

THE
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OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

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

On the cover: *The Salvador Family Grant of Arms* received in 1745 from the English College of Heralds by Francis Salvador, grandfather of the Francis featured in this issue. Rabbi Barnett Elzas, who transcribed the text, reported the document was damaged while on display at the 1901-1902 South Carolina Inter-State and West Indian Exposition. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

In this issue

Francis Salvador, A Historic Short-Lived Presence in South Carolina's Colonial Backcountry ~ Edward E. Poliakoff ~ A young Jewish Englishman turned full-fledged American patriot made the ultimate sacrifice in the Cherokee War of 1776, an early Revolutionary War conflict. Less than three years after arriving in South Carolina, Francis Salvador had made his mark among his peers and appeared poised to take the fight for liberty all the way to victory over the British crown. 4

Jewish South Carolinians and the American Revolution ~ JHSSC meets in Clemson, SC ~ May 3-4, 2025 11

Charleston Jews in the Revolutionary War and "America's First Great Oral History Project" ~ Rebecca Woodruff ~ Researching Revolutionary War veteran pension applications might sound uninspiring, but the testimonies the government required offer colorful details and insights into the experiences of these men and their families. David Nunez Cardozo, Marks Lazarus, and Gershom Cohen are three such examples who represent just a fraction of the individuals whose records are available to the public online at our National Archives. 12

Home, Hearth, and the Pursuit of Outside Income: Jewish Women in Business in Charleston, South Carolina, During the Revolutionary and New Republic Eras ~ Lisa Strauss ~ There were a number of reasons for South Carolina to provide a lawful avenue to commerce for women who lost their individual legal rights when they married, and many couples in the late 1700s and early 1800s took advantage of the opportunity. Reading between the lines of the few existing records suggests women played a vital and active role in Charleston's economy. 15

Model Patriot: Francis Salvador and 20th-Century American Jewish Citizenship ~ Rebecca Shimoni Stoil ~ Francis Salvador, the Jewish patriot who served in South Carolina's Provincial Congresses and First General Assembly, and who died at the hands of a Cherokee native while riding with an Upcountry militia, has proven to be an exemplar for Jewish Americans. His story has been a reliable model for and proof of good citizenship, despite scant details about his life and none regarding his personal practice of Judaism. 18

Kugels & Collards . . . On the Road ~ Rachel Barnett ~ The book of "Stories, Food, Family, and Tradition" has propelled Jewish South Carolina into the limelight. Through speaking engagements in a number of states co-authors Lyssa Kligman Harvey and Rachel Gordin Barnett share not only the way food connects, but how South Carolina's Jewish residents, galvanized by the vision of the JHSSC's founders, have preserved and documented their history. 22

New Book Release ~ At Home with the Holocaust: Postmemory, Domestic Space, and Second-Generation Holocaust Narratives by Lucas F. W. Wilson 22



South Carolina is commemorating the
250th anniversary of the
American Revolution.

For details, go to southcarolina250.com.

Letter from the President



Alexander Cohen and Executive Director Rachel Barnett for filling in for me during my unexpected absence. I regret having to miss the meeting (one of my great disappointments), but am gratified to hear it was well attended. The illustrious Gary Zola spoke from the bimah of the historic and beautifully restored sanctuary, reminding all, through the words of Jane Lazarus Raisin, we can draw strength from the past when striving to move forward.

KKBE's Sisterhood hosted an oneg Friday evening—good food and a chance to reconnect—a wonderful way to start the weekend. Rabbi Stephanie Alexander, President Naomi Gorstein, Executive Director Mark Swick, Docent and Past President Anita Rosenberg, and members of the congregation provided a warm welcome that Saturday and set the stage for an engrossing and informative program. Following Rabbi Zola was Sam Gruber who described the architectural history of KKBE's buildings, and Laura Yares, who discussed with Anita Rosenberg the vital role women played in the education of Jewish children.

Sunday, the JHSSC was treated to a presentation by Max Daniel in Special Collections at the College of Charleston that included the opportunity to look through artifacts from the Jewish Heritage Collection. The weekend was capped by a tour of KKBE's Coming Street Cemetery, provided by Sharon Alexander and Cynthia Stetzer. We are grateful for the expertise of the weekend's presenters and guides, who were so generous with their time.

In 2024, Charleston's Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, birthplace of Reform Judaism, observed the 275th anniversary of the synagogue's founding, and the JHSSC was honored to collaborate with KKBE to mark the occasion at our fall 2024 meeting. Special thanks to Immediate Past President

Our 2025 spring conference will also delve deep into the past as we focus on Jewish South Carolinians and the American Revolution. Next year, South Carolina commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Revolution, steered by the state's SC 250 Anniversary American Revolution Commission. Our meeting will help us gear up for the statewide and national observances. We are going to meet at Clemson University's Madren Center where we'll start Saturday morning by taking a short walk, led by Professor Joshua Catalano, to the on-campus site of the Battle of Essenece and Fort Rutledge. In the afternoon, JHSSC Past President Ed Poliakoff will share his fascinating research on Francis Salvador, the first Jewish man elected to a legislative body in North America and the first Jewish person to die in the

fight for independence. You will not want to miss his talk.

Ed's presentation will be flanked by two other interpretations of Francis Salvador: a SCETV short film about the patriot, and Professor Rebecca Stoil's analysis of Salvador as a historical figure. Sunday will feature a discussion with George McDaniel and Anita Rosenberg on other Jewish patriots from South Carolina. See page 11 in this issue for program details.

I want to thank Rebecca Woodruff of

Historic Columbia for her continuing work on the Merchant Project. This work is funded through a grant provided by the Yaschik Foundation. We are always seeking more narrative information from folks about their family stores. For more information, contact Rachel Barnett at jhssc2020@gmail.com. It is only because of your stories and your input that our history has been and will continue to be documented.

If you are not getting our monthly e-newsletter, please sign up at jhssc.org at the bottom right of the home page. There is so much happening, and with the newsletter, you'll be in the know!

Looking forward to seeing you at Clemson in May.

Steve Savitz



Dr. Gary Zola, "Remembering the Days of Yore," on the occasion of the 275th anniversary of K.K. Beth Elohim, Charleston, SC, September 14, 2024. Photo: Laura Moses.

Francis Salvador, A Historic Short-Lived Presence in South Carolina's Colonial Backcountry

by Edward E. Poliakoff

Markers¹ and monographs tell of Francis Salvador (1747–1776), the first Jewish member of a legislative assembly in America and, at age 29, the first Jewish person known to have died for the cause of American independence.²

As an 1897 history observed, “it is due to Mr. Salvador, whose name appears in every history of the State, that something should be said of him more than the mere casual mention of his name” in that “[h]e was killed in the second battle of the war with the Cherokees in 1776, and his death was much lamented. He was highly accomplished, honorable, and generous. He was a native of England, but of Hebrew parents and a Hebrew in religion. . . . He became a

member of the General Assembly and was warmly attached to the cause of independence.”³

In that spirit of saying more about Francis Salvador as the 250th year of American Independence approaches, this paper reviews his legislative and militia service and death by ambush, all in the patriot cause during his less than three years in South Carolina, as well as his and his uncle and father-in-law Joseph Salvador's landholdings and the name by which those lands were known for years after.

Francis Salvador was the fourth-generation scion of a prominent London-based Sephardic Jewish merchant-banker family whose ancestors had escaped to Holland from the Portuguese Inquisition and settled in England in the late 1600s.⁴ His 1767 marriage to Sarah Salvador, his first cousin and daughter of Joseph Salvador, prominent London-based merchant, financial adviser to the British government, and a leader of the British Jewish community, is documented in the records of London's historic Bevis Marks Synagogue.⁵ Other personal information is sparse, excepting the unsourced material in John Drayton's *Memoirs of the American Revolution*, quoted later in this paper.⁶

He arrived in Charleston in late 1773 at age 26.⁷ The

1. South Carolina historical markers 24-11, “Francis Salvador 1747–1776 (Greenwood County), Erected by the Jewish Citizens of Greenwood, 1960,” and 39-13, “The Battle of Seneca Town/Fort Rutledge (Pickens County), erected by the City of Clemson and Clemson University, 2007,” in Edwin Breedon, *A Guidebook to South Carolina Historical Markers* (University of South Carolina Press, 2021). For the plaque in Washington Square, Charleston, SC, honoring Francis Salvador, see Solomon Breitbart, *Explorations in Charleston's Jewish History* (The History Press, 2005), 106.

2. Nathan Dorn, “Francis Salvador, the First Jewish Member of a Legislative Assembly in American History,” Library of Congress Blogs, May 5, 2020, accessed 08/19/2023, <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2020/05/francis-salvador-the-first-jewish-member-of-a-legislative-assembly-in-american-history/>.

3. John Abney Chapman, *History of Edgefield County from the earliest settlements to 1897* (Newberry, SC: E. H. Aull, 1897), 150.

4. Maurice Woolf, “Joseph Salvador 1716–1786,” *Transactions* (Jewish Historical Society of England) 21, (1962–1967): 104.

5. Bevis Marks Records: Abstracts of the Ketubot or Marriage Contracts of the Congregation from Earliest Times Until 1837, part 2 (Oxford: University Press, 1949), 99.

6. John Drayton, *Memoirs of the American Revolution: from its commencement to the year 1776, inclusive, as relating to the state of South-Carolina, and occasionally refering [sic] to the states of North-Carolina and Georgia*, 2 vols. (Charleston, SC: printed by A. E. Miller, 1821).

7. James Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History* (London: Trübner & Co., 1875), 163. Picciotto asserts without sourcing that “[i]n due course letters came, advising his safe arrival to the new continent, and announcing his intention of seeking his property. He never wrote again. A long silence ensued, and then it was reported that the unhappy Salvador had been murdered and scalped by Indians!”

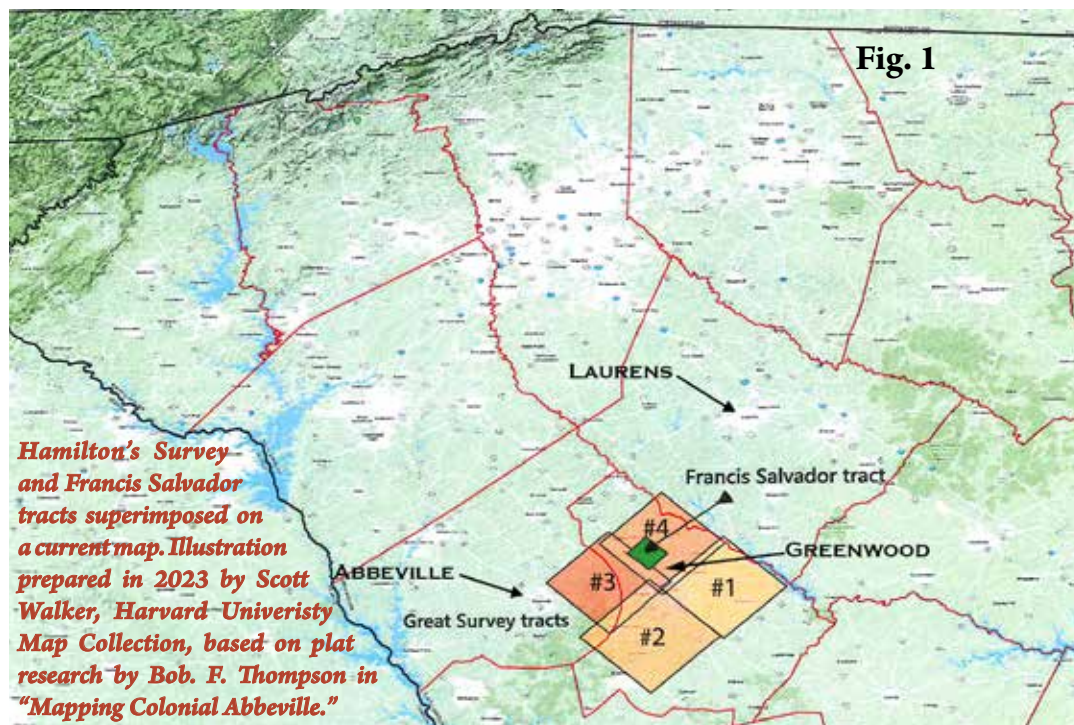


Fig. 1

Hamilton's Survey and Francis Salvador tracts superimposed on a current map. Illustration prepared in 2023 by Scott Walker, Harvard University Map Collection, based on plat research by Bob F. Thompson in "Mapping Colonial Abbeville."

December 6, 1773, South Carolina Gazette reported that “[m]ore than one hundred passengers are come, in the vessels that have arrived since our last, from London, Falmouth, Leith, and Borrowstowness . . .” and listed a number of passengers, including Francis Salvador. As historian Eli Evans noted, “[f]rom the very beginning in the seventeenth century, Jews were welcomed in the British colony of Carolina as traders and merchants with connections spanning the Atlantic, and as cultured contributors with Old World tastes.” And as late as 1820, Charleston had the largest Jewish community in America.⁸

Francis Salvador settled in Ninety Six District, the province's northwest frontier, where Joseph Salvador had owned 100,000 acres since 1755. Joseph Salvador's 100,000 acres comprised the northwest (tract #3) and northeast (tract #4) quadrants, each approximately 50,000 acres⁹ of the approximately 200,000-acre Hamilton's Survey tract, surveyed in 1751 by South Carolina General Surveyor George Hunter (fig. 1).¹⁰

Joseph Salvador valued his property in a 1773 letter to Robert Clive, one of the founders of the British Empire in India, from whom he was seeking a loan: “Among other property I have I am possessed of two considerable tracts of land now cultivating in South Carolina of fifty thousand acres each. I am assured that the value of each passes £10,000, much (of) this knowledge I have from gentlemen of the country.”¹¹

A “To be SOLD” notice placed in 1775 by Joseph Salvador's

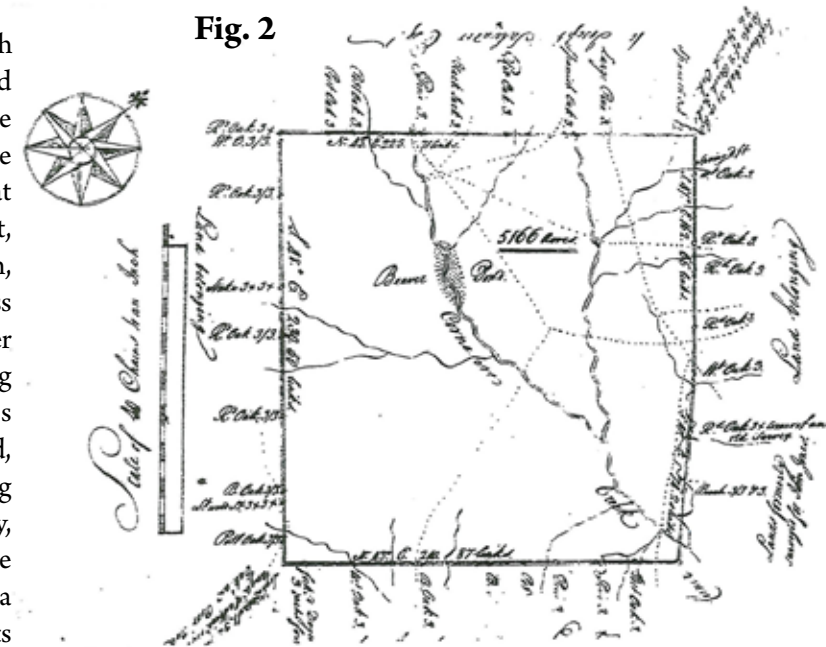
8. Eli Evans, preface, in *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life*, eds. Theodore Rosengarten and Dale Rosengarten (University of South Carolina Press in association with McKissick Museum, 2002).

9. Bob F. Thompson, “Mapping Colonial Abbeville,” accessed 07/12/2023, https://www.bfthompson.com/abbeville_colonial_plats/AbbePlats_home.htm. Woolf, “Joseph Salvador,” 104. See also *Duncan v. Beard*, 11 S.C.L. 400 (2 Nott & McC.400), Constitutional Court of Appeals of South Carolina, (1820).

10. “Ninety Six National Historic Site, South Carolina,” National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, last updated April 22, 2021; accessed August 19, 2023, <https://home.nps.gov/nisi/learn/historyculture/hamilton-s-survey.htm>.

11. “Joseph Salvador letter to Robert Clive,” 3 July 1773, Mss. Eur G37/67/2f.1, India Office Records and Private Papers, British Library.

Fig. 2



Cornacre plat representing the land transferred from Joseph Salvador to his nephew Francis Salvador, 1774. Image available at the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Series S372001, Vol. 0400, p. 000012.

attorney, Richard Rapley, advertised “[a]bout twenty thousand Acres of that very valuable and well-known Land, called Hamilton's Great Survey, situate near Ninety-Six, and now belonging to Joseph Salvador, Esq. . . . The Land is so well known to be some of the very best high Land in the Province, and fit for any Thing but Rice.”¹²

By documents dated May 16 and 17, 1774, “[b]etween Joseph Salvador of London in the Kingdom of Great Britain Esq of the one Part and Francis Salvador late of Twickenham in

the County of Middlesex but now of the Province [of South Carolina] aforesaid, Esq of the other Part,” Joseph Salvador sold 921 acres to Francis, which the deed described as “above Ninety Six” and “part of 100,000 acres granted in two tracts of 50,000 acres.”¹³ And by mortgage document dated May 31, 1774, Joseph Salvador transferred 5,166 acres to Francis, also described as part of Joseph's 100,000 acres.¹⁴ The 5,166-acre tract, bisected by “Cornacres” Creek, as illustrated on the plat (fig. 2), became Francis Salvador's Cornacre plantation. Coronaca Creek, also known as Cornacre or Coronaca Creek,¹⁵ apparently was considered an important

12. *South Carolina Gazette and Country Journal*, June 20, 1775.

13. “Rapley, Richard Andrews, Atty. To Frances Salvadore [sic], Lease And Release, 1774,” *Conveyance Books (Public Register)*, 1719–1776, South Carolina Department of Archives and History (SCDAH), microfilm, S372001, vol.: 04M0, p. 00286.

14. “Rapley, Richard Andrews, Atty. To Francis Salvadore [sic], Lease, Mortgage and Plat, 1774–1775,” *Conveyance Books (Public Register)*, 1719–1776, SCDAH, microfilm, S372001, vol.: 0400, p. 00012.

15. An article, “County Place Names,” *Greenwood Index-Journal*, July 7, 1935, said “[t]here is no perfectly satisfactory explanation of this name,” citing various spellings of an Indian name, and noted “[i]t is spelled ‘Corn-acre’ as the name of the home of the gallant Jewish patriot, Francis Salvador, who lived not far from the headwaters of the creek.” On the other hand, Louis DeVorse, Jr., author of “Names From Cherokee Boundary Lines,” in *Names in South Carolina*, Published by the Department of English, University of South Carolina, XVIII, (Winter 1971): 14, said “[t]he [creek's] name is probably derived from the phrase ‘Corn Acres’ which was used to call attention to the level bottom land which flanks Coronaca Creek from its juncture with Wilson Creek upstream to the U.S. Route 221 highway Crossing.” Salvador's Cornacre tract was, however, located a few miles upstream from present-day Highway 221.

stream, indicated by its prominent treatment by some period mapmakers (fig. 3).

Francis Salvador exploited enslaved African American laborers at Cornacre, evidenced by notices he placed in a Charleston newspaper seeking “AN INDIGO OVERSEER to live near Ninety-Six to look after about thirty Slaves.”¹⁶

From the early 19th century, well after the properties had changed hands, and continuing into the 20th century, the 100,000-acre area in today’s Abbeville and Greenwood counties once owned by Joseph Salvador was frequently referred to in newspapers, court cases, and real estate advertisements as “The Jew’s Land.” Sometimes the usage was “Jews’ Land” or “Jews Land” or “Salvador Purchase.” For example, an 1821 court decision involving contested land titles referred to “the celebrated cases of the Jews land, in Abbeville district.” The court noted that the contested property had “great value” and was “equal in value to a Royal Domain.”¹⁷

An article in the November 13, 1878, *Abbeville Press and Banner* summarized remarks by Gen. Samuel McGowan, a local attorney and retired military officer, and later an Associate Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Gen. McGowan reportedly said the area known as “the Jews’ land” was an interesting fact in the history of Abbeville, and after the original Crown land grants, the lands “fell into the hands of one Salvador, who was a Jew.” He also noted that years later there

16. *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, August 29, 1774, September 9, 1774, and September 16, 1774.

17. *Duncan v. Breithaupt, et al.*, Constitutional Court of Appeals of South Carolina, 1 McCord 149, May Term, 1821.

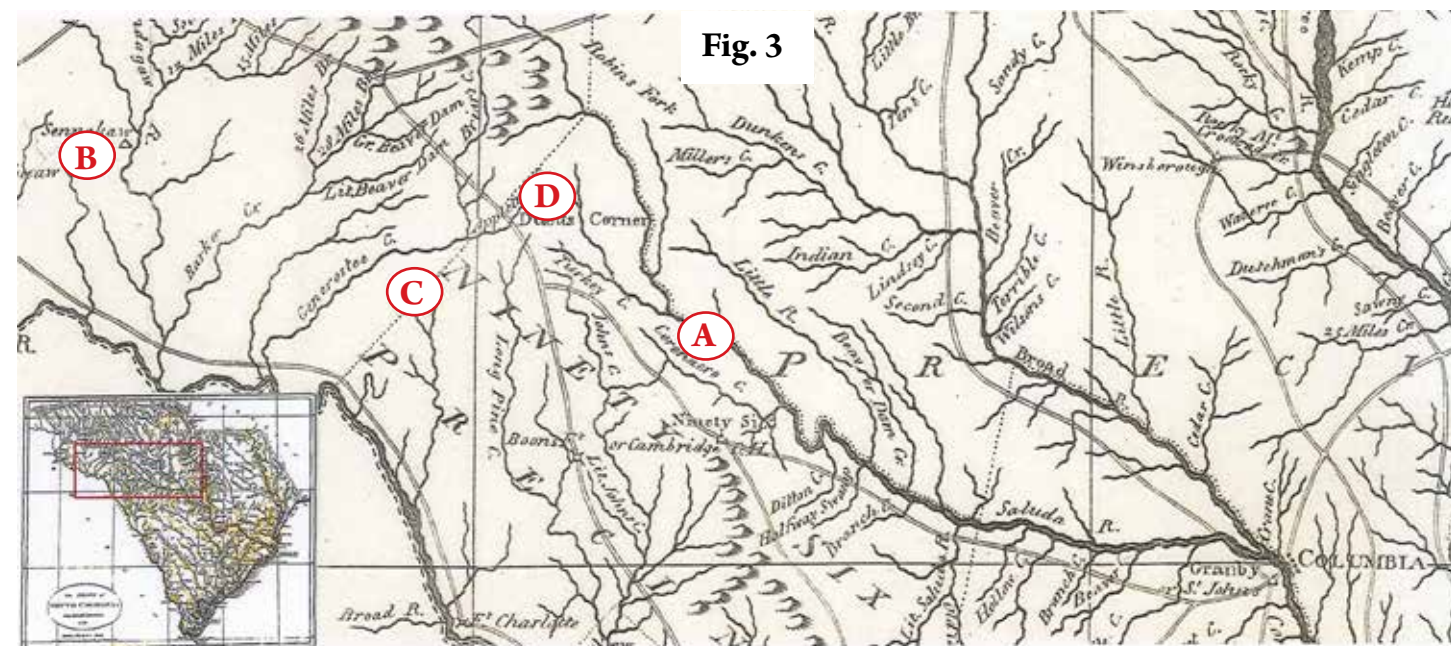


Fig. 3

“Coronacro” (Coronaca) Creek (A), bisecting Salvador’s property, runs just west of the Saluda River; “Sennekaw” (Seneca) (B), approximate location where Salvador was ambushed; the dotted line (C) is the 1766–77 boundary of Cherokee lands; “Duett’s” (DeWitt’s) Corner (D) is where the Treaty of DeWitt’s Corner was signed in 1777, ending the Second Cherokee War. Detail from “The State of South Carolina: from the best Authorities,” 1796, published by John Reid, New York. Poliakoff Map Collection, Abbeville County Library.

were court cases against “squatters” that afforded opportunity for attorneys like himself and John C. Calhoun to distinguish themselves. Calhoun had practiced law in Abbeville in the early 1800s. Some accounts conflated Francis Salvador with Joseph Salvador regarding ownership of the 100,000-acre tract.¹⁸

The March 29, 1876, *Abbeville Press and Banner* obituary of a prominent Hodges, South Carolina, resident noted that Hodges was in an area “for a great many years known as ‘The Jew’s Land,’” as the land was once owned “by Salvador, the Jew,” without identifying which Salvador. The article said “[a]t that time the lands of the county were covered with original forest growth, and game of all sorts could be readily caught anywhere, while the streams furnished an abundance of fish, which enabled those disposed to hunt to make an easy living.” An October 13, 1940, article in the *Greenwood Index Journal* titled “Our Old Roads” noted that “the Salvador Purchase, as it was sometimes called . . . included almost all of the area from Saluda River to a few miles east of the present town of Abbeville.” The article said “[a]ll of this section was long known as ‘The Jew’s Land’ because it was included in a vast area owned by Joseph Salvador, a very wealthy Jew of London.”

On December 19, 1774, barely a year after he arrived in South Carolina, Francis Salvador was elected a delegate from Ninety Six District to the First South Carolina Provincial Congress (1775), becoming the first Jewish member of a legislative assembly in American history.¹⁹ The election took

18. John Belton O’Neill, *Biographical Sketches of the Bench and Bar of South Carolina* (Charleston, SC: S. G. Courtenay & Co., 1859), 223.

19. Dorn, “Francis Salvador.”

place at Andrew Williamson’s plantation, White Hall.²⁰ Other elected delegates included Williamson, Patrick Calhoun, John Lewis Gervais, Richard Rapley and Edward Rutledge.²¹

Salvador was later elected to the Second Provincial Congress (1775–1776) and First South Carolina General Assembly (1776). He earned the respect of backcountry patriot neighbors and the Charleston patriot establishment alike, and was an active member of those legislative bodies. For example, on March 21, 1776, he was appointed vote teller for the “Nays” on a motion to increase the salary of the province’s president, and on March 26, 1776, he co-chaired with Charles Cotesworth Pinckney the committee to proofread the final text of the 1776 South Carolina Constitution, the document that established the First South Carolina General Assembly.²²

In the weeks destined to be his last, Salvador was active in the Ninety Six District militia from the start of the Cherokee War of 1776, a turbulent prelude to the Revolutionary War when British-allied Cherokees and loyalists clashed with backcountry supporters of independence.²³ John Drayton’s *Memoirs* describes a July 1, 1776, episode when a militia counterpart “arrived at the residence of Mr. Francis Salvador on Cornacre Creek, in Ninety Six District, with two of his fingers shot away. He informed, that his father’s house, at Little River, had been attacked by the Savages; . . . Mr. Salvador forthwith mounted his horse, and galloped to Major Andrew Williamson’s residence, twenty-eight miles from thence; . . . to alarm that part of the settlement.”²⁴

Salvador’s July 18, 1776, letter to South Carolina Chief

20. George C. Rogers, Jr., “The South Carolina Backcountry on the Eve of the Revolution,” *Richmond County History*, 6 (Summer 1974): 41.

21. J. D. Lewis, “Members of the 1st Provincial Congress,” *The American Revolution in South Carolina*, 2008, accessed August 12, 2023, https://www.carolana.com/SC/Revolution/sc_revolution_1st_provincial_congress_members.html.

22. “Extracts from the journals of the Provincial Congress of South Carolina. Held at Charles-Town, February 1st, 1776. : Published by order of the Congress,” (South-Carolina: Charles-Town.: Printed by Peter Timothy, M,DCC,LXXVI. [1776]), in the digital collection *Evans Early American Imprint Collection*, University of Michigan Library Digital Collections, accessed 12/19/2023, <http://name.umd.umich.edu/N11953.0001.001>.

23. Alexander Moore, “Cherokee War (1776),” *South Carolina Encyclopedia*, last updated July 20, 2022; accessed August 20, 2023, <https://www.sccyclopedia.org/sc/entries/cherokee-war-1776/>.

24. Drayton, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 339–340.

Justice William Henry Drayton described chaos in Ninety Six District after the July 1 attacks. “You would have been surprized to have seen the change in this country, two days after you left me” wrote Salvador, referring to Drayton’s June



A notice of court-ordered land sales in the November 9, 1860, *Abbeville Press* identified a 200-acre property as “The Jews Land Tract.”

28, 1776, visit at Salvador’s Cornacre plantation. Salvador’s letter complained of difficulties Major Williamson had in raising enough men, writing that “all the men in the country were loath to turn out, till they had procured some kind of fancied security for their families.” He called his side “friends of liberty.”

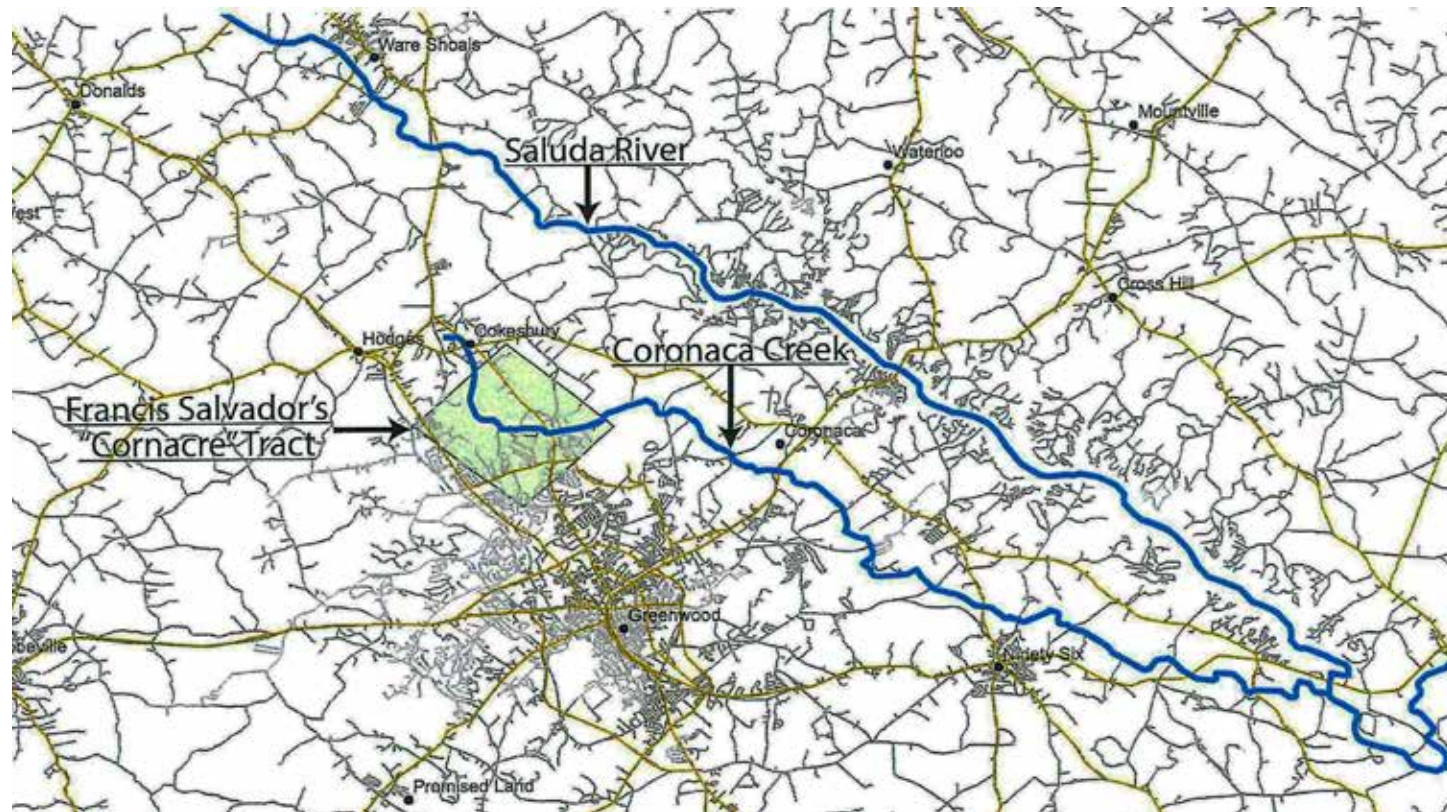
Loyalist fighters were “Scopholites.” Salvador’s letter to Chief Justice Drayton closed as follows: “I hope, you will pardon the freedom, with which I express my sentiments; but, I look upon it as an advantage to men in power, to be truly informed of the people’s situation and disposition. This, must plead my excuse; and believe me to be with great respect, Dear Sir, Your most obedient humble servant, Francis Salvador.”²⁵

Francis Salvador’s life was cut short at age 29 on August 1, 1776, when Major (soon to be Colonel) Andrew Williamson’s 330-man militia raiding party was ambushed by Cherokees and loyalists at Seneca Town (sometimes referenced as “Sennekaw” or “Esseneca”), a Cherokee Lower Town on the Keowee/Seneca River between present-day Seneca and Clemson, South Carolina, an area now inundated by Lake Hartwell.²⁶

The early official account of Salvador’s death is in Col. Andrew Williamson’s August 4, 1776, letter from “Camp, two miles below Keowee” to John Rutledge, President of South Carolina under the Constitution of 1776: “Here, Mr. Salvador received three wounds; and fell by my side: my horse was shot down under me, but I received no hurt. Lieutenant Farar of Captain Prince’s company, immediately supplied me with his. I desired him, to take care of Mr. Salvador; but before he could find him in the dark, the enemy unfortunately got his

25. Drayton, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 363–365.

26. South Carolina historical marker number 39-13 in Breeden’s *Guidebook*. In September 1776, Col. Williamson built a log fort at Esseneca, near the site of the August ambush, and named it Fort Rutledge, in honor of John Rutledge, president of South Carolina. Starting in 1830, a mansion on the nearby plantation that was later the campus of Clemson University was called Fort Hill by its owners, the family of US Vice President John C. Calhoun, due to its proximity to the site of Fort Rutledge. See “Fort Hill: National Historic Landmark,” Clemson University, accessed December 13, 2023, <https://www.clemson.edu/about/history/properties/fort-hill/>.



Francis Salvador's Cornacre plantation tract superimposed on a current map of present-day Abbeville-Greenwood-Ninety Six region, with Coronaca Creek and Saluda River highlighted. Illustration by Scott Walker, Harvard University Map Collection, August 16, 2023, based on plat research by Bob F. Thomson, in "Mapping Colonial Abbeville." Images on pages 4–8 are courtesy of the author.

scalp: which, was the only one taken. Captain Smith . . . saw the Indian; but thought it was his servant, taking care of his master, or, could have prevented it. He died, about half after two o'clock in the morning; forty-five minutes after he received the wounds, sensible to the last. When I came up to him, after dislodging the enemy, and speaking to him, he asked, whether I had beat the enemy? I told him yes. He said he was glad of it and shook me by the hand—and bade me farewell—and said, he would die in a few minutes."²⁷

News of the ambush spread. The August 14, 1776, issue of the *South Carolina & American General Gazette* carried an account of the battle on the same page on which the Declaration of Independence was first published in Charleston. The *Gazette* account is based on Col. Williamson's report to President Rutledge, but contains additional information, including that after the battle Williamson "left a Party to bury the Dead." And the *Gazette* article also adds that "[t]he whole Army regretted [Salvador's] loss, as he was universally beloved and esteemed by them." The *Gazette* article was reprinted in *Dunlap's Pennsylvania Packet*, the *General Advertiser* (Philadelphia, PA), September 17, 1776; the *Pennsylvania Gazette* (Philadelphia, PA), September 18, 1776; the *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg,

27. Drayton, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 369–371.

VA), September 27, 1776; and the London (England) *Remembrancer for the year 1776*.

The Chester, England, *Chronicle*, October 2, 1776, and the Ipswich, England, *Journal*, October 26, 1776, contain identical brief accounts stating "that there has been a warm skirmish in their back settlements, by a party of Seneca and other Indians . . . in which Col. Williamson, the Provincial commandant, had met with a repulse, being way-laid by the Indians, wherein ten of his men were desperately wounded, a Mr. Salvador scalped and killed . . ." and that afterwards Williamson's party had buried their dead.

Henry Laurens, who served with Salvador in the South Carolina Provincial Congresses and First General Assembly, provided a brief description of the battle in a lengthy August 14, 1776, letter to his son John Laurens, writing that "Mr. Salvador a Gentleman whose Death is universally regretted was killed by his [Williamson's] Side."²⁸

John Drayton's *Memoirs*, published in 1821, are based on letters and other documents compiled by his father, William Henry Drayton (1742–1749).²⁹ The senior Drayton was, like Henry Laurens, a prominent patriot leader and American

28. Henry Laurens, *The Papers of Henry Laurens*, eds. David R. Chestnutt and C. James Taylor, vol. 11 [Jan. 5, 1776–Nov. 1, 1777], (University of South Carolina Press, 1988), 230.

29. John Drayton, preface, in *Memoirs*, vol. 1, vii–ix.

Founding Father. He had interacted and corresponded extensively with Salvador, having served with him in the Provincial Congresses and First General Assembly and visited him at Cornacre plantation³⁰ a few weeks before the ambush. *Memoirs* provides the following unsourced personal information about Salvador, some of which the elder Drayton may have obtained directly from Salvador. "The fate of this gentleman excited universal regret. He was the grandson of Francis Salvador, and the son of Jacob Salvador of England; who died when his son Francis, was about two years old. Shortly after his father's death, his mother gave birth to his brother Moses; . . . Both of these young gentlemen, were liberally educated by a private tutor, and the best master; and were taught those accomplishments, suitable to their wealth and rank in life. Upon coming of age, each of them inherited £60,000 sterling; and Francis on his return from France, married his first cousin, Sarah Salvador, second daughter of Joseph Salvador, his uncle; receiving with her a portion, of £13,000 sterling. Mr. Francis Salvador, after this marriage resided at Twickenham, near his mother and step-father Abraham Prado: but, having impaired his fortune by some unfortunate speculations, he came to South-Carolina about the end of 1773; intending to settle here, and have his wife, his son, and three daughters from England with him: but, his unfortunate death, prevented their removal. Although of the Jewish nation, his son John Lovel Salvador adopted the Christian Religion; and was a clergyman of the Episcopal persuasion, in England. About the year 1774, Mr. Francis Salvador purchased lands and Negroes in South-Carolina: and not wishing to live alone, he resided with his intimate friend, Richard A. Rapley, at Coroneka, commonly called Cornacre, in Ninety-Six District. His manners were those of a polished gentlemen; and as such, he was intimately known and esteemed by the first revolutionary characters in South-Carolina. He also possessed their confidence in a great degree; as his literary correspondences with them, sufficiently proves: and at the time of his death, both he and his friend Mr. Rapley, were of the ten representatives for Ninety-Six District, in the General Assembly of South-Carolina. When the irruption of the Savages brought down distress upon his neighbours; and one of their children sought refuge at his dwelling from the bloody tomahawk; his warm heart directed him to their relief. Against the savage foe, he volunteered his services; and at the side of his friend Major Williamson he received those wounds—which sacrificed his life, in the service of his adopted country."³¹

30. R. W. Gibbes, M.D., *Documentary History of the American Revolution, 1776–1782*, vol. 2 (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1857), 24.

31. Drayton, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 345–350.

Epilogue

Thus ended, days after the Declaration of Independence, the brief but evocative life of Francis Salvador. In a July 24, 1776, letter to Salvador from Charles Town, William Henry Drayton had discussed various aspects of the Cherokee War and included the following: "No news yet from Philadelphia; every ear is turned that way, anxiously listening for the word, independence. I say, God speed the passage of it. Amen say you."³² Just as Drayton in Charles Town was unaware on July 24th that the Declaration of Independence had already been issued, Salvador, on the frontier, was no doubt unaware of it a week later when he died.

There is no available record of where Salvador was buried (though the references to Col. Williamson leaving a party to bury the dead after the August 1 ambush suggest he was buried at or near the battle site)³³ and no record of his having a last will and testament.³⁴ Likewise, there is little information about disposition of his assets, although an advertisement in the January 16, 1777, *South Carolina and American General Gazette* said "[a] very valuable collection of Books, consisting of the well-chosen Library of Francis Salvador, Esq; deceased, and the Libraries of some other Gentlemen" would be sold at auction "at Mr. Valk's Room in Church-Street". The Cherokee War of 1776 that had cost Salvador his life was formally ended in May 1777 when representatives of South Carolina and Georgia met with 600 Cherokees a few miles from Salvador's Cornacre and agreed to the Treaty of DeWitt's Corner.³⁵

One can only speculate about what else Francis Salvador might have accomplished had he lived a full measure of years. Perhaps he would have become one of the Founding Fathers of the State of South Carolina and the United States of America, and perhaps the only Jewish person among them. Presumably his wife and their children would have joined him in South Carolina.³⁶ And if the experience of his friend,

32. Gibbes, *Documentary History*, 28–30.

33. The use of rum to preserve a corpse was then a well-known practice, according to Carmen Drahl, "A Hero Preserved in Brandy," *Chemical & Engineering News* 86, no. 44 (November 3, 2008): 26. But there is no evidence of its use for Salvador's body, other than an unsourced account in the August 6, 1858, *Abbeville Independent Press*, which said Salvador's "corpse was introduced into a hogshhead of rum, conveyed to Charleston in a wagon, and thence transported to England."

34. A Charleston District judgement roll matter was filed by the "Administrator" of his estate, the title for a legal representative of a person who died without a will. See "Duncan, Patrick, Admor. of Francis Salvador vs Joseph Dacosta, Exor. of Joseph Salvador, September 23, 1799," *Judgment Rolls, 1791–1904*, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, microfilm, L10018, Item 0222A.

35. Breeden, *A Guidebook to South Carolina Historical Markers*, South Carolina historical marker 1-20, "Treaty of DeWitt's Corner (Abbeville County)." See also Drayton, *Memoirs*, vol. 2, 360–362.

36. In June 1780 Sarah and her children were baptized into the Anglican faith. See Woolf, "Joseph Salvador," 112.



The Salvador plaque in Washington Square, Charleston, SC, after the unveiling. Left to right: Homer Pace, Hyman Rephan, Judith Tobias, Page Halsey. This photo by Louis Schwartz appeared in the Charleston Evening Post, November 21, 1950. Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

backcountry neighbor, and provincial congress counterpart Richard Rapley³⁷ is any indication, Francis Salvador likely would have enjoyed prosperity in the South Carolina backcountry.³⁸ Given his prominence during his short time in South Carolina, it is intriguing to imagine what legacy a longer-lived Francis Salvador might have left behind.

But as history unfolded, the marker in Charleston's Washington Square provides an appropriate coda for the life story of Francis Salvador: "Born an aristocrat, he became a democrat; an Englishman, he cast his lot with America; true to his ancient faith, he gave his life for new hopes of human liberty and understanding."³⁹

37. Rapley was born in London in 1741, according to birth records of St. Mary Magdalene Church, Old Fish Street, London, and had acted as attorney-land sales agent for Joseph Salvador.

38. In "The Feather Bed Aristocracy: Abbeville District in the 1790s," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 80, no. 2 (April 1979): 147, Mary Katherine Davis wrote that at the time of his death, Rapley, a bachelor, owned and managed three plantations, had an extensive library, walnut and mahogany furniture, and, citing Abbeville County probate records, an estate valued at over \$25,000. A July 11, 1920, article in the *Greenwood Index-Journal* said Rapley had "aristocratic notions" and lived on the 3,000-acre Belford tract in a house located one-half mile east of Rapley Shoals. Rapley Shoals is a rapid on Long Cane Creek a few miles west of the site of Salvador's Cornacre Plantation.

39. For the plaque in Washington Square, Charleston, honoring Francis Salvador, see Breibart, *Explorations*, 106.

Acknowledgements

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About the Author

Edward E. Poliakoff was born and raised in Abbeville, South Carolina, near Salvador's Cornacre. A retired partner in Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP, he practiced law in Columbia, South Carolina, for 50 years. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Georgetown University Law Center, a past president of the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina, and a collector of antique South Carolina maps.

Jewish South Carolinians and the American Revolution

May 3–4, 2025 ~ Clemson, SC

Saturday's events, except where otherwise stated, will be held at the Madren Center, Clemson University, 230 Madren Center Drive, Clemson, SC

Saturday, May 3

11:00 A.M. Excursion to the site of the **Battle of Essenecca and Fort Rutledge**, led by Joshua Catalano, Assistant Professor and Public History Coordinator, Clemson University (a short walk from the Madren Center; meet at the Center)

12:30 P.M. Registration and lunch

12:55 Opening remarks ~ Steve Savitz, President, JHSSC

1:00 Role and Activities of South Carolina American Revolution Sestercentennial Commission (SC250) ~ William S. (Bill) Davies, Vice Chair, SC250

1:30 South Carolina Hall of Fame: Francis Salvador, video presentation ~ Steven Folks, Producer, SCETV

2:00 Break

2:15 Francis Salvador, A Historic Short-Lived Presence in South Carolina's Backcountry ~ Edward Poliakoff, JHSSC Member and Past President

3:15 Break

3:30–4:30 Francis Salvador Through the Lens of History ~ Rebecca Stoil, Assistant Professor, Clemson University

6:30 Reception and dinner

Sunday, May 4

9:00 A.M. JHSSC Board Meeting and breakfast. All are welcome.

10:00–12:00 P.M. South Carolina's Jewish Patriots ~ George H. McDaniel, Director of Interpretation, Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, and Anita Rosenberg, JHSSC Member and Past President ~ moderated by Max Daniel, Public Historian and Jewish Heritage Collection Coordinator, Special Collections, College of Charleston

Reception sponsored by



Fees (per person):

Saturday & Sunday \$150
Saturday program, lunch, plus reception/dinner \$100
Saturday program & lunch (11:00–4:30) \$50

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Questions:

Alyssa Neely
neelya@cofc.edu
OR
Rachel Barnett, 843.917.1418
jhssc2020@gmail.com

Charleston Jews in the Revolutionary War and “America’s First Great Oral History Project”

by Rebecca Woodruff, Curator of History, Historic Columbia, and
Lead Researcher, Jewish Merchant Project, JHSSC

May 12, 1780, marked America’s biggest defeat in the Revolutionary War as Charleston—one of the largest and wealthiest cities in the colonies—surrendered to the British.¹ In the years leading up to this day, dozens of Jews in South Carolina fought for American independence, including David Nunez Cardozo (1753–1835), Marks Lazarus (1757–1835), and Gershom Cohen (1748–1802).

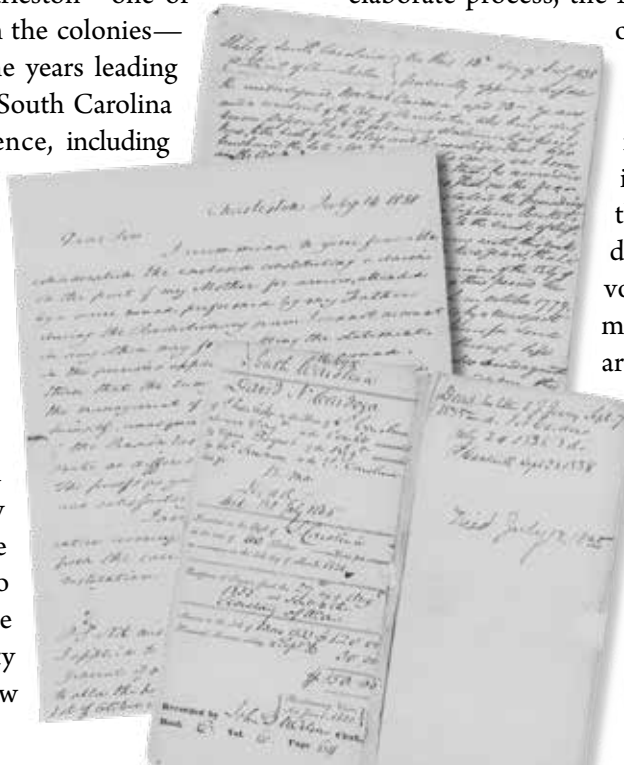
While many men, like Cardozo, sustained lifelong injuries during the war, most veterans in the South enlisted in state militia groups, which were excluded from early pension legislation. Indeed, while Continental Line veterans, who were predominantly from the North, began receiving disability pensions as early as 1776, few South Carolinians received retirement or disability support until 1832, when President James Monroe (1758–1831) passed the third of four Revolutionary War pension acts.²

Described by the National Park Service as “America’s first great oral history project,” the ensuing pension requests include documents and testimonies from the applicants and

their family, friends, and religious leaders.³ As a result of this elaborate process, the National Archives contains millions of documents detailing the lives of America’s first veterans. While scans of the original materials are available for viewing online, the Archives is on a mission to transcribe all of these difficult-to-read hand-written documents (and they are looking for volunteers to help accomplish this monumental task). Among the scans are more than 130 pages of insight on Cardozo, Lazarus, and Cohen, providing a glimpse into three Jewish experiences at the nation’s founding.

Born in New York to Sephardic Jews, David Cardozo moved to Charleston in 1770 and joined the Charleston Grenadiers under Peter Bocquet Jr. (1744–1825) in 1777.⁴ Tasked with throwing lit gunpowder balls, grenadiers were often selected for their height, a characteristic John Cart (1761–1848), a witness in Cardozo’s pension case, acknowledged when describing Cardozo as a “remarkabl[y] tall man.”⁵

Later revered in his obituary as “ripe with honor,” Cardozo was initially stationed in Savannah and volunteered alongside an estimated twenty rebels who seized a British supply ship.⁶



Front to Back: Pension file jacket for David N. Cardozo, letter written by Isaac Cardozo in support of Sarah Cardozo's pension application, and first page of narrative testimony for the application of Sarah Cardozo under the Act of 1836. Reprinted from *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File W. 20830, Images 2, 33, & 7.*

1. Mark Maloy, “Charleston in the Revolutionary War,” American Battlefield Trust, updated April 29, 2024,

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/articles/charleston-revolutionary-war>.

2. Ann Becker, “The Revolutionary War Pension Act of 1818,” *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2019): 99–100; “Revolutionary War Pension Files: Tips and a Guide for the Curious,” National Park Service, updated August 8, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/what-might-you-find-in-the-revolutionary-war-pension-files.htm>.

3. “Revolutionary War Veteran and Widow Pensions,” National Park Service, updated August 8, 2023, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/revolutionary-war-veteran-and-widow-pensions.htm>.

4. “Obituary,” *The Charleston Daily Courier*, July 16, 1835, 2; Pension File W. 20830, David N. Cardozo, Revolutionary War, archives.gov, NAID 54153669, Image 7.

5. Pension File W. 20830, Image 41.

6. “Obituary,” 2; Pension File W. 20830, Image 7.

Testifying under oath, Cardozo later described sailing down the Savannah River in a pilot boat with the ebb tide and anchoring alongside the enemy on Cockspur Island. Upon boarding the British ship, he recalled “part of the volunteers guarded the Mate & Crew whilst the others went to work, and by Noon, placed the Powder Load & Shot safely aboard the Pilot Boat. We then proceeded with the Flood Tide up to Savannah, our Colors flying and Drums beating.”⁷ To the best of his knowledge, the supplies were sent to Salem and used to supply the American army near Boston.

Following this success, Cardozo was promoted to sergeant major and later served in the Siege of Savannah in October 1779. Volunteering to lead the “Forlorn Hope,” or the deadly frontlines, he suffered a musket ball to the left leg. His son Isaac (1793–1855) later noted in his mother’s pension case, that Cardozo “never to the hour of his death entirely recovered from the effects of his wound.”⁸

Despite this, Cardozo went on to fight against the British once more in the Siege of Charleston and was taken prisoner upon its fall. As opposed to many captured soldiers who were released on parole, Patrick Cantwell (1795–1849), a magistrate overseeing Cardozo’s pension case, implied that Cardozo was exiled to a prison ship before adding, “The Jews were particularly obnoxious to the enemy; and none of the Jews were more faithful to the Revolution than D. N. Cardoso [sic].”⁹

Following the war, Cardozo married Sarah Cohen (1766–1853), the granddaughter of Rabbi Moses Cohen (1709–1762)—the first religious leader of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim (KKBE)—in 1784, and then started a family in Charleston.¹⁰

7. Pension File W. 20830, Images 63–64.

8. Pension File W. 20830, Image 35.

9. Pension File W. 20830, Image 25.

10. “Sarah Cardozo,” Jewish Gen, accessed January 25, 2025, jewishgen.org; Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim, “Pocket Guide to Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim and Charleston Jewish History,” accessed January 25, 2025, <https://jhssc.org>.

Cardozo, whose household, according to the 1830 census, included the five people he enslaved, also served as measurer of salt and coal at the Port of Charleston, and, having filed a claim for a Revolutionary War pension, he received \$60 semi-annually, beginning in 1833.¹¹ Upon his death

in 1835, David Nunez Cardozo was buried at KKBE’s Coming Street Cemetery.

Three years before that, Cardozo served as a witness for fellow Jewish war veteran, Marks Lazarus. Much as early pension legislation demonstrates favorable treatment towards soldiers in the North, the pension acts of the early 1800s were built under the false assumption that all applicants were members of a Christian church. Indeed, on the back of Cardozo’s testimony, a district court clerk noted, “In the cases of Mr. Cardozo and the present applicant [Marks Lazarus], it was found difficult to obtain the certificate of a Clergyman as required—they are both Hebrews.”¹²

Five years later, when both Lazarus and Cardozo’s widows applied for their husbands’ remaining pensions under the Revolutionary War Pension Act of 1836, the trustees of the Hebrew Congregation graciously underscored the frivolity of this difference, writing that their “church” records were destroyed in a fire in 1790, but that they collectively believed Sarah Cardozo and Rachel DeTorres Benjamin Lazarus (1762–1847) were “deserving of faith and confidence.”¹³

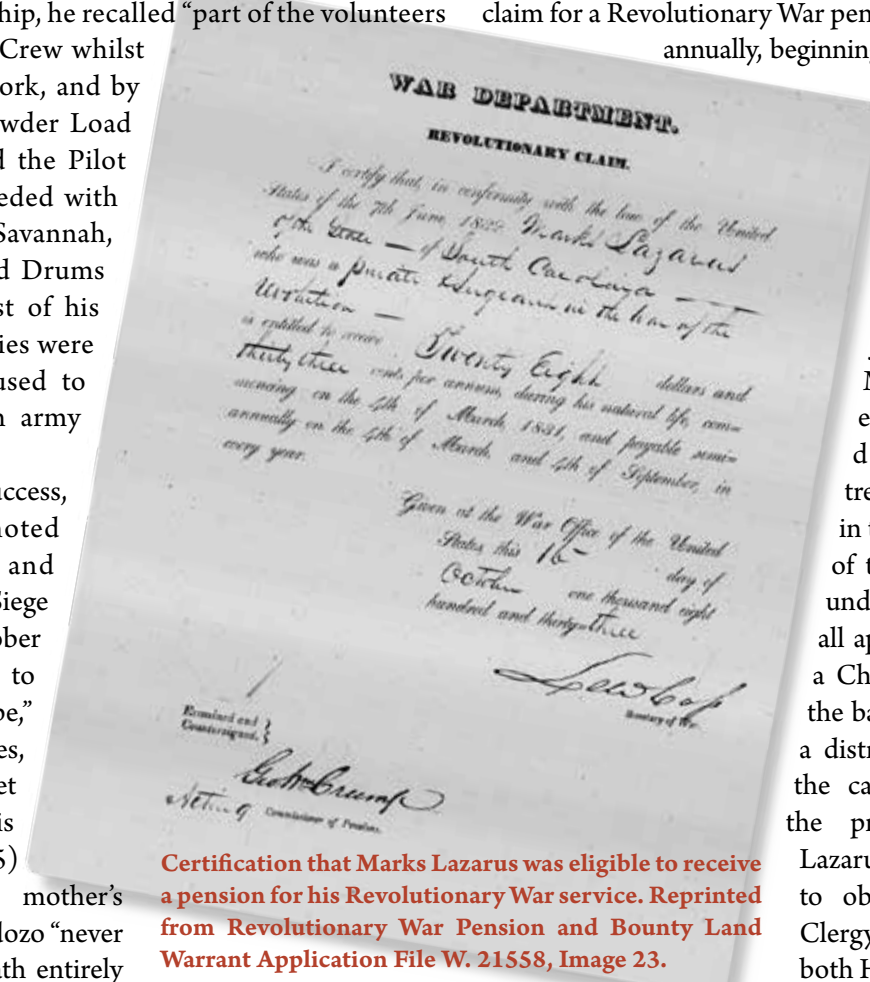
While still alive, Marks Lazarus appeared before a district judge and swore under oath that he was born in Charleston in 1757 and enrolled as a volunteer cannoneer under Captain John Donnell (1748–1822) at the beginning of the war. By

org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/History-Pocket-Guide.pdf.

11. “Four Days Later from Europe,” *Charleston Courier*, November 11, 1830, 2; 1830 United States Federal Census, Charleston Ward 1, Charleston, SC, Series M19, Roll 170, National Archives.

12. Pension File W. 21558, Marks Lazarus, Revolutionary War, archives.gov, NAID 196160104, Image 27.

13. Pension File W. 21558, Image 29.



1779, he was stationed “at the 18 Gun Battery [on Sullivan’s Island] and was almost always on duty, suffering with his comrades the usual . . . hardships incident to the life of a soldier.”¹⁴ After the regulars at Fort Moultrie

were redirected from Sullivan’s Island to Savannah, Lazarus was promoted to sergeant major and transferred to the 2nd Battalion under the command of Captain Richard Lushington (1751–1790).¹⁵

Sometime after the regulars returned to Fort Moultrie, Lazarus served under future Charleston mayor John Huger (1744–1804) and later fought in the Siege of Charleston. Despite his early and prolonged dedication to the rebel cause, Lazarus swore allegiance to “his Majesty’s person and Government” during British occupation and was released from prison on parole. By 1790, he had established a shop at

101 King Street and enslaved two people.¹⁶ When he died in 1835, he was receiving a semi-annual war pension of \$28.33 and was described by the writer of his obituary as “a single-minded and zealous patriot.”¹⁷

While Lazarus—and later his widow—ultimately received federal assistance after the war, not all veterans were so fortunate. In fact, while Cohen’s Revolutionary War story draws many parallels, it ends without federal recognition.

14. Pension File W. 21558, Image 6.

15. For more on Richard Lushington see George H. McDaniel, “Looking for Lushington,” *Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina Magazine* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2022): 6–7.

16. Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1905), 102; *The Charleston Directory and Revenue System of the United States* (Charleston: T. B. Bowen, 1790); 1790 United States Federal Census, St. Phillips and St. Michaels, Charleston, SC, Series M637, Roll 11, National Archives.

17. Pension File W. 21558, Image 23; Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, 92 citing *The Southern Patriot*, November 7, 1835.

In August 1779, Charleston merchant Gershom Cohen married Rebecca Sarzedas (1761–1840) before serving under Lushington and fighting in the Siege of Savannah alongside

his brother-in-law, Dr. David Sarzedas (1760–1841), the following month.¹⁸

During Rebecca Cohen’s pension hearing, Sarzedas recalled arriving in Beaulieu, Georgia, and marching toward Savannah:

“On my arrival at that place, I recognized

several of my friends and

acquaintances from

Charleston... amongst

them was my Brother

in Law, Mr. Gershon

[sic] Cohen, who was

in action storming the

British lines.”¹⁹ When

the rebels failed to retake

the city, Cohen was

sent back to Charleston

where Rebecca was likely

managing their store in his

absence.²⁰

After fighting in the

Siege of Charleston in

May 1780, Cohen was

imprisoned for twelve

months and then released

prior to the British evacuation

in December 1782. At that

time, the patriot legislature

began to enforce the South Carolina Confiscation Act of 1782, expelling some 500 loyalists and seizing their land. According to historian Rabbi Barnett A. Elzas (1867–1936), Gershom Cohen was repeatedly called as a character witness for those under investigation, describing his neighbors as “honest” and men of “good character.”²¹

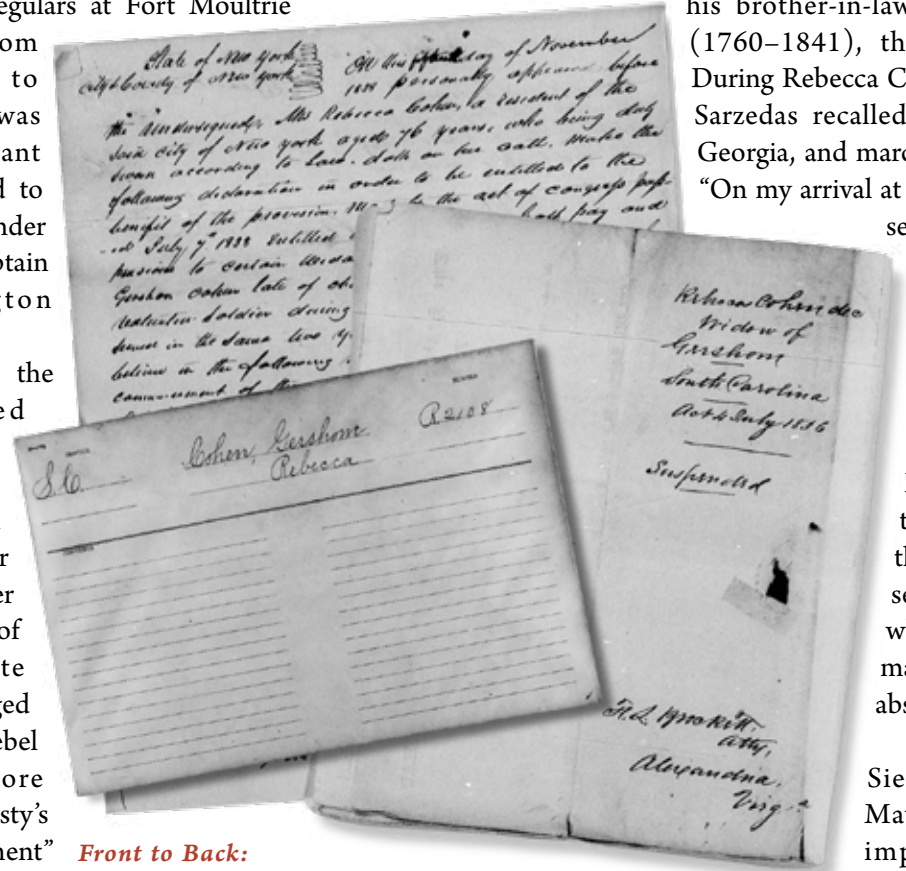
Even after the war and the confiscation proceedings, life was not without hardship. In 1786, a fire broke out in Gadsden’s Alley between Broad and Elliott streets, destroying

18. Pension File R. 2108, Gershom Cohen, Revolutionary War, archives.gov, NAID 54258396, Images 2, 16.

19. Pension File R. 2108, Image 20.

20. According to Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, 103, *The Royal Gazette* and *The Royal South-Carolina Gazette* featured advertisements for the Cohens’ store while Gershom served in the military.

21. “Liberty Won and Lost: The British Evacuation of Charleston,” National Park Service, updated April 15, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/british-evacuation-of-charleston.htm>; Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina*, 97–99.



Front to Back:

Pension file reference card, pension file jacket, and first page of narrative testimony for the application of Rebecca Cohen under the Act of 1836. Reprinted from *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty Land Warrant Application File R. 2108, Images 1, 2, & 4*.

the Cohens’ livelihood. Nonetheless, Gershom and Rebecca rebuilt their lives, and in the 1790 census, the family, and the six people they enslaved, were listed at 22 Church Street.²² Two years later, the Cohens oversaw and advanced significant contributions to the construction of KKBE’s first synagogue, which was destroyed in an 1838 fire.²³

Upon his death in 1802, Gershom Cohen was buried in KKBE’s Coming Street Cemetery, thirty years before Monroe passed the third Revolutionary War pension act. When Rebecca later applied for her widow’s pension, her claim was denied. After years spent raising her children in Charleston and operating her own store on King Street, Rebecca died while living with her son Philip (1781–1866) in New York City.

22. “Cohen, Gershom (1748–1802),” *Jews in Colonial America* (AJHS Oppenheim Collection), 1650–1850, Archive Collection P-255, Box 2, citing *New York Independent Journal* or *Weekly Register*, June 13, 1786; *The Charleston Directory* (1790); 1790 United States Federal Census, Roll 11.

23. *Yearbook 1883: City of Charleston, South Carolina* (Charleston: News and Courier, 1883), 306.

Despite the Cohen’s dedication to their nation and community, neither of them received any tangible acknowledgement from the federal government.²⁴

While the sieges of Savannah and Charleston feature prominently in all three of these stories, each pension application reveals the singular lived experience of each veteran with their differing insights on the war and its aftermath. While Cardozo and Lazarus only briefly benefited from Monroe’s pension acts, and Cohen never lived to see them, these pension records have preserved their perspectives—or the perspectives of their loved ones—for nearly 200 years. As just three of the more than 82,000 Revolutionary War pension stories digitized by the National Archives, there are many Jewish viewpoints yet to uncover. To learn how you can help make these records more readily accessible, visit <https://www.archives.gov/citizen-archivist/missions/revolutionary-war-pension-files>.

24. Pension File R. 2108, Image 11.

Home, Hearth, and the Pursuit of Outside Income: Jewish Women in Business in Charleston, SC, During the Revolutionary and New Republic Eras

by Lisa Strauss

There is a long history of businesswomen in South Carolina dating to the 18th century. In particular, Jewish women flourished as merchants in pre- and post-Revolutionary Charleston. This phenomenon was made possible in South Carolina through the South Carolina Equity Courts, which granted women status to operate businesses separate from their husbands.¹ These women became known as “sole traders.”² Between 1766 and 1827, a considerable number of

1. Property File: “229–233 King Street (Rachel Lazarus Buildings),” KING.229-233.1, Margaretta Childs Archives, Historic Charleston Foundation, <https://charleston.pastperfectonline.com/archive/B47B84A8-B288-4096-A296-403022390821>. See also Cynthia Kennedy, *Braided Relations, Entwined Lives* (Indiana University Press, 2005), 153–54.

2. James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (University of Alabama Press, 1993), 219. This term and status was derived from the English legal procedures, which South Carolina adopted, involving the rights and status of women. A “feme sole” was a single adult woman (unmarried or widowed) who could handle her own affairs. A “feme covert” was a married woman with no legal rights or

Jewish women operated businesses, having acquired the status of feme sole traders.³

Generally, Jewish and non-Jewish women shared the same role in the 18th and 19th-century South as the keeper of the home and children, and the “guardian and ornament of the social compact.”⁴ However, women could acquire the status of sole trader in one of two ways: single, widowed, or abandoned women could establish themselves by opening a business and engaging in transactions (with the aid of a court’s determination of abandonment), whereas a married woman had to rely upon her husband to begin the process by granting

status separate from her husband. A feme covert, to whom a male husband granted sole trader rights, enjoyed all of the rights of a “feme sole,” including owning property and conducting business.

3. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 219.

4. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 218, quoting Nathaniel Levin.

her this status “by deed under [his] hand and seal.”⁵ As a sole trader, women could retain “the profits and advantages that might arise from her business,” buy and sell property, sue and be sued, and enter and execute binding contracts, including wills.⁶ The feme sole trader would in no way be liable for any debts of her husband or her husband’s businesses nor could her property be subject to the control of her husband or any of his potential debtors.⁷

Whether married or unmarried, feme sole traders had to publish notice of their intention to transact business in their own name but did not have to register as a sole trader by statute, thereby making it impossible to determine how many sole traders actually existed. What is known, however, is sole traders drew from a diverse cross section of race and class as well as a wide variety of occupations (artisans, innkeepers and boarding house landladies, wives of planters, merchants, slave traders, and other professionals, to name a few), and most South Carolinian sole traders (83%) lived in Charleston.⁸ While it is not disputed that slavery was central to the Charleston economy, “feme sole traders were also at the heart of the economy.”⁹

The motivations for women obtaining sole trader status were mixed. Some viewed “sole tradership as a legitimate means of materially improving their lives and, by protecting their inheritances, the lives of their female kin.” Because the state was often looking to “to keep people off the public dole,” they looked upon sole trader status a means to achieve that goal, especially for abandoned women. Courts granted sole trader status to women whose loyalist husbands were banished from South Carolina during and after the Revolution.¹⁰ But it appears that many married feme sole traders acquired the status so their husbands could avoid debt or because their husbands could no longer operate their businesses due to debts or lawsuits.¹¹ For example, Rebecca DeMendes Benjamin (mother of Judah P. Benjamin, U.S. Senator and Secretary of State for the Confederacy) took

5. Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 153–54.

6. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 219; Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 153.

7. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 219.

8. Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 154.

9. Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 129.

10. Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 153–54.

11. Kennedy, *Braided Relations*, 154; Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 219–223.



Benjamin Doros Lazarus (1800–1875), son of Rachel and Marks Lazarus. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston Libraries.

over her husband’s business affairs to end the numerous legal cases against him for unpaid debts.¹² But, to be sure, some feme sole traders were motivated to supplement income or to grow a business and even for more benign purposes: “[t]he deeds granting women sole tradership frequently mentioned that they were being granted with love and affection toward the wife but with special concern for the future generation.”¹³

Historian James Hagy has identified 48 Jewish feme sole traders between 1766 and 1827 (after this time fewer records are available).¹⁴ The types of businesses in early Charleston varied, and often the women operated multiple businesses over time: boarding houses;¹⁵ clothing,¹⁶ cloth,¹⁷ and dry goods¹⁸ stores; fruit stands;¹⁹ hat shops;²⁰ and other shops or stores.²¹

Rachel DeTorres Benjamin Lazarus (1762–1847) was a successful feme sole trader in Charleston, who acquired this status in 1785.²² She was the wife of Marks Lazarus, who served as a sergeant major in the American Revolution in 1776, 1779, and 1780, and was “an actor in some of the eventful scenes of the Revolution.”²³ His obituary in the *Southern Patriot* in 1835 described him as a “single-minded and zealous patriot.”²⁴ In addition to being a businesswoman, Mrs. Lazarus bore 17 children, and made time for other pursuits, including being the only female member of the Hebrew Harmonic Society,

12. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 220.

13. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 220–1, 230.

14. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 219, 234–5.

15. Esther Barrett, Abigail Seixas, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

16. Rebecca Benjamin, Elizabeth Harris, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

17. Reinah DeLyon, Hannah Hyams, Judith Hyams, Susannah Moses, Judith Suares, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

18. Rachel Florance, Catherine Jacobs Hyams, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

19. Abigail Seixas, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

20. Elizabeth Harris, in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

21. Esther Barrett, Elizabeth Harris, Sarah Hart, Catherine Jacobs Hyams, Hannah Hyams, Celia Jacobs, Deborah Moses, Jane Mordecai in Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 225 (table 32).

22. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 235.

23. Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina* (J.B. Lippincott Co., 1905), 92.

24. Elzas, *Jews of South Carolina*, 92; Solomon Breitbart, *Explorations in Charleston’s Jewish History* (The History Press, 2005), 30, 173.

which provided funds for the installation of the organ in Beth Elohim Synagogue in 1841.²⁵

Mrs. Lazarus was also a real estate developer. A great fire ravaged Charleston in 1838. The state provided for loans under the Act for the Rebuilding of the City of Charleston, and Mrs. Lazarus obtained funds to construct three buildings, still standing, on the main business thoroughfare in Charleston. Her buildings—229 to 233 King Street—were constructed in 1839 as three-story tenements and their architecture has been described as notable: “[t]he 3-story stuccoed brick facades retain their original fenestration with stone lintels and sills, as well as masonry



Rachel Lazarus’s three-story tenements, 229, 231, and 233 King Street, built in 1839 to replace the buildings she lost in the 1838 fire at the same location. Photo: Lisa Strauss, 2025.

belt courses, and molded cornices. On the upper stories each structure follows the Charleston single house plan and most retain their Greek Revival mantels and staircases.”²⁶ “Apparently Rachel looked out for other independently minded Jewish women, for one of her tenants was another feme sole, Hannah A. Moses.”²⁷

As a feme sole trader, Rachel Lazarus was afforded the right to execute a last will and testament in which she bequeathed the rights to purchase her King Street properties to her son Benjamin Lazarus. But it is the multiple references to her unmarried daughters in this document that suggests one purpose of her feme sole trader status was to ensure the financial well-being of her many children.²⁸ Rachel also executed legal documents in connection with a petition to claim her husband’s military pension after his death.²⁹

25. “Rachel DeTorres Benjamin Lazarus,” Mapping Jewish Charleston, <https://mappingjewishcharleston.cofc.edu/1833/rachel-detorres-benjamin-lazarus/>; Breitbart, *Explorations*, 108.

26. “229–233 King Street,” Historic Charleston Foundation.

27. “Rachel Lazarus,” Mapping Jewish Charleston.

28. Rachel Lazarus will, 1844 March 19,” SC-6706, American Jewish Archives.

29. “Rachel Lazarus sworn statements, 1838 July 16,” SC-6707, American

The institution of slavery aided feme sole traders, whether it was extra hands in the operation of the businesses or because the women were able turn over their household responsibilities. Most families enslaved at least two to four people to work in their houses.³⁰ Marks Lazarus, at the time of the 1790 census,³¹ enslaved two people, which certainly would have been helpful to feme sole traders like Rachel Lazarus who was working and raising seventeen children.³²

Because of poor record-keeping, there is no way to confirm the depth of feme sole participation in the slave trade.³³ However, bills of sale do name Rachel Woolf and Hannah Davis as having engaged in multiple transactions

involving the sale and purchase of humans, suggesting that feme sole traders were also engaging in the slave trade following the Revolution.³⁴

Scholars have bemoaned the paucity of specific records concerning the full activities of the feme sole traders. It is likely that many more women worked and participated in the marketplace whether at the sides of their husbands or because, as unmarried women, they could operate as they wished without any documentation of such or need for sole trader status.³⁵ The evidence we do have shows that women were very much a part of the local economy during the turbulent Revolutionary and New Republic eras.

Jewish Archives.

30. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 228.

31. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 92 (table 10), 228. For perspective, of the 45 Jewish households Hagy identified in the census, 29 included enslaved people.

32. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 228. Hagy reports that 10 of their 17 children were born after Lazarus became a feme sole trader.

33. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 228.

34. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 95 (table 12), 228.

35. Hagy, *This Happy Land*, 231.

Model Patriot: Francis Salvador and 20th-Century American Jewish Citizenship

by Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, Assistant Professor, Department of History, Clemson University

In other circumstances, it would be easy to imagine Upcountry planter Francis Salvador as an arcane historical figure. A resident of South Carolina for some three years, Salvador lived on a long-forgotten plantation known as “Cornacre” on the banks of the Saluda River. Active in the nascent patriot cause, he served in the Provincial Assembly and accompanied a patriot militia into Cherokee land, where he was killed in an ambush near Esseneca, not far from the modern-day campus of Clemson University. Mourned by his peers, Salvador may have faded into the pages of history a scant generation later if not for one salient fact: Francis Salvador was the scion of a prominent Sephardic Anglo-Jewish family.

In a previous article in this magazine, it was argued that the lack of contemporary accounts of Salvador or any sort of surviving text written by Salvador himself made the South Carolina revolutionary “the easiest of historical figures to memorialize, a pliable hero for changing eras, one who can be reframed to fit a myriad of identities and commitments.”¹ This study will examine those shifts in portrayal to demonstrate the way in which Salvador’s life story and its memorialization served in the 20th century as a construct of ideal Jewish citizenship in the American polity and to argue for the central role played by Jews and Jewish values in the emergence of the American liberal tradition.

Although Salvador left no trace of Jewish affiliation or practice in his scant historical record, his Jewish background

was noted by his contemporaries.² He remained, however, a historical side-note until the late 19th century saw the emergence of a new focus on American Jewish history. Amid an unprecedented wave

of Jewish immigration, the American Jewish Historical Society was established in 1892 to collect and publish material relevant to Jewish contributions to American history, one of a number of organizations established during this period that emphasized

Jewish “belonging” as part of American identity. “If we can show clearly to the people of the United States what the Jews of this country have done, what they have contributed as citizens of the Republic, we shall accomplish a great work,” declared Harvard professor Dr. Charles Gross at the founding meeting. “It will certainly be made evident that the Jews of this Republic . . . have been patriots in time of war and philanthropists in time of peace,

2. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, Salvador would appear in non-Jewish sources as a historical side-note, frequently contextualized through references to John Drayton’s 1821 *Memoirs of the American Revolution*. Drayton did not describe Salvador as Jewish, although he offered a lengthy backstory of his aristocratic lineage and noted that “although of the Jewish nation, his son John Lovel Salvador adopted the Christian Religion; and was a clergyman of the Episcopal persuasion.”

that they will be patriots and philanthropists in the future as they have been in the past.”³

AJHS emphasized the primordial roots of American Jewish inclusion; its initial objectives explicitly cited Jewish roles in the discovery and colonization of the Americas as well as in the Revolutionary War.⁴ For an organization focused on situating Jews at the moment of American inception, Salvador would be an unusually useful device. Shortly after the organization’s founding, Leon Huhner—who would serve as AJHS curator for over five decades—resurrected Salvador’s story as notably fulfilling the organization’s objectives. In 1899, Huhner presented a paper to the society detailing Salvador’s biography, which would be later published in the organization’s journal. “The Jews of the South during the American Revolution proved conclusively, not only that Jews were staunch patriots but also that they were willing to shed their blood as well as risk their fortunes in their country’s cause,” Huhner wrote in the 1901 article, introducing Salvador to AJHS’s readership.⁵ Huhner highlighted that

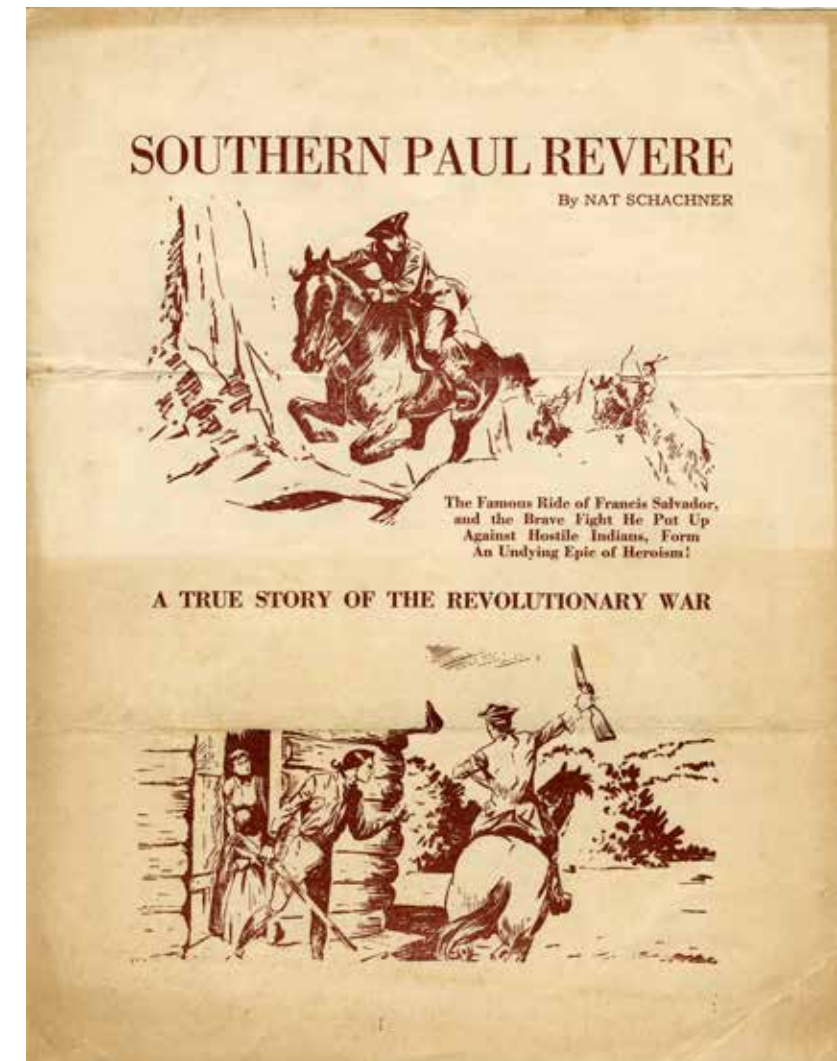
Salvador both put his wealth on the line for the patriot cause, “fought for that country on the field of battle,” and “takes rank with the leaders of the Revolution in South Carolina.”⁶ Salvador, for Huhner, embodied the three characteristics of

model Jewish American citizenship—philanthropy, political engagement, and patriotic sacrifice. The last of these themes, patriotic sacrifice, was emphasized again by Huhner in a 1904 publication that highlighted Salvador in a recounting of the military service, injuries, and deaths of Jewish South Carolinians during the American Revolution and drawing a distinction between the military contributions of South Carolina

Jews and the financial contributions of Jews from other colonies. In an era characterized both by Jewish helplessness in the face of increasing pogroms in Russia and the spread of antisemitic canards about Jewish financiers, Huhner’s recovery efforts suggested a corrective narrative for robust Jewish citizenship. Huhner’s characterization of Salvador was carried through to other contemporary works situating Jewish American citizenship in the first two centuries of settlement.⁷ Huhner remained an active and prolific member of AJHS through the next two decades and included mentions of Salvador’s political and martial legacy in his many publications. His efforts paid off; in 1949, historian Cecil Roth referred to

Salvador as “the well-known American patriot.”⁸

Historical memory of Salvador enjoyed a resurgence in the two decades following World War II, when his story was used to highlight a growing trend of American exceptionalism that underscored a whiggish history of expanding inclusion in democratic structures. This narrative was particularly central



3. American Jewish Historical Society, *Report of organization: abstract from the minutes, 1892*, American Jewish Historical Society (1892): 8.

4. American Jewish Historical Society, *American Jewish Historical Society: organized at New York, June 7th, 1892* [booklet], American Jewish Historical Society (1892), 2.

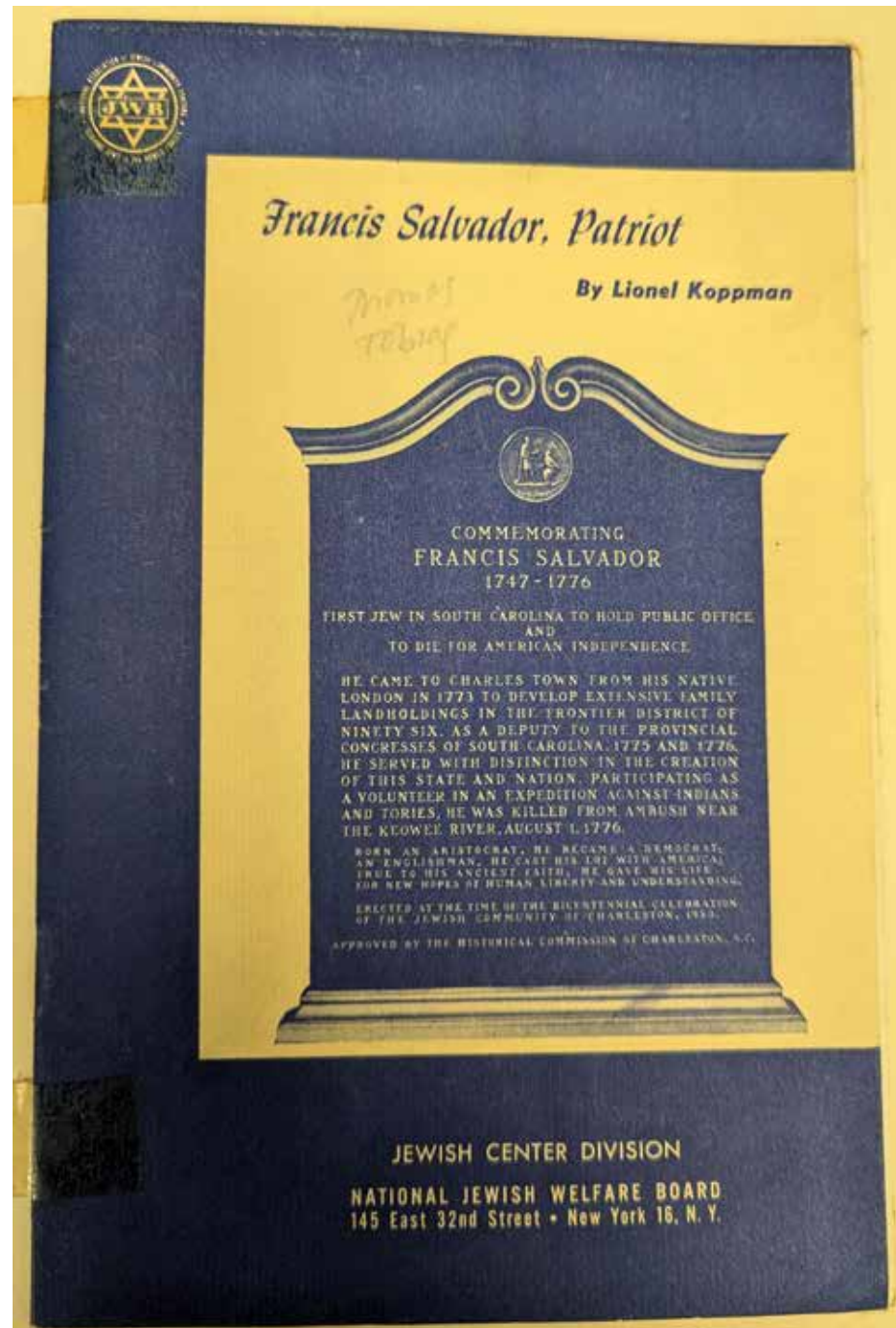
5. Leon Hühner, “Francis Salvador, A Prominent Patriot of the Revolutionary War,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, no. 9 (1901): 107.

6. Hühner, “Francis Salvador,” 107.

7. See, for instance, “A Sketch of the History of Jews in the United States,” *The American Jewish Year Book* 4 (1902): 70, which notes Salvador’s “army distinction,” and Abram S. Isaacs, “The Jew in America,” *The North American Review* 181, no. 588 (1905): 679.

8. Roth, Cecil, “Some Jewish Loyalists in the War of American Independence,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 38, no. 2 (1948): 104.

1. Rebecca Shimoni Stoil, “Atlantic Enigma: The Shifting Identities of Francis Salvador,” *JHSSC* 27, no. 2 (Fall 2022): 8.



to America's self-conception during the early years of the Cold War in which the struggle between Washington and Moscow was framed as a battle between liberal democracy and intolerant totalitarianism. "We Jews, as an historical people, owe it to ourselves and to America when the United States is assuming world leadership . . . to make known the role which Jews have played as an integrated and vital element in the settlement and progress of the country," American Jewish Historical Society President Lee M. Friedman declared in a 1950 speech. "With new responsibilities of leadership it is increasingly essential for our own nation as well as for all others that there should be

enlarged knowledge and appreciation of the roots of Americanism and how our western democracy, its cultural developments, political ideas and attitudes spring from a union of heterogeneous foreign and native backgrounds," he continued.⁹ Unsurprisingly, Friedman cited Salvador as an example minutes later in the same speech.

Published in the immediate aftermath of World War II, Abram Vossen Goodman's *American Overture: Jewish Rights in Colonial Times* highlighted Salvador's commitment to the patriot cause and political inclusion, describing him as "the first Jew in American history, and probably the first Jew in the modern world, to serve in an elective office."¹⁰ For Goodman, and others, Salvador's sacrifice emphasized an intrinsic difference between the possibilities of liberal America in contradistinction to Europe. "Perhaps he recognized that out on the Carolina frontier a man was rated at his own worth, while across the sea in England all his family's prestige and influence could not wipe away the stigma of being a Jew," Goodman speculated regarding Salvador's motivations.¹¹

Salvador's symbolic utility for understanding American Jewish citizenship continued to flourish in the ensuing decades as, like Goodman, authors fictionalized Salvador's conversations and motivations to demonstrate the ways in which Salvador broke barriers to overcome antisemitism and triumph as a valuable American citizen. Imagining a 1774 tavern conversation in Ninety-Six District, Charleston Rabbi Allan Tarshish described two locals

debating whom they could elect to represent their district in the Provincial Congress. One man suggested Salvador while his counterpart expressed concern that Salvador was "a Jew." The rejoinder to that comment reflected a passionate argument for Jewish citizenship. "Sure, he's a Jew and a good one," Salvador's

9. Lee M. Friedman, "Know Thyself: A Program for American Jewish History" [speech], delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Jewish Historical Society, NY, NY, February 11, 1950, *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* 39, no. 4 (1950): 337.

10. Abram Vossen Goodman, "American Overture: Jewish Rights in Colonial Times," *Jewish Publication Society of America* (1947), 166.

11. Goodman, "American Overture," 166.

imaginary defender countered, recounting the Salvador family history and claiming that Salvador was a member of Charleston's Beth Elohim Congregation.¹² "But that doesn't mean anything here," he continued—echoing Goodman's speculation. "We've decided that a man's religion is his own business and every person should be judged on the basis of his own character."¹³ This recurring concept of American exceptionalism—that religious tolerance would differentiate America from the Old World—was exceptionally resonant in the shadow of European totalitarianism.

Tarshish and later authors would also offer a further elaboration on the relationship between Salvador and America's liberal tradition, arguing that in fact, Revolution-era Jews such as Salvador had a formative role in shaping American liberalism grounded in Jewish values. Tarshish's nameless defender of Salvador argued that "we Christians owe a lot to the ethical ideals of Judaism," later adding "it seems those Jews have a passion for liberty anyway."¹⁴ This theme remained central through an extensive swath of late-20th-century Salvador literature. "The soil of America shall not know the poisonous weed of religious intolerance," *Palm Beach Jewish Journal* staff writer David Bittner had Salvador proclaim in an unsourced quote in an article about Jewish roles in the Revolution. "Here we are building a world where men shall be free to worship in accordance with their conscience. . . . My very Jewishness will spur me to do my duty more fully."¹⁵

Of course, there is no evidence that Salvador ever uttered these or any similar words—or even publicly acknowledged his Jewish heritage—but that only makes it more telling that these are the sentiments that contemporary American authors put in

12. Tarshish himself was the rabbi of that congregation, but I have not found any evidence from the 18th century to suggest that Salvador was a "member" of Beth Elohim.

13. Rabbi Allan Tarshish, "Francis Salvador, A Revolutionary Hero" [pamphlet], 1950, Thomas J. Tobias papers, Mss 1029, Box 13, Folder 3, Special Collections, College of Charleston, Charleston, SC.

14. Tarshish, "Francis Salvador."

15. David Bittner, "Jews Played Important roles in Revolutionary War," *Palm Beach Jewish Journal*, June 30, 1992.

his mostly silent mouth. Devoid of historical evidence, the blank slate tying Salvador—a model for Jewish-American citizenship—to Jewish identity, inclusion, and even Jewish philosophical contribution to the Patriot movement allowed 20th-century writers to remake him in the image of their own desires and ideals.

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Among Salvador's achievements were: financial advisor to the Assembly; participation in reorganization of the courts and system of selecting magistrates; his active role in the drafting of the Constitution of South Carolina; and his commission to sign and stamp the State's new currency. Although he died at the young age of 29, Francis Salvador's contributions to his adopted state and country were exceptional. The plaque dedicated to his memory in City Hall Park in Charleston bears these words . . .

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Kugels & Collards ... On the Road

by Rachel Gordin Barnett, JHSSC Executive Director

When *Kugels & Collards* was published in August 2023, neither Lyssa Harvey nor I had any idea what would transpire. Fast forward to spring 2025, and we have now traveled across South Carolina, on to Georgia, North Carolina, Louisiana, Tennessee, Virginia, and the Northeast. This spring will take us to Ohio and Florida. We have given virtual talks for folks in New Jersey, Michigan, California, and New York. We have been invited by Jewish community centers and federations, temples and synagogues, historic foundations, libraries, women's groups; the list goes on.

Food, as we know, is an equalizer, and our hunch that food and memories would be a vehicle to tell our collective South Carolina Jewish history has paid off. We have discovered that no matter if we are in Batesburg-Leesville, South Carolina, or Richmond, Virginia, or Stamford, Connecticut, everyone has a food-related story to tell. As culinary historian Dr. Jessica Harris says, "Through food, we can find out that there is more that connects us than separates us. What we eat and what we discover brings us together. It's a communal table. It's how we know who we are, and it's how we know we're connected."

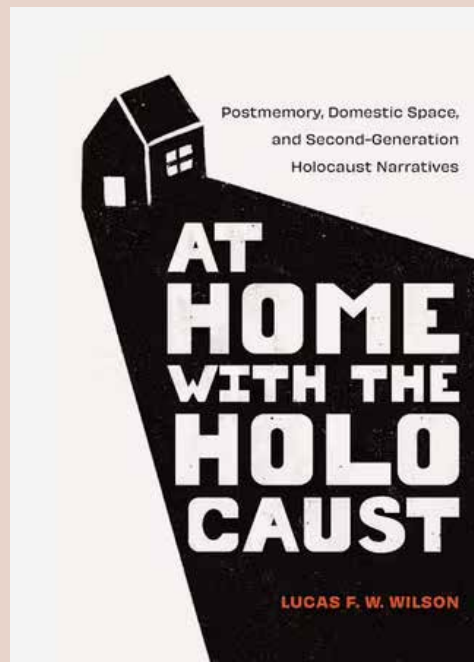
As we visit other communities, I talk about the role the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina has played in documenting and preserving South Carolina's Jewish history. Our ongoing statewide projects, joined now by *Kugels and Collards*, document

merchants, synagogues, and burials, and make that information available on our website. We are extremely fortunate to have the talents and organizational skills of Alyssa Neely who designs and edits two magazines a year, no small feat. The work we are doing is possible because of the financial support from our Pillars and our multitude of loyal members.

Our partner organizations at the College of Charleston, the Jewish Heritage Collection in Special Collections at Addlestone Library, the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture, and the Zucker/Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies, work with us on programming, research, and collections, collaborations that result in biannual conferences that edify and inform and an archives that benefits researchers from across the country and even around the globe. What we have built over 30 years at the College of Charleston is nothing short of remarkable.

When Lyssa and I take *Kugels & Collards* on the road, it is a joy for me to share South Carolina's deep and rich Jewish history. I am grateful to those who had the vision to lay the groundwork for the resources we have today. I know I share this gratitude with many of you. The future of the past needs to be secured and I hope that you will consider supporting these treasured organizations for generations to come.

Thoughts? Contact me at rgbarnettsc@gmail.com.



NEW BOOK RELEASE

At Home with the Holocaust: Postmemory, Domestic Space, and Second-Generation Holocaust Narratives

by Lucas F. W. Wilson

Postdoctoral Fellow
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Rutgers University Press: "At Home with the Holocaust examines the relationship between intergenerational trauma and domestic space, focusing on how Holocaust survivors' homes became extensions of their traumatized psyches that their children 'inhabited.'"

Lucas was a 2017 and 2019 Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture research fellow: "My time at the College of Charleston provided me with significant material for *At Home with the Holocaust*. Without my time there, my book would certainly not be what it is today. I am indebted to the folks at the college, especially Harlan Greene, Dale Rosengarten, and Alyssa Neely."

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