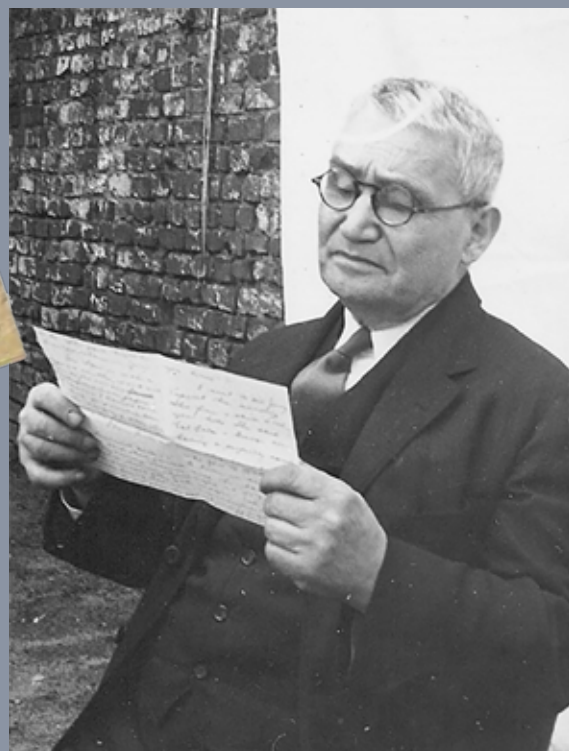


THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

"Paper Bridges":
Letters of Hope and Despair,
1933-1945

Charleston
April 29-30, 2023



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THE
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On the cover:
Gershon (George) Mazo of Charleston, SC, reads a letter from family in the Old Country, ca. 1939; image courtesy of Joseph Mazo Butwin. Envelopes addressed to Helen Stern Lipton in Beaufort, SC (top), and Mrs. Bernard Harry (Minnie Tewel) Baum of Camden, SC (middle), from family in Poland and Germany. Evidence of Nazi postal censorship appears on the envelope at the bottom. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

In this issue

Remembering Martin Perlmutter ~ Rachel Barnett, David Cohen, Richard Gergel, Dale Rosengarten, and Jeffrey Rosenblum reflect on the legacy of Dr. Martin “Marty” Perlmutter, o.b.m., JHSSC’s founding executive director and former director of the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston. 4

News from Home, Pleas for Help, and Lost Connections: The Helen Stern Lipton Papers and Holocaust Era Jewish Family Correspondence ~ Chad S. A. Gibbs ~ The College of Charleston’s Holocaust Studies director delves into a collection of letters held in the archives in Addlestone Library, noting worrisome changes in substance and tone between 1932 and 1939. He introduces three other essays in this issue that also focus on correspondence from Europe, pointing to the rich resources available for research and instruction in the Jewish Heritage Collection’s Holocaust Archives. 7

Joe Engel’s Legacy: Never Forget, Never Again ~ Samantha Krantz ~ Joe Engel, o.b.m., passed away on November 26, 2022. The native of Zakroczym, Poland, and survivor of Auschwitz made Charleston, South Carolina, his home in 1949. In later years, he devoted much of his time to telling his story—especially to young people. The author, who met Joe while she was a freshman at the College of Charleston, describes the impact he had on her life. 9

“Paper Bridges”: Letters of Hope and Despair, 1933-1945 ~ JHSSC meets in Charleston, SC ~ April 29–30, 2023. 11

Returned, Redacted, and Refused: Postal Censorship in Nazi Germany ~ Grace Shaffer ~ The arrival of letters from family in wartime Europe may have eased apprehensions stateside, but what could recipients make of an empty envelope? Or one that had been opened, resealed, and stamped with the Nazi swastika? 12

Crying Out for Help: Letters from the Minnie Tewel Baum Papers, 1938–1941 ~ Leah Davenport ~ From a collection of letters preserved in the Holocaust Archives at the College of Charleston, a reader can glean the story of Malie and Chaim Landsmann and their two daughters. Malie appealed to her cousin Minnie Tewel Baum of Camden, South Carolina, for help in getting out of Germany. As Malie’s entreaties grew more desperate, Minnie came up against one bureaucratic roadblock after another. 14

Teaching the Holocaust with Letters: An Interview with Dr. Amos Bitzan ~ Chad S. A. Gibbs ~ History Professor Amos Bitzan at the University of Wisconsin-Madison tells how he used primary documents with a local connection to help his students achieve a deeper, more personal understanding of the Holocaust. 16

History Loves Company: A Tribute to Dale Rosengarten ~ Harlan Greene ~ The founding curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection retired February 15, 2023, leaving behind a body of work distinctive for its broad scope and exceptional caliber. A native New Yorker, she became the principal collector of South Carolina Jewish artifacts, photographs, and stories, and a leading advocate of sharing her discoveries through public education. Thoroughly immersed in her subjects, she has become part of the story. 18

Help Us Secure the Future of Your Past ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett ~ JHSSC has lined up a tremendous public program—“Paper Bridges”: Letters of Hope and Despair, 1933–1945—for the Society’s spring meeting, where presenters will discuss materials from the Jewish Heritage Collection’s Holocaust Archives. To continue the work of preserving South Carolina Jewish history, JHSSC and JHC seek your support in their joint endowment campaign, The Future of the Past. 19

Letter from the President



This past October the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina hosted an amazing conference. Our joint meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society had over 125 participants from 22 states and 3 countries come together in Charleston for a weekend of presentations and panel discussions. Prior to Shabbat services at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, the KKBE Sisterhood hosted a dinner, and Professor Michael Cohen from Tulane University delivered the Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Lecture on “The Economics of Southern Jewish History.” Three walking tours of different historic sites were held on Saturday morning followed by the Beeber Family Lecture presented by Dr. Shari Rabin of Oberlin College titled, “Dissent, Providentialism, and Slavery: A New Interpretation of Early Charleston Jewish Life.” The highlight of the weekend was a reception at the College of Charleston’s Addlestone Library honoring Dale Rosengarten, founding curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection, who retired in February. Many thanks go to Jay Silverberg, Ashley Walters, Dale Rosengarten, Barry Stiefel, Hilit Surowitz-Israel, and Anna Tucker for organizing the program and to Enid Idelsohn, Anita Rosenberg, Alyssa Neely, Yaron Ayalon, and Rachel Barnett for making all of our local arrangements. Please make plans to join us in Charleston for another engrossing weekend, April 29–30, for “Paper Bridges’: Letters of Hope and Despair,” 1933-1945, featuring New York Times op-ed page editor Sarah Wildman, who will discuss her 2014 book, *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*.

As our friend Dr. Dale Rosengarten retires from her position at the College of Charleston, let’s look back at the many things she has done over the years that have benefited our Society. In 1995, Dale founded the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston and has served as its curator for 28 years, amassing a vast collection of family papers, photographs, memoirs, objects, and congregational and organizational records pertaining to Jewish life in South Carolina. She has worked with volunteers to record over 600 oral histories from individuals in towns and cities across South Carolina. Collaborating with McKissick Museum, Dale developed the exhibition and co-authored the book *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*. After the grand opening in Columbia at McKissick in 2002, the exhibit traveled for two years, spending time in Charleston; Charlotte, North Carolina; and New York City. For over twenty years, she has been the editor of our biannual magazine. Dale and her husband, Dr. Theodore Rosengarten, led College of Charleston undergraduate and graduate students on numerous study abroad trips to Holocaust and Jewish cultural sites in Central and Eastern Europe. She was instrumental in the development of *Mapping Jewish Charleston, Life of the Synagogue*, and *Synagogues of the South*, three pioneering digital public history exhibits. In 2019, Dale was awarded the Order of the Jewish Palmetto, the highest honor conferred by the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. We are indeed indebted to Dale for her many contributions to preserving the history of South Carolina Jewry. Thank you Dale for everything you have done and continue to do.

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



Dale Rosengarten (r), in honor of her upcoming retirement, was feted at a reception held at Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, the weekend JHSSC hosted SJHS’s 2022 meeting. Charleston Mayor John J. Tecklenburg (l) delivered an official proclamation, declaring October 22, 2022, Dale Rosengarten Day. To the Mayor’s left: Harlan Greene and Ted Rosengarten. Photo: Vincent Fraley, College of Charleston.

Remembering Martin Perlmutter

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina lost a giant in January. Marty Perlmutter, the founding director, created and led our organization for 24 years. Because of his leadership and tenacity, the Society exists today.

Marty had a knack with people. Everyone who knew him, I am sure, has a story to tell. I became involved with the Society in 2009 when President Ed Poliakoff asked me to assist in planning a meeting at Hobcaw Barony. I didn't know Marty but soon discovered his talent for quietly and effectively steering you to the correct (his) outcome. I also discovered he would back you up and support any initiative if it was within the scope of mission and would promote South Carolina's Jewish history. So, in 2016, when I suggested we tackle documenting South Carolina's Jewish merchants, he readily agreed and threw his support behind the project. As of 2023, we have documented more than 600 merchants across 90 cities and towns and there's more to be done.

Marty would often say to me, "you know I'm not from here." I beg to differ. He may not have been born here, but arriving in 1979, he and Jeri sunk roots, raised their family, and made a big difference. He very much has his place in South Carolina's Jewish history.

Even upon retirement, Marty stayed involved. We spoke often about Society business. He was a key player with the Future of the Past

Endowment Campaign, joining every call. He cared deeply about securing the future of the Society and the campaign was the vehicle to bring that to fruition.

Marty was a great friend, mentor, and boss, and I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from him—his philosophy guides me now as executive director.

May his memory be a blessing.

— Rachel Barnett



Above: standing (l to r), Saul Viener, Isadore Lourie, Klyde Robinson, Jeffrey Rosenblum, Martin Perlmutter, Sol Breitbart, and Richard Gergel; seated: Leah Chase, Belinda Gergel, and Janice Kahn, JHSSC meeting, College of Charleston, 1998. Photo courtesy of JHSSC.

Below: Marty Perlmutter, seated, with Elizabeth Moses, (l) and Dale Rosengarten in the Jewish Studies Center, under construction, 2002. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.



When Marty became director of Jewish Studies at the College of Charleston in the early '90s, the program was quite modest: a couple of courses taught each year. But he saw the possibilities and began to build community relationships through public programming—Three Rabbi Panels, Sunday morning talks with copious eats, and so on. Soon Marty found himself at the heart of Jewish life in South Carolina. Or as Jeff Rosenblum said, "He was the chief rabbi for all 10,000 or so Jewish Carolinians.

But this was only the beginning. He wanted more Jewish students to come to the College. Thirty years ago, there were approximately three dozen; now there are more than 600. He wanted a building, but no one in any position of authority at the College supported the idea. He persisted because he knew a home, a place for friends, was the key to an enduring academic and social environment. He and Mr. Yaschik bought an old dry cleaners, built the Jewish Studies

Center, and ultimately transferred the facility to the College of Charleston. Even that was not enough, and now we have a kosher dining facility open to the public, as Marty insisted, because friends break bread together. So he built not out of vanity, but because he believed in the humanity of the Jewish people and felt obligated to see that others, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, shared that sense of humanity.

Marty had a special gift for giving renewed meaning to those who experienced the sadness, the loss of a loved one. When many of us shy away, not knowing what to say or do in these situations, Marty moved closer, to the Arnolds, to Beatrice Stieglitz, to the Zuckers, to Stanley Farbstein, and to so many others. He knew what to say and how to comfort. That's friendship of the most extraordinary sort.

— David Cohen



Above: Marty Perlmutter with Jerry and Anita Zucker, JHSSC reception, October 2004. Below: Marty with Susan Lourie, widow of JHSSC's founding president, Isadore Lourie, JHSSC's Bluffton meeting, 2010. Photos courtesy of JHSSC.



I recall meeting Marty for the first time nearly 30 years ago when I attended a meeting on a beautiful spring day, held on the porch of a historic building on Glebe Street where the College of Charleston's Department of Philosophy was located. In attendance at this first meeting were Senator Isadore Lourie, who was seeking to organize the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina; David Cohen, the College's Dean of Libraries; my wife, Belinda, and myself. Marty initially appeared to fit the stereotype of a brainy but slightly befuddled academic. As we began discussing Marty's vision for the, then, mostly nonexistent Jewish Studies Program he had recently taken over and Senator Lourie's plans for a statewide Jewish organization devoted to preserving the history of our state's Jewish community, I realized I was in the presence of two great strategic thinkers. Within months, Senator Lourie persuaded the College of Charleston's president and his lifelong friend, Alex Sanders, to embrace Marty's vision of a robust Jewish Studies program on campus. Within a few short years, Dale

Rosengarten was hired to work with David Cohen to develop the Jewish Heritage Collection, the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina was conducting well attended meetings across South Carolina with talks by highly respected scholars and panels made up of community residents sharing their special local stories, and a beautiful Jewish Studies building was constructed on the corner of Glebe and Wentworth. The remarkable partnership that exists today between the College of Charleston's Jewish Studies Program, the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College's Addlestone Library, and the Jewish Historical Society is a living legacy of two truly visionary Jewish leaders, Marty Perlmutter and Isadore Lourie. May their memory be a blessing.

— Richard Gergel

Marty lived his life intent on leaving the world a better place than he found it. He has left a monumental legacy at the College of Charleston where he built the Jewish Studies Program from scratch. He also launched the Jewish Historical Society and directed it for a quarter century. He engineered (meaning envisioned, funded, and implemented) a building for Jewish

Studies students and faculty, three endowed academic centers, a kosher/vegetarian dining hall, and wall-to-wall public programming, from Sunday brunch lectures to three-rabbi panels to the World of Jewish Culture at Piccolo Spoleto.

I am eternally grateful for the doors Marty opened for us. In the early 1990s, he asked Ted to stand in for the irreplaceable Beatrice Stieglitz, who was teaching a course on East European fiction permeated by the Holocaust. From that beginning, a Holocaust Studies program grew at the College, attracting hundreds of students every year and offering advanced courses and extra-curricular opportunities. Generous funding from the Zucker/Goldberg family assures Jewish Studies faculty will be

teaching courses and leading study abroad programs for many years to come.

Marty didn't exactly recruit me, but I am certain I would not have become a southern Jewish historian and curator if not for him. He championed JHC and JHSSC at every turn, and at the time of his death, was actively working on a History and Heritage fundraising campaign to secure the future of both agencies.

Hard to imagine where Jewish Studies and Charleston's Jewish community will go without Marty's guiding light, but as a dear friend of his said to me at the funeral, "Marty's not gone. Look around you. He's everywhere."

— Dale Rosengarten

Dr. Martin Perlmutter, o.b.m., came to the College of Charleston to introduce students to the great philosophers and their teachings after lecturing at the Universities of Texas and Tennessee. This followed his rabbinical studies at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City and receiving his doctorate in philosophy from the University of Illinois. A deeply religious, spiritual, and philosophical man, Marty quickly became the leading voice in the newly formed Jewish Studies Program, with an academic curriculum rather than a religious program. As its head, he developed a diversified department recognized throughout the country for its excellence.

Marty was a builder in the full sense of the word: of programs, facilities, and relationships. His successes grew from his ability to bring people of differing points of view around to his perspective, usually without them realizing it. His quiet demeanor and light hand, never sanctimonious, were unusually powerful in terms of persuasion. In addition to building up Jewish Studies, he collaborated with other Jewish community members (with the support of College of Charleston President Alex Sanders) to found the Jewish Historical Society of

South Carolina. While serving as the Society's executive director for more than 20 years, he led the way in creating a strong and vibrant organization. He raised, almost singlehandedly, the endowments for the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture and the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies at the College. He worked with my mother-in-law, Frederica Weinberg Kronsberg, to create the Kronsberg Lecture Series, deftly giving her comfort and friendship that lasted the rest of her life, while simultaneously gifting knowledge to the community-at-large. This multifaceted benevolence was Marty's gift.

Marty also built facilities to bring people closer together: the Sylvia Vlosky Yaschik Jewish Studies Center and the kosher dining facility, Marty's Place. The latter, built in the face of a state moratorium on construction, arose through Marty's sheer will, perseverance, and ability to fundraise. Working with Marty on the new Jewish Studies Center, I witnessed his remarkable knowledge of student and faculty needs. I also enjoyed the depth of Marty's knowledge in his other interests, including architecture, Charleston's architectural and historical character, the Blue Ridge Mountains, and movies—how much fun it was to listen to Marty's analysis of a little-known

movie. Without Marty I would never know how terrible a cauliflower crust pizza tastes.

Marty's sincere and warm approach during my tenure on the Jewish Studies Board encouraged me to expand my mindset and to think outside the box. His empathy knew no bounds. I am a better person due to my association with Marty Perlmutter. He was a compassionate and loving father, grandfather, and friend, loved by all he met, including my wife, Mickey, and me. We will miss him, as will his wife, Jeri, their family, and beloved students and faculty.

— Jeffrey Rosenblum



Marty and Jeri Perlmutter (seated) with their children and grandchildren, 2021. Photo courtesy of the Perlmutter family.

News from Home, Pleas for Help, and Lost Connections: The Helen Stern Lipton Papers and Holocaust Era Jewish Family Correspondence

by Chad S. A. Gibbs, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies, Director of the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston

In a presentation looking back over his life at the 1998 annual meeting of this Society, Beaufort native Joseph Lipton poignantly recalled listening to his mother read aloud the family mail. Sometimes it was just the Yiddish daily *Forverts* or another newspaper, but

On other occasions letters would arrive from the parents of my father or my mother. While I listened, she would read these precious letters over and over. We both wept. I never knowing exactly why I was tearful. Through this exchange of mail, I became an extension of the European family and the cities of Lodz, Kielce, Warsaw, Basogala, Vilna, and Riga became as familiar to me as Charleston, Savannah, and Columbia.¹

Unfortunately, Joseph Lipton became familiar with these age-old Jewish communities in the dusk of their existence. He went on to note that his mother last visited Poland and saw family—with him and one younger brother in tow—in 1930. She, and indeed he, would never see most of them again.²

Like it did so many others, the Holocaust struck Joseph's family hard. Only a few of the people he heard his mother voice as she read the mail ever made it out. One family member, Israel Moishe Albirt, survived the Nazis only to be murdered by Polish neighbors in the 1946 Kielce Pogrom when he tried to return home.

These and other equally difficult stories characterize much of the Lipton collection. This is especially true reading the letters today with a clear sense of what is coming next.

The earliest of the Lipton letters is a note sent from Dovid Albirt to his aunt Helen Lipton on May 25, 1932. Even at this early date, likely having less to do with Germany, Dovid Albirt asserts his wish to come to the United States to live with his family in Beaufort, South Carolina.³ It is with some mystery that a later letter from Rivke Mechale Sterernzys—Gabriel Stern and Helen Lipton's mother—indicates a ship

ticket purchased for Dovid Albirt did at one point exist. The original translator of these letters, Rabbi Philip Silverstein of Columbia, South Carolina, notes that the ticket is unexplained in the existing letters or the recollections of (then) living relatives. Rabbi Silverstein colorfully ends his explanation: "With the principals now residing in eternity, definite answers will forever remain out of reach."⁴ Regardless of whether any new information emerges to change that conclusion, a chance to get one family member out of Europe before the war came and went for reasons unknown.

With only one side of the conversation in these and most other Holocaust-era collections, such problems are rife. The missing half of these interactions often leaves the reader wondering what is being discussed, why one person is inactive, or, as is often the complaint given by Gabriel Stern's correspondents—why didn't he write more often? The European side of this transatlantic relationship, however, reveals a great deal even by itself.

Reading the collection in its entirety, the letters fall into a more mundane pattern for some time after Rabbi Silverstein's compelling notes about the ship ticket. As we might expect for a family divided by an ocean, there is a good deal of conversation about emigration and the lives of Helen or others on American shores. Though, as time wears on and the outbreak of war looms, the pleas from Helen's family grow louder and more worried

in their tone. In a note dated November 22, 1938, Rivke Mechale Sterenzys admonishes that she has now sent three letters asking after the emigration papers her son Gabriel in Lexington, South Carolina, was to send, but nothing has arrived. Rivke's words are paired on this date with a letter from Helen's nephew Dovid on the backside asking her to have Gabriel speed up his work with the papers.⁵ By late 1938, the content of the letters has changed. Conversations about the weather become less frequent and the pressing work to reunite the family in America takes over.



Helen Stern Lipton, ca. 1940. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

Some hopeful, undated, news arrived later at Helen's home with word from both her mother, Rivke, and nephew Dovid that the ship ticket for him from Gabriel had at long last arrived. Dovid wrote also that he had filled out necessary paperwork for the Polish government and submitted the papers for the US Consulate.⁶ A look through the letters for a next note from Dovid results not in a message saying he is set to sail, but instead a letter to Helen in April of 1939 stating that he has heard from Gabriel and "he writes that he received my letter and he answered me that he can't do any more about my coming. He did everything that he could do within his power."⁷ That illusive ship ticket did arrive, but other problems did not allow Dovid Albirt to set sail. Several letters thereafter attest to the same swirl of paperwork needed and dreams dashed one small refusal at a time.

This is where the collection itself leaves the reader. The letters can neither confirm nor disprove the fates of Helen and Gabriel's family members in Europe. Like Anne Frank's diary, the letters stop before conditions are at their worst. Some family members certainly made it through the war as letters come from far off places like Samarkand, USSR (now Uzbekistan), during and after the war, as well as one from Tel Aviv, Israel, in the 1960s. Everything from Joseph Lipton's presentation to the JHSSC to the earliest saved Lipton letter from 1932 is held by Special Collections in the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library. In all, the [Helen Stern Lipton Papers](#) span 173 pages of original correspondence, translations, and much else. This irreplaceable group of documents is far from alone at Addlestone, where the [Holocaust Archives consists of more than 50 collections](#) donated by survivors and liberators with ties to South Carolina.

Leah Davenport's article in this issue highlights the equally frustrating and, ultimately, heartbreaking [Minnie Tewel Baum Papers](#). South Carolina Jewish communities saved and donated a vital collection of letters documenting the concerns, preoccupations, and pleas of relatives and friends in Europe. As Leah will show, the Baum papers further demonstrate the many attempts local Jews made to get people out of German-occupied territory. Letters in both the Lipton and Baum files shout the

increasing desperation of those facing the advance of Hitler's armies. These sources are so often raw and frank about living conditions under the Third Reich that you start to wonder whether there was much censorship of the post in the occupied areas or even in Germany itself. This is where Grace Shaffer's article comes in, informing us how censorship worked (or didn't) and how it shows up in the Lipton archive. Grace provides an important understanding of those barriers and some stunning images of the marks left behind by Nazi censors.

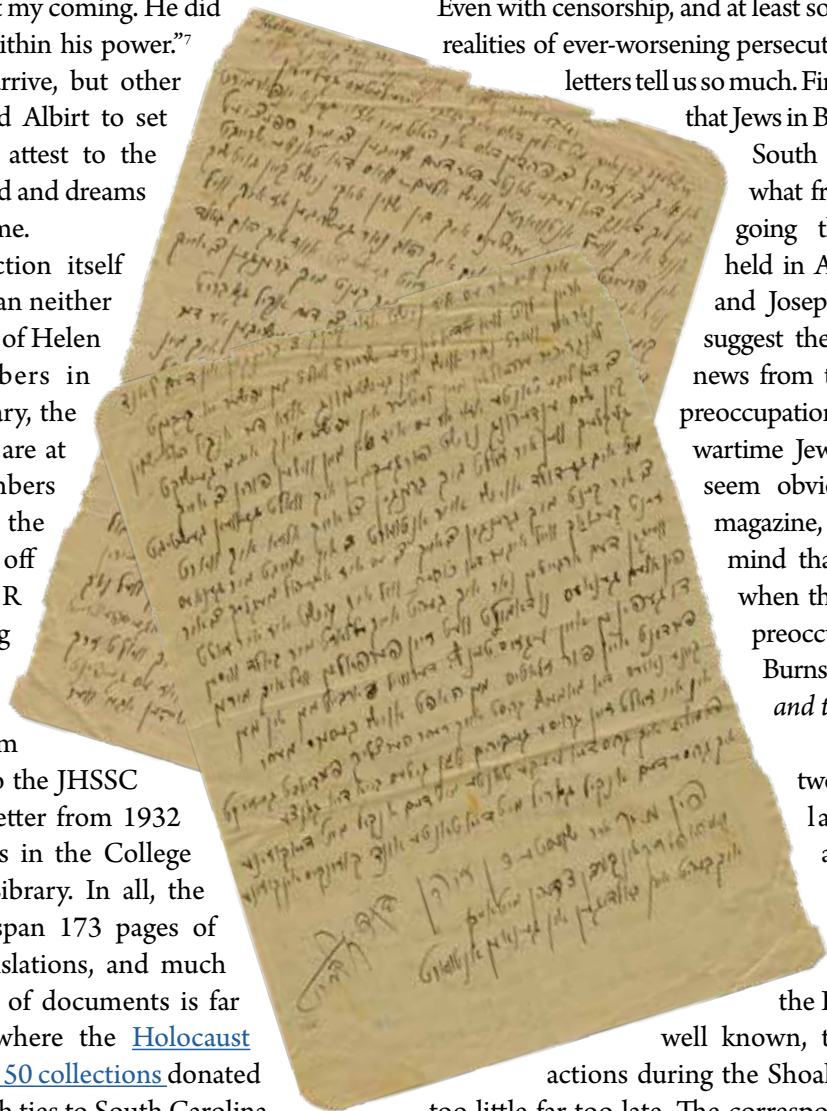
Even with censorship, and at least some desire to conceal the realities of ever-worsening persecution from relatives, these

letters tell us so much. First and foremost, they tell that Jews in Beaufort and elsewhere in

South Carolina knew exactly what friends and relatives were going through. If the letters held in Addlestone are any clue, and Joseph Lipton's recollections suggest they are, then the terrible news from the Old Country was a preoccupation of many prewar and wartime Jewish homes. This might seem obvious to readers of this magazine, but we should keep in mind that what they knew and when they knew it was a major preoccupation of last year's Ken Burns documentary *The US and the Holocaust*.

In three monumental two-hour episodes, Burns labors to show his audience what the United States did in the years leading up to, during, and after the Holocaust. As is already well known, the story of America's actions during the Shoah is often one of doing too little far too late. The correspondence in our archives attests to that reality and to American knowledge of what was going on. To spark discussions of what Americans knew and to personalize, or humanize the immensity of Holocaust history, Professor Amos Bitzan, used a collection of letters sent to Racine, Wisconsin, to teach about Jewish experiences at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison. My interview with Amos in later pages here highlights the many successes of that teaching method in ways that I plan to replicate at the College of Charleston.



Letter written in Yiddish from Dovid Albirt in Kielce, Poland, to his aunt Helen Stern Lipton in Beaufort, SC, May 25, 1932. Translated by Rabbi Philip Silverstein, Columbia, SC. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

At the same individual level that Amos sought to bring understandings of the Holocaust to his classes, the Lipton letters make it clear why Joseph's mother was in tears. He may not have understood as a boy, though he did later, and we certainly can today. Readers of Sarah Wildman's book *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind* will also register the pain, separation, worry, and helplessness of Wildman's grandfather as he received letters crying for help from his endangered first love. Wildman will be JHSSC's keynote speaker at the spring meeting (see program, page 11), where she will discuss the generational trauma experienced by the descendants of survivors. Those deep connections and family ties to the history of the Holocaust

as well as to letters from endangered loved ones are, I suspect, something not at all unfamiliar to readers of this magazine.

NOTES

1. Joseph Lipton, "Joseph Lipton Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Presentation" (Annual Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, Beaufort, SC, October 24, 1998), 3.
2. Lipton, JHSSC Presentation, 4.
3. "Helen Stern Lipton Papers, 1932-2008," Mss 1065-012, College of Charleston Addlestone Library Special Collections, Envelope 3.
4. Lipton Papers, Envelope 8, see translator's notes.
5. Lipton Papers, Envelope 15.
6. Lipton Papers, Envelope 9.
7. Lipton Papers, Envelope 24, PDF pg. 114.

Joe Engel's Legacy: Never Forget, Never Again

by Samantha Krantz, REMEMBER Program Associate, Charleston Jewish Federation

Joe Engel, o.b.m., opened a window to a painful past every time he spoke of his life before, during, and after the Holocaust. In light of his recent passing (d. Charleston, SC, November 26, 2022), we reflect on how sharing his story was a way for Joe to express his love and dedication to South Carolinians.

Joe was born on October 9, 1927, in the town of Zakroczy, Poland, to a working-class family of eight brothers and sisters. Living in Poland before the Holocaust, he experienced antisemitism as a child. Growing up, Joe spoke multiple languages including Yiddish, German, Polish, and Hungarian. As an adult, he continued to speak Yiddish, even teaching others phrases with a grin on his face.

On September 1, 1939, the German army destroyed Zakroczy. The family moved to Warsaw, and then to Plonsk, which eventually became a Jewish ghetto. Joe and a few members of his family managed to remain in the ghetto until the final selection. They were subsequently transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau on a cramped and disease-filled cattle car. At Auschwitz, Joe became a bricklayer and survived on little-to-nothing to eat. In January 1945, the

Germans liquidated the camp and Joe considered a life-altering decision—whether he should jump from the transport train and try to make his escape. Once it was dark, he made that fateful leap and successfully evaded the German soldiers who searched for him. Afterward, Joe hid in the forest, digging a hole in which to live with his bare, frozen hands. He later joined a resistance group. In March 1945, the Red Army liberated Joe and his companions.

After liberation, Joe returned to Poland to see if any of his family survived.

He stayed for six months, until learning he was being drafted into the Polish army. Once again, Joe knew he needed to escape, only this time it was to Germany. Upon his arrival, he learned that a sister and two brothers had survived.

The aftermath of the Holocaust was both an individual and

a collective trauma. Many survivors made efforts to create a new family and life to replace what they had lost. In 1949, Joe made his way to Charleston, South Carolina, which marked the beginning of a new life for him. Years later, he liked to share stories about the "old Charleston" where he got his start as a peddler. Over time, Joe built a business, working—as he



Joe Engel, holding a sign that says "Always remember, never forget," with College of Charleston Hillel students at a Holocaust survivor brunch. Photo: Hillel staff.

loved to joke—as a CPA, meaning in “Cleaning, Pressing and Alterations” at his King Street laundry for over 36 years.

Like many other survivors, both locally and around the world, Joe spent many years building his new life with a new family before turning to the work of telling his story.

I met Joe in 2015, when I was a freshman at the College of Charleston, taking a Representations of the Holocaust course. The first time I heard his story tears filled my eyes and I felt an instant connection with him. I left his talk with a drive instilled in me to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to hear his story. The words that he said kept replaying in my mind: “This should not happen to anybody, to any humans, what they done to us.”

From the day I first met him, I made sure to see Joe every month. As a student and later as a professional working for the Charleston Jewish Federation’s REMEMBER Program, I had the honor of bringing Joe to schools to speak to thousands of students and community members across South Carolina.



Joe Engel speaks to students at Porter-Gaud, a private school in Charleston, SC, 2020. Photo: Samantha Krantz.

In each talk, Joe emphasized that he wanted everyone to love and be kind to one another. When Joe spoke, you could hear a pin drop, but when he finished sharing his story, he was met with handshakes and hugs. It was his selflessness that made Joe so special. The REMEMBER Program brought Joe and other local survivors, as well as their descendants, to schools to ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten. Joe’s legacy is the thousands he educated and the thousands more who will continue to hear and tell his story—from generation to generation.

Joe once said, “don’t you ever forget me, as long as you gon’ live. You tell this story for us, because we will not be here to tell this story forever.” We promise to honor that wish.

The Joe Engel papers, housed in Special Collections, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, have been digitized and can be viewed on the Lowcountry Digital Library: <https://lcdl.library.cofc.edu/content/joe-engel-papers-1938-2006/>

She was your grandfather’s true love, was the only answer given when Sarah Wildman presented her grandmother with a dozen photographs of a dark-haired, smiling young woman she had stumbled upon in her grandfather’s old office. “True love”? It was stated as fact, and with no further information. Who was this woman? And what was her relationship to her grandfather? When pressed, her grandfather’s sister offered a bit more: “She was brilliant! And so in love with your grandfather.” It was tantalizing, but agonizingly open-ended.

Years after her grandparents had both passed away, Wildman found a cache of letters written to her grandfather in a file labeled “Correspondence: Patients A–G.”



What she found inside weren’t dry medical histories; what was written instead opened a path into the destroyed world that was her family’s prewar Vienna. One woman’s letters stood out: these were mailed from the woman in the photo. Her name was Valerie Scheftel—Valy. She was Karl’s lover, who had remained in Europe when he boarded a ship bound for the United States in Hamburg in September 1938. But why had she not left with Karl? And more important, what had happened to her? With the help of the letters Valy had written her grandfather, Wildman started to piece together her story. The letters revealed a woman desperate to escape and still clinging to the memory of a love that defined her years of freedom.

Riverhead Penguin October 30, 2014

“Paper Bridges”: Letters of Hope and Despair, 1933–1945

April 29–30, 2023 ~ Charleston, SC

The Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina dedicates this meeting in memory of Marty Perlmutter, o.b.m., our beloved founding executive director, whose steadfast support and adept leadership knew no bounds.

Saturday, April 29

Unless otherwise noted, all events will be held in Arnold Hall in the Sylvia Vlosky Yashchik Jewish Studies Center, 96 Wentworth Street.

11:00 A.M. Registration

11:30–12:15 P.M. Lunch

12:15 Opening remarks

12:45 “Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind” ~ Sarah Wildman

2:00 Break

2:15 News from Home, Pleas for Help, Lost Connections: Holocaust Era Jewish Family Correspondence ~ Chad S. A. Gibbs, Director, Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies and Assistant Professor, Jewish Studies, College of Charleston

3:00 Break

3:15 Helen Stern Lipton Letters: Family Discussion

Moderator: Chad S. A. Gibbs

Panelists: Marcie Stern Baker, Lilly Stern Filler, Ellen Lipton Yampolsky

5:00–6:30 Reception, Stern Student Center Garden, 71 George Street (in case of rain: Arnold Hall)

Dinner (on your own)

Sunday, April 30

9:30–10:30 A.M. JHSSC board meeting

10:45–12:15 Torn Pages: The Hopes and Hard Realities of Wartime Letters ~ Chad S. A. Gibbs in conversation with College of Charleston students Leah Davenport and Grace Shaffer



Sarah Wildman is the author of *Paper Love: Searching for the Girl My Grandfather Left Behind*. She is currently an editor and writer at the *New*

York Times in Opinion. She was previously an editor at *Foreign Policy Magazine*, for which she hosted and co-produced the podcast *First Person*. Sarah has also been on staff at NBC News online, Vox, and *The New Republic*, and has long contributed to a number of other publications. Sarah has received numerous fellowships and awards in support of her work, including a German Marshall Fund Peter R. Weitz Prize for excellence and originality in coverage of Europe, a Milena Jesenska Fellowship in Vienna, and an Arthur F. Burns Fellowship in Germany as well as Pulitzer Center grants for covering issues shaping Jerusalem and Paris.

Meeting registration

Fee (per person): \$75

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

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

A block of rooms is reserved at the special rate of \$239 at Hampton Inn Charleston/Mt. Pleasant-Patriots Point, 255 Sessions Way, Mt. Pleasant. Call 843-881-3300 or go to <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/chsmthx-jhs-b9fe994f-5146-45b4-bf00-cc3c7674731f/>

Questions:

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

Returned, Redacted, and Refused: Postal Censorship in Nazi Germany

by Grace Shaffer, Research Assistant, Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies

Letters have always been a way to connect long-separated family members and this connection becomes even more essential in times of upheaval. Censorship, no matter how tightly administered, could take away that most important function of mail from loved ones. During the Holocaust, Jewish families fought to maintain connection with one another in the face of increasing violence. This does not mean, however, that their letters detail these worsening conditions. Initially, there is a desperate sense of keeping connection and shared life with a focus on building a mental picture for the recipient.¹ Even if they could not share much or only empty envelopes arrived, letters were still proof of life and hope on paper so long as they kept coming.

When the war began in September 1939, the focus of letter-writing shifted away from the usual fare towards messages of love and longing.² On April 9, 1940, the Nazi regime issued postal regulations and formal guidelines for letter censorship. Under these regulations, any letter written in Hebrew or Yiddish was marked for censorship.³ It's also evident that people practiced an emotional self-censorship in letters between family members before their correspondence got anywhere near a Nazi censor.⁴ In a great deal of wartime letters, readers today are able to feel a sense of not wanting to burden the recipients with the indignity and horrors the senders were facing.⁵ When a letter becomes a proof of life, the mere fact that it was sent becomes more important than the content it contains.

Of the four censored pieces of mail in the [Helen Stern Lipton Papers](#) in Special Collections, College of Charleston, number 26, an envelope with an accompanying letter, and 34B, a heavily-marked, albeit empty, envelope, are the most striking. Based on their postmarks, both were written in 1940, shortly after Nazi authorities passed down new censorship guidelines. The black circular stamp with an eagle and swastika in the center of the envelopes tells us that they were both intercepted and censored in Berlin, where all outgoing foreign mail was examined.⁶ Because they are in Yiddish, all of the letters from Dovid "Dutchie" Albirt to his aunt Helen Lipton of Beaufort, South Carolina, should have been returned to sender or entirely redacted. However, it appears that only the empty envelope 34B was actually censored—likely delivered with a slip of paper explaining the redaction.⁷ The German authorities could not read the letters themselves, instead relying on Jewish forced labor to carry out the process of reading and censoring mail written in Yiddish.⁸ Is there a chance that one of these individuals marked this letter as censored, but then sent it on its way, delivered as if nothing had happened?

Letter 26 and its envelope. Notice the "1374" censor's mark, bottom left on the letter and on the envelope, underneath the resealing tape in the illuminated enlargement (1). "Geöffnet" means "opened" in German.

Letter 26 has several official markings on the exterior of the envelope; the most striking of which is the large Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, or German Army High Command, censorship stamp. Among various international postage marks, there is a small purple rectangle containing the numbers "1374"—is this meant to identify an individual censor in Berlin? The censors in the Berlin office typically used pencil marks, not stamped numbers, to identify themselves, as seen on the lower left of Letter 34B's envelope.⁹ However, underneath the resealing tape on letter 26, there is a second 1374 mark. This mark would have had to be stamped on the envelope before it was resealed and sent off to Beaufort.

Letter 26 itself, written in Yiddish, is short compared with others in the collection—barely over a page in length. As the words are generally evenly spaced and relatively large, it doesn't seem as though Dutchie was rushed in his composition. Despite the number of official markings on the exterior, the content of Letter 26 is extremely mundane, simply expressing love and longing for family members in America and assuring them that everything is fine in Kielce. Dutchie tells his aunt they have recently received letters from other family members, providing some long sought-after proof of life for family outside Kielce. He signs off with a request: that the family pass on love to relatives in Columbia. This letter fits neatly into the established pattern; the sender doesn't want to burden the recipient with anything negative and instead centers his message around feelings of love.

What was it about Letter 34B that Nazi censors deemed too dangerous to let slide? Because there is no insert for the letter, we can only speculate why the content was deemed unfit for delivery. The envelope is postmarked August 24, 1940. By that time, the Berlin censor office may have begun to operate with greater efficacy. Perhaps Dutchie wrote to tell his aunt about worsening conditions in Kielce Ghetto or an incident of mass violence against the Jewish population—something no censor would allow.

After August 1940, there is a gap in dateable correspondence until September of 1944. This speaks to the increasing pressure

of both the violence and the censorship faced by Lipton family members who remained in Europe. When the letters resume, there is again a focus on sentiments of love, as well as yearning for more frequent contact—postage was the only way recipients would get news about their loved ones. Despite attempts to censor correspondence, families like the Liptons were able to maintain contact. Sometimes, the sender was lucky, and their letter was delivered opened but unaltered. On the other hand, delivery of an empty, censored envelope let the recipient know that the sender was alive and thinking of them. When letters are the only vehicle for contact with loved ones, the longing to see the next missive arrive remains strong, no matter the potential obstacles.

Empty Envelope, Letter 34B. Note the censor's pencil marks, front, bottom corners. Images this page and previous courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

Notes

1. Debórah Dwork, "Holding on Through Letters: Jewish Families During the Holocaust" Lecture presentation, (Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship, November 13, 2022).
2. Ibid.
3. Justin Gordon, *Holocaust Postal History: Harrowing Journeys Revealed through the Letters and Cards of the Victims* (Chicago: Six Point Watermark, 2016), 7.
4. Dwork, "Holding On Through Letters."
5. Ibid.
6. Gordon, *Holocaust Postal History*, 8.
7. Ibid, 7.
8. Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg [German Federal Archive, Ludwigsburg, Baden-Württemberg, Germany, Bild [Photograph] 101I-134-0793-30.
9. Rudi Anders, "Censorship of Civilian Mail in Germany during WWII," <https://lcps-stamps.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2020-06-24-Anders-Rudi-CensorshipCivilMailGermanyWWIIREV-F.pdf>.

Crying Out for Help: Letters from the Minnie Tewel Baum Papers, 1938–1941

by Leah Davenport, Research Assistant, Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, and College of Charleston sophomore, majoring in Jewish Studies and Women's and Gender Studies

Residing in a vault in Special Collections at the College of Charleston's Addlestone Library is a binder containing 15 or so letters between two people who never met. The [Minnie Tewel Baum Papers](#) are comprised of the correspondence between Malie Landsmann and Minnie Baum, two cousins, one living in Germany, the other in Camden, South Carolina. While the conversational nature of the letters indicates that Minnie wrote back, only Malie's responses remain in the archives. In addition to personal messages, are letters between Minnie and various government agencies, societies, and aid organizations, all written with the intent of helping the Landsmanns flee Europe. The Baum letters demonstrate just how difficult it was for everyday Americans to help relatives escape Europe. Minnie had never heard of Malie before receiving the first letter, but over the next several months, she would become increasingly invested in getting Malie Landsmann and her family out of Hitler's grasp.

Malie Landsmann first wrote to Minnie Baum in March 1938, pleading for a way out of Nazi Germany. Malie had a family and was willing to do anything she could to save them. Her letter to Minnie explained how they were related, saying Minnie was her "dear cousin, the daughter of my father's sister." Briefly explaining her family's situation in Germany, Malie wrote, "Unfortunately, it is the wish of the higher authorities

that we as Jews should migrate." While it is clear that she knew her position was dire, Malie of course had no way to know just how bad it would become. Chaim, her husband, was a tailor, who, prior to 1938, had a decent job that allowed them to live

comfortably in Berlin. Malie's letters introduced her daughters, Ida, age twelve, and Peppi, who was one, and profusely thanked her cousin Minnie in advance for any help she could give.

The Baum letters offer a first-hand account of the escalation in Nazi attacks on Jews. Malie wrote to Minnie over a dozen times between 1938 and 1941. When she first reached out, life was difficult, though the family was still together in Germany, and at least getting by.

Shortly after receiving the first few letters from Malie in 1938, Minnie began looking for ways to help. By December, the South Carolina cousin was caught up in a flurry of activity. Minnie first contacted the United States Lines Company to receive a quote on how expensive it would be to buy four steamer tickets from Germany to New York. The company informed Minnie of the price—something well beyond her means—and told her that the Landsmanns would need visas, affidavits, and a multitude of other documents before embarking.

Adding to her difficulties, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) stated that they were "in no position to send for immigrants." Minnie's papers show that she nevertheless kept trying, next writing to the American Consul in Berlin and, yet again, receiving a negative response. According to the Consul, Chaim and Malie hadn't submitted an application for immigration. Minnie even secured

the help of South Carolina Senator E. D. Smith in the form of a letter to the American Consul and the Acting Secretary of State, attempting to deliver the required affidavits to Germany as soon as possible.



Malie and Chaim Landsmann and their daughters, Ida and Peppi. Malie, first cousin to Minnie Tewel Baum of Camden, SC, appealed to Minnie for help getting her family out of Germany.

Unfortunately, by November 1938, the Nazis had forcibly deported 17,000 Polish-born Jews living in Germany, including Malie's husband, Chaim. Though Nazi authorities brazenly stripped thousands of naturalized Jewish Germans of their citizenship and forced them over the border into Poland, a country that also did not want them, this was just light foreshadowing of what was to come. In a letter sent around this time, and only days prior to Kristallnacht, Malie wrote that her "situation ha[d] changed badly, indescribably" and that she hoped her letter would reach Minnie "before we are completely destroyed."

Eleven months after receiving the first letter, Minnie realized that the American Consul in Berlin would be of no help and HIAS couldn't do anything until the Landsmanns arrived in the United States. Minnie wrote to the American Consul in Cuba and then to the Cuban Consul in Savannah, Georgia. Again, the arrangements would have been wildly expensive and much too difficult

to complete. Malie and Chaim would have had to deposit \$5,000 each in the Bank of Cuba, Malie would have needed a notarized document proving she and Minnie were blood relatives, and all four Landsmanns would have needed visas. By 1940, Malie and her daughters were also expelled from Germany, reuniting them with Chaim in a new shared destitution.

Minnie did not bear the burden of her attempts to help Malie alone. She wrote of what she was trying to do in letters to other relatives. Fanny Adelstein, Minnie's cousin living in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, wrote in April 1938 that helping the Landsmanns "is a wonderful cause, a good deed for humanity[s] sake." A few months later, Minnie's sister Rose wrote that she was working to get more affidavits for Minnie to send to the American Consul showing that the Landsmanns wouldn't be a burden. One relative wrote in April 1941 that for one person to get out of Poland, "The fare total would be about \$1,220. The passport fees alone [are] \$720."

Malie, Chaim, and their two daughters never made it out of Poland, though not for a lack of trying. The bureaucratic hoops and emigration obstacles were much too high for one person to jump through, much less four. Malie's story is that of someone reaching out, perhaps uncertain whether any help was possible, but taking the desperate risk all the same. Her situation also illustrates multiple points in which governments had the opportunity to intervene, the chance to change fates, and either failed to do so, chose inaction, or both. The Nazis murdered Malie and Chaim at Auschwitz in 1942. Sadder still, no known records have yet clarified what happened to Ida and Peppi.

Letters to Minnie Baum: from Rabbi Samuel Shillman (Temple Sinai, Sumter), chairman of the Coordinating Refugee Committee of SC, 1938, advising her of a letter of support from Senator E. D. Smith; from Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society of America, 1938, declaring HIAS was in "no position to send for immigrants;" from her sister Rose promising help. Images this page and previous courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries. See cover for images from the same collection.



Teaching the Holocaust with Letters: An Interview with Dr. Amos Bitzan

by Chad S. A. Gibbs, Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies, Director of the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston

All Holocaust educators worry about how to make the terrible enormity of Nazi genocide understandable and more personal for their students. As he struggled with this conundrum, my early advisor Dr. Waitman Beorn asked students not to think of the Shoah as six million murders, but to instead imagine one person murdered six million times.

Beorn was trying to put a face on the almost unfathomable scale of Nazi mass murder. Readers may remember the Kentucky students who attempted to comprehend the scale alone by collecting six million paperclips. Demonstrating the size of that number, what one class tried to achieve ended up taking their school over a decade.

As a doctoral student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, I had the opportunity to learn another way of personalizing these events from my mentor, Dr. Amos Bitzan. Amos used a small collection of letters sent from Nazi-occupied Poland to Racine, Wisconsin, to show how persecution and degradation weighed on real people. For students in Madison, the local destination of the Stern letters also helped connect these events to a place many actually knew. I thought Dr. Bitzan would be best suited to tell us about his work with letters. My interview with him follows.

How did you receive the Stern postcards and how did you decide to use them in your class?

I received the postcards from Michael Stern, a Wisconsin alumnus and engaged supporter of the Mosse/Weinstein Center of Jewish Studies at the university.

He sent me a scan of one of the postcards in a set of 13 that he discovered in his late mother's belongings. Initially, he simply wanted some help from a faculty member in understanding the significance of the postcard and in translating the contents. After seeing the sender's address, in Nazi-occupied Poland, the stamp and date of 1941, and then translating its content from German, we realized that this was correspondence that Stern's late grandmother, Sara Spira, had written to her daughter (his mother), Mary Stern, and son-in-law (Michael's father), George Stern, during the

war years. Michael's parents had been able to flee Nazi Germany and come to the U.S. in late 1938. The postcard revealed the voice of a woman in the most difficult circumstances who, despite facing hunger and near-constant threat of death, was overwhelmingly concerned with the wellbeing of her children. With some trepidation, I asked Michael Stern if he would be willing to send me the entire set of postcards and to allow me to build a History of the Holocaust course around them that I would be teaching the following semester. He agreed.

What were your goals for this part of your Holocaust class? Do you think you got there?

I had several goals. One, I wanted my students to understand the process of historical research through actual practice with primary sources. Two, I wanted them to build deep and lasting knowledge of the Holocaust. Three, I wanted them



The fall 2016 cover of the Mosse/Weinstein Center for Jewish Studies newsletter features three of the primary documents from the Sara Spira collection used by Amos Bitzan to help teach his History of the Holocaust course at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Courtesy of the author.

to form a personal connection to a real person who was taken from the world by the Nazi genocide in order to counteract the inevitable tendency for abstracting human life into numbers, when we are presented with figures such as "six million victims." Four, I wanted my students to learn from and assist Michael Stern—a member of the broader community—with their historical research. I think that I succeeded in these goals.

Working as your teaching assistant, I remember the destination of the letters had a real effect on students even before we discussed their content. What do you think of the recent drive to localize history? Do you think that's particularly important to Holocaust history in anyway?

Yes, I think that the fact that these letters were sent by Sara Spira to Racine, Wisconsin, a city not far from the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison and also close to the homes of many of our undergraduates, allowed them to connect the history of the Holocaust, set primarily in Europe, to their own lives and experiences. Learning about the Racine childhood of Michael Stern, the grandson of Sara Spira, also built this connection. I do think that this localization is important, not only as a pedagogical device for deepening engagement but also to understand the ways in which historical events transpiring, in this case, in Nazi-occupied Poland, also had implications for people living in the midwestern United States.

What advice would you give a teacher thinking of adding letters to their classes?

I think that the postcards worked best when we didn't force connections to every single aspect of the course. My

History of the Holocaust course covered events from 1933 to 1945 and the extant letters were only from 1940–1941. It was not possible to synchronize them. The first time I taught the course, I simply planned for working with one postcard every week, in chronological order, and I provided the background to allow my students to understand roughly what was happening, but then gave them the task of reading the letter closely and

helping us unpack it. I was greatly assisted in the use of the postcards by my teaching assistant at the time, Rebekka Grossmann, now a scholar in her own right, who expertly translated the remainder of the cards and also planned many of the research sessions on individual letters. In addition to the postcards, the learning of my students was also greatly enhanced by access to a large collection of

family photographs, passports, and other personal documents provided by Michael Stern. In turn, my students conducted research in the digital archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum that unearthed Sara Spira's identification card complete with a photograph of her from wartime Krakow. A different student discovered that, unbeknownst to Michael Stern, a relative of the family had survived the Holocaust in very dramatic circumstances, though, sadly, his wife and young son were murdered in Auschwitz.

Images, courtesy of the author, are from the Sara Spira Collection (unaccessioned recent donation), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.



History Loves Company: A Tribute to Dale Rosengarten

by Harlan Greene

The future, no doubt, will revere Dale Rosengarten. Historians will sing her praises, scholars reference her works, and users of her hundreds of oral histories will gratefully discover ancestors they never knew. There are already two official resolutions honoring her: one from the Charleston, South Carolina, mayor's office and another from the South Carolina House of Representatives, citing her superior accomplishments, all officially signed and sealed.

Over time, more honors will accrue, as she'll inevitably be included in the lineup of luminaries of South Carolina Jews who not only made names for themselves in their respective fields (for Dale, it'll be at least two), but who also added luster to and made their marks on Jewish history. Think Isaac Harby, Penina Moise, Solomon Nunes Carvalho, and Thomas Jefferson Tobias. Rabbis Barnett Elzas and Jacob Raisin will welcome Dale, another Ashkenazi, into the circle of Sephardim.

But she won't just be judged by the company she keeps; she'll be remembered for being among the ones who helped pin those names into the annals of southern and American Jewish history. Yes, they were there before Dale launched the Jewish Heritage Collection, but through her collecting, consciousness-raising, and kibbitzing, she helped assure their elevation into the academy and, literally, into textbooks of American Jewish history.

After Dale joined forces with McKissick Museum and the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina to mount the landmark exhibit *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, no one dreamed the project would evolve into more than two decades of presentations, websites, books, and seminars, all documenting the life of Jewish southerners and southern Jews. (How do you identify yourself, is a classic Dale question in her interviews.) What started with "a call for candlesticks" morphed into a cascade of photographs, letters, ledgers, legends, and oral histories. Deliberately and devotedly, passionately and patiently, she listened with care, knowing each story rescued was important. Whether ordinary or extraordinary, the narratives add up to something Talmudic. She who saves a single life saves a world, it is said. Dale has saved a solar system of a particular people and a particular way of life.

But "a curator's rule of thumb is, the fewer words the better," she has said. So, to borrow a metaphor from the other field Dale has mastered—the history and heritage of coiled grass baskets of the Lowcountry—she has woven us into her heart and her being, becoming one of us in so doing. Dale, the future is yours, but for saving our past, we, the portion of a people you helped gather, will always be grateful to you.

Top: Dale Rosengarten (r) and Mindelle Seltzer interview Raymond Stern in his store in Andrews, SC, 1995. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries. Middle: Dale (left, front) on the steps of K. K. Beth Elohim, Hasell Street, Charleston, SC, with College of Charleston students taking her course Charleston's Ethnic Neighborhoods, 2007. Courtesy of Dale Rosengarten. Bottom: Dale (r) and Harlan Greene attended the dedication of the Little Jerusalem/Lincoln Theatre historic marker, 595 King Street, Charleston, SC, 2021. Courtesy of Brittany Lavelle Tulla.



Help Us Secure the Future of Your Past

by Rachel Gordin Barnett, JHSSC Executive Director

Letters give us an inside view of families and relationships and provide evidence of lives lived in a particular place and time. When the place is Europe, the time is 1933 to 1945, and the writer is Jewish, the letters become urgent: desperate pleas for help getting visas, poignant instructions from parents sending children away—the stories are heart wrenching.

JHSSC's spring meeting, "Paper Bridges": Letters of Hope and Despair, 1933–1945, will showcase correspondence from the Jewish Heritage Collection's Holocaust Archives. Working with Ashley Walters of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture (CSJC) and Chad S. A. Gibbs, director of the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies, we have planned a weekend program that focuses on the lives of Jewish letter writers during the Holocaust.

The spring meeting is a great example of how our organizations work together: JHSSC designs public programming, the Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) provides research and archival resources, and CSJC creates the curricular component of our collaborative endeavors.

In 2022, JHSSC and JHC embarked on a joint campaign—The Future of the Past—to establish a sustainable financial framework so that the two organizations can pursue their mission for years to come. With support from South Carolina's Jewish community, the College of Charleston, and individual and institutional donors, we have built an internationally recognized archive and a historical society that "punches above its weight."

But the work never ends. There are more manuscript collections to process, oral histories to record, and public programs to produce. I thank those who have contributed to the campaign and encourage others to consider a gift.

Marty Perlmutter used the following analogy to describe our enterprise: if you visualize a three-legged stool, the legs are JHSSC, JHC, and CSJC. A three-legged stool stands only if all three legs are secure. With the Pearlstine/Lipov Center fully endowed, our goal now is to safeguard the future of South Carolina's Jewish history and heritage. Please join us in Charleston in April for a most compelling meeting.

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Annual Dues (July 1, 2023–June 30, 2024)

_____ Individual/Family/Gift	\$54
_____ Friend	\$200
_____ Patron	\$500
_____ Benefactor	\$1000
_____ Pillar (\$1,000 per year for 5 years)	\$5,000

Enroll your friends and relatives for an additional \$54 each.
Send us their information and we will inform them of your gift.

Make checks payable to JHSSC and mail to address above.

Register now for the **April 29–30 meeting at jhssc.org/events/upcoming.**
See page 11 of this publication for program information.