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Jewish Mobile's Narrow Bridge

Deborah Gurt

University of South Alabama, dgurt@southalabama.edu

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THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
of SOUTH CAROLINA

Expanding the Archive(s)
of
Southern Jewish History

JHSSC hosts the **Virtual**
Southern Jewish Historical
Society 45th Annual
Conference

October
21-24
2021

Volume XXVI Number 2 ~ Fall 2021





THE
JEWISH
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
OF
SOUTH CAROLINA

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

On the cover: Lilly Zalkin Bebergal in the doorway of Zalkin's Meat Market, 535 King Street, Charleston, SC, 1942. The image is actually a composite of two photographs created for use as a mural in the exhibition A Portion of the People. One photo shows Lilly holding a poster with the message "Save Waste Fats for Explosives." In the second photo she is propping the door open. If you look closely at the window, you can see her reflection holding the poster. Courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

In this issue

- What Does It Mean to Expand the Archive(s) of Southern Jewish History?** ~ Jason Lustig ~ Confronted with crises in racial justice, public health, and climate change, archives can become "active forces, not passive repositories," that shape the way we remember the past and envision the future. The southern Jewish collections profiled in this issue showcase a range of strategies designed to broaden their scope and reimagine their role and mission. 4
- The Future of the Past** ~ Dale Rosengarten ~ Through collaboration with well-placed partners, the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston has put South Carolina on the map of Jewish America. But the work is not complete. Archives, the author contends, must expand their holdings and offer perspectives from sources whose stories have gone largely unrecorded. 6
- From Broom Closet to Industry Leader** ~ Jeremy Katz ~ The Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives for Southern Jewish History, at the Breman Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, has grown from a modest local collection to a vast two-state archive. While the Breman seeks to add to its Georgia and Alabama resources, it places a premium on accessibility and prides itself on its state-of-the-art catalog systems. 8
- Expanding the Archive(s) of Southern Jewish History** ~ JHSSC hosts the *Virtual* Southern Jewish Historical Society 45th Annual Conference ~ October 21–24, 2021..... 10
- Saving History after Harvey** ~ Joshua Furman ~ In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused devastating flooding in Houston, Texas; out of the destruction the Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University was born. Stymied by the COVID-19 pandemic, once again, faculty and staff found opportunity in the face of adversity, recording oral history interviews over Zoom and publishing them online. 12
- Jewish Mobile's Narrow Bridge** ~ Deborah Gurt ~ Jewish residents of Mobile, Alabama, include old timers and newcomers from all walks of life. The Jewish Mobile Oral History Project, launched at a moment of national turmoil, aims to capture the diversity of Jewish experience in this Gulf Coast city, engage the public, and promote dialogue and understanding. 13
- Pursuing Justice** ~ William Obrochta ~ Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives in Richmond, Virginia, opened in 1977 as the archival repository for congregations Beth Ahabah (est. 1841) and Beth Shalome (est. 1789). Moving into its own building in 1983, the collection expanded in scope. Recent social justice demonstrations have prompted serious soul searching and a reexamination of Beth Ahabah's historical ties to slavery and the Confederacy. 14
- Kugels & Collards** ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett and Lyssa Kligman Harvey ~ Southern Jewish foodways reflect a multitude of influences and in turn have influenced the world around them. Developed as a food blog, *Kugels & Collards* demonstrates, in the eating habits and culinary practices of Jewish Carolinians, food meets culture and history. 16
- Through a Wide-Angle Lens** ~ Nora Katz and Josh Parshall ~ The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) takes seriously its mission to preserve and interpret Jewish life across the region. Acknowledging its seminal role in the emergence of the field of southern Jewish studies, the organization established the ISJL Institutional History Archive in 2019. 18
- It Began with a Phone Call** ~ Rachel Gordin Barnett ~ JHSSC is perfectly positioned to assist in preserving "orphaned" objects—ritual items from defunct synagogues, store signs too large for an archive, etc. This year the Society helped repatriate a memorial tablet that once hung in Temple Beth El in Rock Hill and is now working to document the bygone congregation and a family burial ground unknown to us before. 19



Letter from the President

Warm greetings to the members of the Southern Jewish Historical Society and to the Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina. Once again we find that we must convert to a virtual meeting. This decision was deliberate, but difficult. Given the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we know it is the safest and best way to "get together." Maybe next year in Charleston!

The past two years have been challenging, frustrating, and exhilarating all at once. Challenging because we had to "pivot" from in-person meetings to virtual programs in March 2020, five months after our fall 2019 gathering in Spartanburg. We had to find new ways to maintain and exhibit the relevance of the Society and make our programming engaging and timely. We needed to serve our members and also to earn their annual dues. I am thrilled and delighted to report our membership has grown during the past year and a half and attendance at our Zoom sessions has risen month by month, at last count reaching 250 participants from across the USA.

Do not underestimate, however, the frustrations entailed in figuring out how to deploy virtual technology and in recognizing that Zoom-only programming left behind some of our older and most loyal following. The burden was thrust on our new executive director, Rachel Gordin Barnett, who surmounted a steep learning curve and made it work, with a big assist from past presidents Richard Gergel and Robert Rosen.

Which brings us to the exhilarating part. Our team stepped up to the plate and hit the ball out of the park. Thanks to Rachel, who made everything look easy. Thanks to the Society's executive board and to Jewish Studies Director Yaron Ayalon and JHSSC Director of Operations Enid Idelsohn for their steadfast support. Thanks to the Honorable Richard Gergel and attorney Robert Rosen and the awesome guests they invited to their monthly "Sunday Conversations." Their banter makes viewers think they are

privy to an intimate tête-à-tête, concealing the prodigious preparation required for each encounter.

Thank you also to our partners the Breman Museum in Atlanta and the Southern Jewish Historical Society who shared our programming with their e-lists as we shared theirs with our members. And thanks to board member Terri Kaufman for proposing and implementing an innovative strategy to attract young people and encourage them to participate: a media contest called "My SC History" that enables the voices of the next generation to be heard.

I also am elated to report that two-time past president Jeffrey Rosenblum, chairman of the Society's new "Endowment

Fund," has demonstrated the persuasiveness and persistence for which he is known. His success will allow the Society to stay true to its mission—to record and remember the life experiences of Jewish South Carolinians—yet grow with the times.

Thanks as always to the editors of our biannual magazine, Dale Rosengarten and Alyssa Neely, and welcome to new associate editor Ashley Walters, Assistant Professor in Jewish Studies and Director of the Pearlstone/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture. Working together we came up with relevant themes for the past two issues when there was no meeting to organize around and recruited willing contributors who devoted untold hours to researching

and relating their stories. Thank you to all of them.

It has been an honor and a joy to be your president these last two years. I have the dubious distinction of presiding as president without ever meeting our members in person! Though I am stepping down from leadership, I plan to continue to be an active member of this wonderful and vibrant organization.

Stay safe, please get your vaccines and/or booster shots, and join (via Zoom) a wonderful, diverse group of folks who share the desire to perpetuate the history of southern, and especially South Carolina, Jewish history.

Best,
Lilly Stern Filler, M.D.
JHSSC President

Slate of Officers for 2022–2023

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What Does It Mean to Expand the Archive(s)

In a 1955 seminar on Jewish history, Jacob Rader Marcus, director of the American Jewish Archives (AJA) in Cincinnati, was asked by his students about local Jewish historical societies and archives. Somewhat condescendingly, he declared: “I don’t trust those societies.” It was a curious statement, in part because the AJA has long encouraged the development of local and synagogue archives. Marcus was not entirely opposed to local institutions, but he feared that, especially at a moment in the Cold War when the future seemed particularly precarious, irreplaceable historical materials might be lost if they were not brought to a central archive.

Nearly seven decades later, the rich landscape of archives of southern Jewish history and culture, as illuminated in this issue, seems to have proven Marcus’s fears misplaced. In fact, the collections described here showcase the vitality of local and regional archives and their singular importance for the continual exploration of collaborative and innovative approaches. Taken together, they offer a glimpse into the surge in archival activity across the South.

Dale Rosengarten in Charleston and Jeremy Katz in Atlanta detail how their efforts to document local Jewish life have broadened to a regional scope. Joshua Furman’s Houston Jewish History Archive and Deborah Gurt’s Jewish Mobile Oral History Project exemplify archival responses to rapid change and crises, whether demographic shifts of a “population in transition,” as Gurt puts it, or dramatic climatic transformations that force us to reevaluate the ways we have lived and what we must do in the future.

William Obrochta’s Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives in Richmond confronts issues of difficult history—specifically, the congregation’s relation to the racial order of the past. We must reckon with history, both the bad and the good. In “Kugels & Collards,” Rachel Barnett and Lyssa Harvey demonstrate how Jewish interactions with southern society can be documented through a focus on foodways. And paying attention to the present, Nora Katz and Josh Parshall at Mississippi’s Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) note the historic value of their own records.

The ISJL and other Jewish archives have turned toward documenting their constituents’ lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. In this and other ways, southern repositories are part of a wider phenomenon of community-based archives. The term, which has been popularized in archival circles over the past 15 years, refers to efforts, often undertaken by minority groups, to possess their own history by establishing local archives and determining how their stories should be told. The gist is: everyone has a history, and it belongs not in the control of state archives or centralized repositories, but in one’s own hands.

As Jews have come to understand the importance of preserving their past, historical records have grown in meaning and value. Southern Jewish archives mirror the continuing impulses of what I have dubbed a “time to gather” in modern Jewish culture, when Jews have sought to bring together the sources and resources of Jewish life in diverse and exciting ways.

While southern archives are part of the bigger picture, they present unique opportunities to expand the record of Jewish history, too. Since the 1980s, one thrust of the “archival turn”



Above: Sisterhood convention in Savannah, GA, with Ahavas Chesed delegation in attendance, 1955. Congregation Ahavas Chesed Papers, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama. Below: Contact sheet of photographs taken by Bill Aron in 1992 at Temple Agudath Achim in Little Rock, AR. Institutional History Archive, Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.



of Southern Jewish History? *by Jason Lustig*

in scholarship, alongside new approaches in archival practice, has been the growing recognition that significant stories have been excluded from the archives. Given the legacy of racism and segregation in the United States, do Jewish repositories have a responsibility to record and remember voices left out of the historical narrative? Attempts to document servants and enslaved people in Jewish households, and also Jews of color, represent a welcome movement to broaden our perspective, and a shift away from archives as celebratory monuments toward critical engagement with difficult aspects of our history.

We cannot alter the events of history, but we do have a chance to change how we present them to the public. In times of vigorous debate about memorials and texts that valorize the Confederacy, archives can help us interpret history in light of ongoing concerns. By accepting and speaking publicly about the power archives have always had in shaping views of history, archivists can highlight our agency over the past and thereby contribute to ongoing conversations about the tensions between historical events and historical memory. We have the power to reimagine how we tell the story of the past, whose experiences we celebrate, and whose we illuminate. In this fashion, we can speak of “expanding the archive” not just in terms of enlarging the scope of collections but also transforming how archives remember, teach, and talk about the past.

In the spirit of being honest about history and pursuing the whole picture, including uncomfortable truths, archives must also document how our changing environment affects Jewish life. Extreme weather events, such as Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Katrina, have prompted archival rescue missions and oral history projects. As climate change makes certain areas less hospitable, Jewish people, like most everyone else, may over time become climate migrants, whether within a city or on a larger scale, contributing to wider population movements. And as the COVID-19 pandemic wreaks havoc worldwide, Jews are forced to change how they practice their religion. In this remarkable era, we should actively document these developments and better understand our society’s radical remaking. Nimble and deeply rooted in their specific local contexts, community archives are well positioned to experiment and respond to new circumstances.

All this speaks to what it means to “expand the archive.” It can mean expanding what we collect and study; it can mean expanding the boundaries of history. But it can also mean expanding the missions that archives take on. The most powerful tendencies in both critical archival studies and archival practice have been to perceive archives as active forces, not passive repositories. Archives that document the Jewish South face tremendous opportunities and, as demonstrated in the pages that follow, have the institutional diversity to innovate, explore, and broaden the archive of southern Jewish history.



Above: Party for Carolee Rosen's first birthday, Asheville, NC, 1931. Below: Commemorative quilt, created in 1998–99 by eighth graders studying the Holocaust at Gregg Middle School, Summerville, SC. The quilt, now part of the Jerry and Anita Zucker Holocaust Collection, resides at the Charleston County Public Library. Images courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.



Jason Lustig is a Lecturer and Israel Institute Teaching Fellow at the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies, University of Texas at Austin, and author of A Time to Gather: Archives and the Control of Jewish Culture, forthcoming from Oxford University Press in November 2021. He is also the host and producer of the Jewish History Matters podcast, which is online at www.jewishhistory.fm.

The Future of the Past

The Jewish Heritage Collection began in 1995 as a partnership among three organizations, each with its own agenda. Special Collections at the College of Charleston had recently acquired the congregational records of Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim—a huge and exceptionally important cache brought in by the late Sol Breibart; Library Dean David Cohen wanted to build on this gem of a collection. McKissick Museum at the University of South Carolina aspired to develop an exhibition about the state’s Jewish history and culture. A few years

earlier I had curated the museum’s highly successful *Row Upon Row* exhibit about the Lowcountry basket tradition, and McKissick Director Lynn Robertson thought the time was ripe to embark on ethnographic research on South Carolina’s Jewish population. And the new Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina (JHSSC), envisioned by Senator Isadore Lourie and fostered by CofC’s Jewish Studies Program Director Marty Perlmutter, wanted to record oral histories of what its members saw as a vanishing demographic: small-town Jewish merchants of their parents’ and grandparents’ generations.

It did not hurt that Izzy Lourie’s friend and desk mate in the state senate was Alex Sanders, the newly inaugurated president of the College of Charleston. As someone once said at a Harvard commencement, “It’s not who you know, it’s whom.”

Thus, the stars lined up, we had powerful backers—including two state-funded institutions of higher education—and we were off and running. Izzy & Co. proposed we begin collecting oral histories, and it struck us all that it was the right thing to do. As it turned out, recording life stories was a perfect strategy for ferreting out exhibit objects.

We called our first brochure “A Call for Candlesticks” and we meant it literally. We wanted to gather Sabbath candlesticks that made the voyage to America from “the old world” and key them to a map—showing where people came from and what they brought with them. With associate curators Barbara Karesh Stender and Judith Alexander Weil Shanks scouring the country, we went after prized heirlooms, including portraits and miniatures, and mundane items like a bar of kosher soap. After seven years of “primary accumulation”—discovering, documenting, researching, collecting, borrowing, and, of course, fund raising—McKissick mounted an exhibition titled *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* that traveled nationally and put South Carolina on the map of Jewish America.

Among southern states, South Carolina was late to the table. Mississippi, Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, Virginia, and Florida all had mounted exhibits, established archives, and published books about Jewish life in their localities. Yet outside the region the myth persisted that there were no Jews in the South. Who knew that Jews were first naturalized in Carolina in 1697, or that in 1800, Charleston boasted more Jewish inhabitants than anyplace on the continent? As the cradle of southern Jewry, South Carolina had a big story to tell, and we had a host of objects and narrators to tell it.

Our short-term goal of taping 18 interviews proved unrealistic. Like a snowball rolling downhill, our oral history archives swelled to dozens and then scores of recordings—25 years later, numbering close to 600. We were intent then, as we are now, on capturing family stories and everyday experiences, with



Top to bottom: JHSSC tour of historic sites, Charleston, SC, October 1998. Display case, *A Portion of the People*, Yeshiva University Museum, 2003. Photo: Nico Sardet. Mindelle Seltzer (l) and Dale Rosengarten interviewing Raymond Stern in the shoe department of his store, Stern’s, in Andrews, SC, March 1995. Photo: Norton Seltzer. All images courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston.

by Dale Rosengarten

an emphasis on what it means to be Jewish in the South. As opposed to the “Great White Men” school of historiography, we want to give “ordinary people” opportunities to recount their own life histories. The same approach animates the development of JHSSC’s bi-annual magazine: once we decide on a theme for the issue, we solicit content from individuals in the communities we serve.

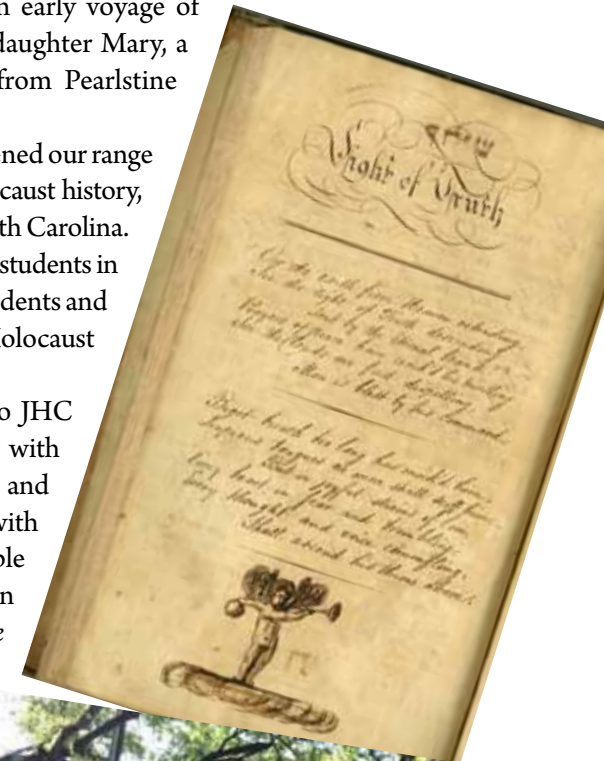
In JHC’s manuscript archives, alongside such priceless items as Isaac Harby’s handwritten prayer book and a first edition of Penina Moïse’s hymnal, documents of everyday life occupy pride of place: family papers and photographs, diaries, memoirs, scrapbooks, correspondence, cookbooks, congregational and organizational records, minutes books, business ledgers, invoices, ephemera, and yes, bills of sale for enslaved people. Though we do not have space to acquire many objects, we have made exceptions for a set of bancas (medicinal cups) that crossed the Atlantic on an early voyage of the ill-fated *Lusitania*, a dollhouse sukkah built in 1925 by Harry Sholk for his daughter Mary, a 19th-century wimpel, Sonny Goldberg’s apron, and advertising paraphernalia from Pearlstine Distributors. Hard as we looked, however, we never could find a peddler’s pack!

With the acquisition of the Southern Jewish Historical Society papers, we broadened our range to regional. Beginning in 2000, the collection’s scope expanded again to include Holocaust history, with contributions from survivors, liberators, and other eyewitnesses with ties to South Carolina. We developed a website based on a memorial quilt fabricated by Gregg Middle School students in 1998–99, and we catalogued our Holocaust Archive to facilitate research by CofC students and provide primary sources for public programs sponsored by the SC Council on the Holocaust and the Charleston Jewish Federation, among other groups.

In 2007, Irene Rosenthal, widow of Rabbi William A. Rosenthal, donated to JHC her husband’s marvelous collection of Judaica, assembled over his lifetime, along with his professional and research papers. With funding from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), we were able to catalog, digitize, and post online, with meticulous metadata, the bulk of the Rosenthal Collection, creating an incomparable resource for researchers around the globe. Moving beyond our focus on the American South, we mounted an online exhibition curated by Samuel Gruber titled *Life of the Synagogue*. Constructed around images of more than 75 items from the Rosenthal Collection, the exhibition exemplifies our commitment to transform archival assets into public history accessible to people everywhere.

Taking another step in the direction of public history, JHC partnered in 2014 with CofC’s Jewish Studies Program and JHSSC to establish the Pearlstine/Lipov Center for Southern Jewish Culture—an engine of research that combines the strengths of Charleston’s Jewish historical and cultural institutions, contributes courses to the CofC curriculum, and sponsors a dynamic Fellowship Program in support of new scholarship, publication, and artistic production. In 2019, JHC was the staging grounds for an extraordinarily successful NEH summer institute that brought 25 young scholars from across the country to Charleston for a crash course on southern Jewish history.

Under the auspices of the Pearlstine/Lipov Center, we found a way to take history to the streets, so that anyone with a computer or a mobile phone could tour the urban landscape and engage with the archives while on site. We created an online exhibit titled *Mapping Jewish Charleston*, digitizing three historical and one contemporary map chosen for their aesthetic qualities and dates that marked turning points in the city’s Jewish life, then rectified the early cartography to current GIS coordinates. We identified places of Jewish interest and compiled a cast of characters, going out of our way to profile



Page from manuscript prayer book written by Isaac Harby, ca. 1825. Special Collections, College of Charleston. Harlan Greene leads scholars on a walking tour of Charleston, SC, for the NEH summer institute, “Privilege and Prejudice: Jewish History in the American South,” May 2019. Photo: Dale Rosengarten.

individuals—especially women—who were not necessarily movers and shakers but were representative of social and demographic trends. With help from ace property researcher Sarah Fick, we pulled narrative material and quantifiable data from our archival holdings and secondary sources, and from public records such as censuses, city directories, Sanborn maps, registers of real estate transactions, wills, newspaper accounts, and advertisements. We fashioned this “thick description” into short, illustrated entries pinpointed on the relevant maps, now accessible through portable technology outside the quiet solemnity of the reading room.



Archivist Sarah Dorpinghaus and intern Gillian Rogers sort postcards from the Rosenthal Judaica Collection in Special Collections, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston, 2011. Photo: Leslie McKellar/College of Charleston.

Over the past quarter century, we have done a lot to broadcast South Carolina’s rich Jewish heritage. Our goal ahead is to tell a more comprehensive story. We can do this by “expanding the archives” and acknowledging that museum exhibitions and archival collections privilege the privileged, that silver tea services, miniature portraits, and carefully crafted objects of Judaica are more likely to come to rest in a vitrine or vault than the less dazzling material legacies of the poor.

We are proud to celebrate Jews who joined freedom fighters not only in Mississippi, but in Sumter County and Greenville, South Carolina. Yet while we are mindful that color is only one basis for discrimination, we must be forthright about Jewish complicity in the institution of slavery and the oppressive regimes of Jim Crow and segregation. For our oral history archives, we want to record more voices from outside the community. We want to hear from the Black women and men who worked in

Jewish kitchens, stores, and synagogues. We want to record younger people. We want to seek out Jews of color, Jews who identify as LGBTQ, and secular Jews who are underrepresented in our database. We want to document incidents of antisemitism, collecting, for example, flyers distributed by the Ku Klux Klan as they marched down main streets across the state, materials from white nationalist groups, and evidence of quotas that once restricted Jews from admission to law schools and medical schools.

Today, more than at any time since the end of World War II, it serves the interests of Jewish people to join in active partnerships with social justice movements and to recognize, for instance, the points of intersection as well as divergence between Jewish and African American history. It is not accidental that the 2020 page of *Mapping Jewish Charleston* begins at Marion Square, site of the Holocaust Memorial and the recently removed Calhoun monument.

Jews have left their mark on every phase of South Carolina’s history. But if their saga is not recorded, collected, archived, exhibited, and published, the future of their past is uncertain. As both a scholarly repository in an academic library and a self-styled community archive, the Jewish Heritage Collection strives to invigorate the process of preservation and give people tools for taking ownership of the past.

Dale Rosengarten is the Founding Curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection, Special Collections, Addlestone Library, College of Charleston.

From Broom Closet to Industry Leader

by Jeremy Katz, Senior Director of Archives

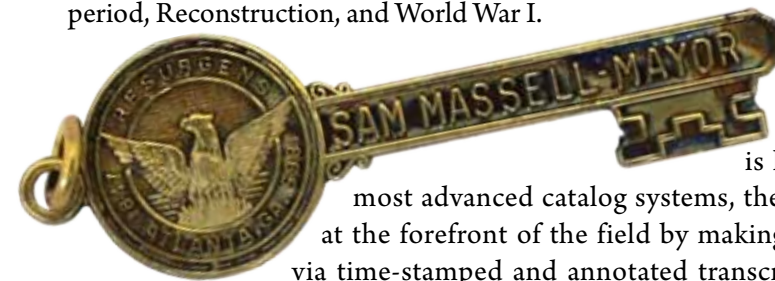
What started in the mid-1980s as the Jewish Community Archives in a closet at the Atlanta Jewish Federation (now the Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta) has since grown into the largest repository for Jewish history in the Southeast. Known today as the Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives for Southern Jewish History, the collection has been part of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum since the museum’s founding in 1996. The museum’s holdings now encompass millions of documents, tens of thousands of photographs, one

thousand artifacts and textiles, and more than a thousand oral history interviews documenting Jewish life in Georgia and Alabama from colonial times to the present day.

Over the decades, the Breman Museum has expanded its collecting scope from Atlanta to the rest of the state and neighboring Alabama as well. We strive to highlight contributions Jews have made to the region, preserve evidence of violent antisemitism, such as the lynching of Leo M. Frank and the bombing of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation

Temple, and ensure that materials in the permanent collection reflect the diversity of the Jewish community. Special projects have focused on Jewish veterans, Holocaust survivors, Jewish-owned businesses, summer camps, Jewish women, Sephardim, Soviet Jewry, civil rights, and Jewish political involvement. These efforts continue today as we seek out collections documenting gender and sexual diversity, as well as Jews of color. The archives recently acquired, for example, the papers of Rabbi Josh Lesser, documenting the career of a native Atlantan and founding rabbi of Congregation Bet Haverim, the first LGBTQ Jewish congregation in the area.

Spanning the full chronology of Jewish life in Georgia and Alabama is another central goal of the archives. The absorption of the Savannah Jewish Archives in 2015 filled a significant gap in the permanent collection. Measuring 200 linear feet, these materials provide evidence of Jewish settlement in Savannah and Chatham County dating back to the colonial period, including, for example, documents, photographs, and a Bible that belonged to the Minis family, one of the first Jewish families to settle in Georgia. Accessioning these resources confirmed the Breman Museum as the central repository for Jewish history in the state. The effort to close gaps continues today as we seek documentation of Jewish life during the antebellum period, Reconstruction, and World War I.

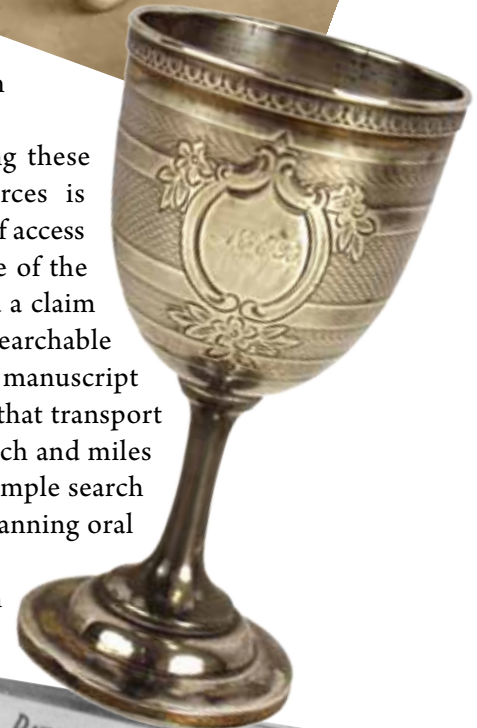


Growing and preserving these rich and expansive resources is vital, but the work is in vain if access is limited. Taking full advantage of the most advanced catalog systems, the Breman Museum has staked a claim at the forefront of the field by making audiovisual materials text searchable via time-stamped and annotated transcripts and indexes, displaying manuscript collections down to the document level, and creating virtual exhibitions that transport patrons into online gallery environments. What used to take our patrons hours of research and miles of travel can now be accomplished from the comfort of home with a few keystrokes. A simple search of names, places, events, or subjects yields results across tens of thousands of records spanning oral history, manuscript, artifact, and photograph collections.

We hope you will think of the archives at the Breman Museum as a resource for research and a place that preserves stories of Jewish life in Georgia and Alabama. To learn more, please visit: www.thebreman.org.

Jeremy Katz is the immediate past Senior Director of Archives at the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum in Atlanta, Georgia, and author of *The Jewish Community of Atlanta* (Arcadia Publishing, 2021). He recently accepted the position of Archivist at Hamilton College in Clinton, New York.

From top: Rhoda Kaufman (1888–1956), likely on left, and her sister Bernice, Columbus, GA, no date. Kiddush cup given to Emilie Baer and Abraham Rosenfeld on the occasion of their wedding in October of 1867. The Rosenfeld’s wedding inspired the founding of the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation (The Temple). Key to the city of Atlanta inscribed with the seal of the city and “Sam Massell, Mayor.” Massell, the city’s first Jewish mayor, served from 1970–74. Civil rights protesters outside Charles Lebedin’s deli, which, like other Atlanta restaurants, was not yet integrated, 1963. Images courtesy of the William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum.



Expanding the Archive(s)

JHSSC hosts the Southern Jewish Historical Society

All sessions will be online, Eastern Daylight Time, and are free and open to the public.
To register, go to jhssc.org/events/upcoming

Thursday, October 21

2:00–2:15 P.M. Welcome by JHSSC president Lilly Filler and SJHS program co-chair Shari Rabin (Oberlin College)

2:15–3:30

Expanding the Archive(s) of Southern Jewish History

Chair: Marcie Cohen Ferris (Emeritus, University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill)

Moderator: Jason Lustig (University of Texas–Austin)

- Rachel G. Barnett and Lyssa Kligman Harvey (Kugels & Collards, SC)
- William Obrochta (Beth Ahabah Museum and Archives, Richmond, VA)
- Joshua Furman (Houston Jewish History Archive, Rice University, TX)
- Deborah Gurt (Jewish Mobile Oral History Project, Mobile, AL)
- Jeremy Katz (William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, GA)
- Nora Katz (Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, MS)
- Dale Rosengarten (Jewish Heritage Collection, College of Charleston, SC)

3:45–5:00

Collecting Kentucky Jewish History

Moderator: Sarah Dorpinghaus (University of Kentucky Libraries)

- Janice W. Fernheimer (University of Kentucky)
- Heather Fox (University of Louisville)
- Abby Glogower (The Filson Historical Society)

Friday, October 22

2:00–3:15 P.M.

Laura Leibman (Reed College) ~ The Art of the (Southern) Jewish Family

Janice Rothschild Blumberg Lecture on Culture, Arts, and Southern Jewish History

Introduction by Ashley Walters (College of Charleston)

3:30–4:30

Facts and Fictions: Archives of Literature and Performance

Chair: Adam Meyer (Vanderbilt University)

- Heather Nathans (Tufts University) ~ Judaism in the Background: Silent Spectacles and 'Missing' Archives in 19th-Century American Theatre
- Michael Hoberman (Fitchburg State University) ~ Did You Ever Hear of Judah Benjamin? Fictional Representations of the Jewish Confederate

7:00

Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Shabbat service, including, at **7:30 P.M.**, **Listen to the Streets: How Old City Maps Can Enrich Our Historical Imagination** ~ Guest presentation by Marni Davis (Georgia State University)

Saturday, October 23

9:30 A.M.

Synagogue Emanu-El Shabbat service, including, at **10:45 A.M.**, **Willard Hirsch and The Menorah for The Six Million** ~ Commemorative program honoring renowned Charleston sculptor Willard Hirsch, o.b.m., and the six-branched menorah he designed in 1972

of Southern Jewish History

45th Annual Conference ~ October 21–24, 2021

Program Committee: Shari Rabin, Dale Rosengarten, Marcie Cohen Ferris, and Ashley Walters

Saturday, October 23

1:00–2:30 P.M.

Archives and the Discoverable Life

Chair: Ellen Umansky (Fairfield University)

- Austin Coke (University of Kentucky) ~ Lost History: Uncovering Lexington's Early Jewish Business Community, 1867–1924
- Ray Arsenault (University of South Florida) ~ The Most Arrested Rabbi in America: Si Dresner's Civil Rights Activism in the Jim Crow South, 1961–1965
- R. Barbara Gitenstein (College of New Jersey) ~ Experience Is an Angled Road: My Journey from Florala, Alabama

Sunday, October 24

11:00 A.M.–12:00 P.M. JHSSC Annual Meeting (election of officers)

3:30–4:30

Archives of Dislocation and Rescue

Chair: Eric Goldstein (Emory University)

- Marilyn Miller (Tulane University) ~ A Secret Program Revealed: Aid Organization Archives and 'Enemy Alien' Internment in the South during World War II
- Andrew Sperling (American University) ~ Creative Power: A Jewish Refugee in the Jim Crow South
- Joshua Furman (Rice University) ~ From Kiev to Cowboys: Houston's Jewish Community and the Soviet Jewry Movement

4:45–6:00

Stephen Whitfield (Brandeis University) ~ Jewish Lawyers versus Jim Crow

Inaugural Dr. Lawrence J. Kanter Lecture on Southern Jewish History

Introduction by SJHS President Jay Silverberg



With generous support from Nelson Mullins



Laura Arnold Leibman is Professor of English and Humanities at Reed College. Her work focuses on how material culture changes our understanding of the role of women, children, and Jews of color in the early Atlantic World. Leibman is the author of *The Art of the Jewish Family: A History of Women in Early New York in Five Objects* (Bard Graduate Center, 2020), which won three National Jewish Book Awards, and *Messianism, Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life* (2012), which won a Jordan Schnitzer Book Award and a National Jewish Book Award. Her latest book, *Once We Were Slaves* (2021), is about members of a multiracial Jewish family who began their lives enslaved in the Caribbean and became some of the wealthiest Jews in New York.



Stephen Whitfield holds the Max Richter Chair in American Civilization (Emeritus) at Brandeis University, where he taught from 1972 until 2016. He is the author of nine books, including *A Death in the Delta: The Story of Emmett Till* (1988), *The Culture of the Cold War* (1991), *In Search of American Jewish Culture* (1999), and, most recently, *Learning on the Left: Political Profiles of Brandeis University* (2020). Present at the rebirth of the Southern Jewish Historical Society in Richmond in 1976, Whitfield has served since 2009 as the book review editor of *Southern Jewish History*. In 2010, he received the Society's Samuel Proctor Award for Distinguished Scholarship.

Saving History after Harvey

by Joshua Furman

Over the course of three days in late August 2017, Hurricane Harvey overwhelmed Houston and Southeast Texas, dumping more than 50 inches of rain on the region and causing unprecedented devastation to the nation's fourth-largest city. In the aftermath of the storm, more than 95,000 homes within Houston's city limits had flooded. One of the areas most severely affected by Harvey was the Meyerland neighborhood and surrounding communities to the southwest of downtown that have served as the hub of Houston's Jewish residents since the 1960s—a low-lying zone that has been prone to flooding over the last several decades.

The Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University grew out of a spontaneous effort—a collaboration between Rice faculty and staff and local volunteers—to preserve documents and photographs recovered from flooded homes and synagogues. Since 2018, the archive's focus has expanded beyond Houston to the entire South Texas region, working to preserve historical records from smaller cities such as Galveston and Baytown, as well as from Jewish communities that have disappeared from towns such as Wharton. As of May 2021, we have accessioned more than 150 collections from families, synagogues, institutions, and Jewish-owned businesses across South Texas. Of particular interest are materials from Jewish World War II veterans, bulletins and correspondence compiled by Houston Action for Soviet Jewry, and the papers of local attorney Sherry Merfish, who engaged in a national campaign to discredit the Jewish American Princess stereotype in the 1980s and 1990s.



Above: Joshua Furman, September 2017, assisting with recovery of Beth Yeshurun congregational records from the devastating flooding left behind by Hurricane Harvey. Photo: Michael Duke, Jewish Herald-Voice. Below: Beth Jacob World War II service banner donated after the owner learned Furman was "collecting Houston Jewish history." It was restored with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Photo: Jeff Fitlow, Rice University.



Because we work in a flood zone and have become used to acquiring collections that have been exposed to water and mold, it is especially critical that we digitize as much of our materials as possible, both for preservation purposes and for ease of access. In addition to creating our own digital catalog, which is connected to Rice's Fondren Library, we have partnered with The Portal to Texas History, an online database of Texas periodicals and primary sources maintained by the University of North Texas. With a grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), we have been able to digitize large collections of Houston synagogue bulletins and commemorative books and share them with a wide network of researchers. I hope the improved accessibility will make it easier than ever before to incorporate Texas Jewish perspectives into broader historical narratives.

The pandemic brought certain aspects of our work to a sudden halt in March 2020—no more meeting with families in their living rooms to review scrapbooks and wedding albums! But the lockdowns also created an opportunity to launch an oral history initiative using Zoom to interview Jewish Texans about their family histories and experiences during the era of coronavirus. Many of these interviews have been edited and transcribed, and they are being published through our digital portal (<https://scholarship.rice.edu/handle/1911/105156>) and the Rice Humanities YouTube channel. The narratives, rich in colorful anecdotes and reflecting a diversity of perspectives, add an important layer to our work. To date, we have recorded

more than 25 interviews with subjects who have spoken on a variety of topics, from growing up Jewish in small towns like Schulenburg and New Braunfels, to being the first openly gay pulpit rabbi in Houston, to running a Jewish senior care center during the pandemic.

Moving forward, as we continue to expand the archive's mission and reach, a concerted effort is underway to engage two populations within the wider Houston Jewish community whose stories have remained relatively obscure, and whose documents and photographs have not made their way into the archives yet. The Fondren Southwest neighborhood is home to a thriving ultra-Orthodox community that has seen tremendous growth in recent years, thanks to record numbers of transplants from New

York, New Jersey, and California. Also centered around Fondren Southwest is a substantial Sephardic and Mizrahi population served by two synagogues and a day school. The full picture of Jewish life in Houston is incomplete without documenting the stories and contributions of Jews from the Middle East and Latin America, who have so much to add in enriching our understanding of southern Jewish identity today. It is my hope that our efforts to build contacts and nurture relationships with members of these communities will further diversify and strengthen the archive in 2021 and beyond.

Joshua Furman is Associate Director of Jewish Studies and Curator of the Houston Jewish History Archive at Rice University.

Jewish Mobile's Narrow Bridge

by Deborah Gurt

Mobile, Alabama, is home to a Jewish community formally established in 1841, when members purchased land for a burial ground. Approximately 1,000 in number, today's Jewish residents are deeply entwined with the fabric of the city—in business, education, medicine, and civic life. Among them are Holocaust survivors and their descendants, families who have lived here for generations, Jews of color, transplants from the North, LGBTQ Jews, and converts to Judaism, unified primarily by their experiences as members of a religious and cultural minority in Alabama.

The Jewish Mobile Oral History Project (JMOHP) of the McCall Library at the University of South Alabama was developed with funding from the Alabama Humanities Foundation to record interviews capturing the history, communal development, and present-day experience of Mobile's Jewish citizens. The project was conceived at a moment of political turmoil following the tumultuous first years of the Trump presidency. An alarming rise in antisemitic hate-speech

and violence had begun across the country. After the 2018 massacre at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, leaders from Mobile's law enforcement, city government, and local churches and mosques gathered for a hastily arranged vigil at Ahavas Chesed Synagogue to express support for Mobile's Jews. This expression of solidarity was profound, but the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty persisted.

The JMOHP project was designed with three primary aims: to record and preserve early memories of community elders; to document the present-day experiences of new arrivals and younger people; and to share these stories with the goal of encouraging inter-communal dialog. Public engagement was a primary mission of the project, an objective the Alabama Humanities Foundation specifically cited for support. Hence, we sought a variety of interlocutors to provide a range of viewpoints and, in this way, expand the Jewish archive.

Initially planned as a collaborative project, with an active community steering committee and several student interns, COVID forced a reevaluation of method and



In his interview, Donald Zivitz describes Jackie Robinson's 1951 visit to his father's store, which was located on Davis Avenue in the heart of Mobile's Black community. Image courtesy of Donald Zivitz, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.

a recalibration of expectations. The mode of interviewing was shifted to virtual, using a podcasting platform. Student intern Abigayle Edler, rather than participating in communal activities, found herself editing interview transcripts and joining Zoom events and services. The culminating public event planned for November is, however, currently expected to be in person, and we hope it will bring a festive closure to the work.

To date, 25 interviews have been completed and a handful are upcoming. Interviewees include members of Mobile's Reform congregation, Springhill Avenue Temple; the Conservative synagogue, Ahavas Chesed; plus a few unaffiliated and non-Jewish but deeply engaged friends of the community. Mobile has an unusual array of cooperative organizations that bridge religious divides, notably the Mobile Christian-Jewish Dialogue and the Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education. Several narrators are converts to Judaism who brought perspectives on communal life that reflect a genuine grappling with questions of identity more easily ignored by Jews by birth. In some instances, these narrators expressed great enthusiasm for Jewish life and practice that is notably missing in other interviews. A general pessimism was evident among many older narrators.

Patrick Crabtree, who identifies as a gay man, referred repeatedly to his "home" synagogue, Bet Haverim in Atlanta, which was founded by and for LGBTQ Jews. He discussed the activism of Rabbi Josh Lesser as something



Holocaust survivor Agnes Tennenbaum (1923-2016) shares her story with students at the University of South Alabama. She was active in the Mobile Christian-Jewish Dialogue and regularly taught in local schools about her experiences. Mobile Area Holocaust Survivors Collection, The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of South Alabama.

that encouraged him to see new possibilities for bringing Jewish values and social justice work into alignment. In Mobile, Crabtree channels that passion into work with the NAACP and the Alabama Education Association.

Other notable themes include the expansion of pro-Israel Evangelical Christian overtures toward the Jewish community that are welcomed in some quarters and viewed warily in others. For a community awakened to the threat of physical harm, the hand offered in support of Jews and Israel is comforting, even if the areas of actual policy agreement are narrow.

One of the project's central goals is to document and make accessible the perceptions of members of Mobile's Jewish community. Our intern, who spent months proofing interview transcripts, notes that she had almost no familiarity with many of the concepts that are central to the experience of Jewish life in America. This suggests that the need at the heart of the original proposal—to gather resources that can promote dialogue and learning—remains acute.

Viewed in sum, the JMOHP interviews reflect a population in transition, holding on to certain vestiges of the past, casting off others, and wrestling to develop a new and different sense of itself and its place in the 21st-century American landscape.

Deborah Gurt is Assistant Librarian and Interim Director of the McCall Library at the University of South Alabama and President of Congregation Ahavas Chesed in Mobile.

Pursuing Justice

by William Obrochta

The Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives in Richmond, Virginia, was established in 1977 by an agreement between Congregation Beth Ahabah and the Museum and Archives Trust. The purpose of the Trust is to provide for the care, maintenance, and safekeeping of the congregation's museum and archives collection, promote its availability, and provide access to its members and the general public.

Initially, the Museum & Archives focused on preserving the papers and ritual objects of Kahal Kadosh (K.K.) Beth Shalome, founded in 1789, the sixth-oldest congregation in the United States, and its successor K.K. Beth Ahabah, established in 1841 by German immigrants who, unlike the members of Beth Shalome, followed Ashkenazic tradition. Almost immediately the Museum & Archives began collecting materials from

Jewish organizations, businesses, and families throughout the Richmond area.

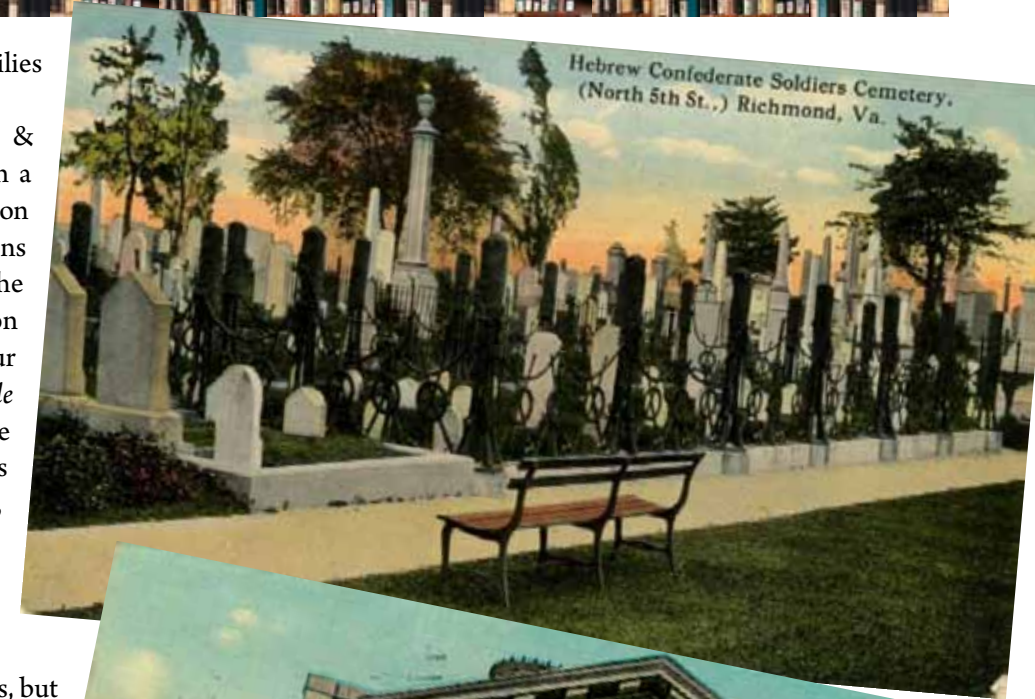
In 1983, the Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives officially opened to the public in a free-standing building owned by Congregation Beth Ahabah. Since then, our publications and exhibitions have concentrated on the history of Richmond's Jewish population and on Jewish practice in general. Our most recent exhibition, *Beyond the Temple Walls*, showcases the contributions of the city's Jews, through their chosen pursuits in the fields of health care, government, education, social work, and the arts, to the lives of all people in Richmond.

The Museum & Archives has enlarged the scope of southern Jewish history not so much by expanding our collecting protocols, but rather by looking at our collections with fresh eyes and asking different questions.

Richmond's Black Lives Matter protests and the effort to remove the city's Confederate monuments took place a few blocks from the museum. In fact, the congregation's administrative building was vandalized when a protest in May 2020 turned violent. These confrontations led to a good deal of soul searching and prompted Beth Ahabah's Brit Olam (Social Justice) Committee to ask the Museum & Archives to survey its records to get a better understanding of the historic relationship between the African American and Jewish communities. Specifically, the committee asked the museum to research 20 events in the modern civil rights era and examine the Jewish community's response. The committee is using this information to help guide the congregation's discussions about the appropriateness of several Civil War memorials in the Temple.

Another area of concern is Jewish Richmond's support of slavery. The Museum & Archives' genealogical records have helped several African American researchers trace their ancestry to enslaved women owned by Jews. Several of these individuals are descended from Isaac Judah, the first reader (hazzan) at Beth Shalome.

The Museum & Archives also maintains the records of the Hebrew Cemetery, which may contain African American burials in a portion of the graveyard the city of Richmond sold to the cemetery at the turn of the 20th century. Staff members have given tours and talked with groups that include



Postcard images of the Hebrew Confederate Soldiers Cemetery, 1900, (top) and Beth Ahabah Synagogue, 1924, in Richmond, VA. William A. Rosenthal Judaica Collection, Special Collections, College of Charleston.

descendants of individuals buried in what once was the Second African Burial Ground. Our archives assisted a local historian who worked with community activists to place a historical marker at the site. The marker was approved in mid-June 2021.

The Museum & Archives continues to work with the Brit Olam committee and community groups to come to a better understanding of our shared past and how we use that past to inform our actions in the future.

William Obrochta is Executive Director of Beth Ahabah Museum & Archives.

Kugels & Collards

What began as a passionate personal interest in food, recipes, and South Carolina's Jewish history has become a digital collection, now under development as a book. In 2017, when we approached Robin Waites, Executive Director of Historic Columbia (HC), about writing a food blog for the Columbia Jewish Heritage Initiative, she readily agreed. Brainstorming sessions with HC's directors of research and marketing led to a format and a plan. We would gather the stories, either by interviewing or soliciting submissions from members of the local community. HC Research Director Katharine Allen would provide historical assistance, investigating food stories from Columbia's past.

We crafted an annual calendar with topics for each month and began gathering family food stories, recipes, and vintage photographs. We called our project *Kugels & Collards* to signify the marriage between traditional Jewish dishes, such as the classic noodle pudding known as kugel, and southern ingredients like collards. Over the next four years, the *Kugels & Collards* team produced 36 blog post entries and published more than 50 recipes.

In 2019, editors of the University of South Carolina Press who had seen our blog approached us and solicited a proposal for a South Carolina Jewish cookbook. What we suggested, however, is not a typical cookbook but a compilation of essays and family recipes from contributors across South Carolina.

We sent out formal email requests to friends, relatives, and Jewish Historical Society of South Carolina members to submit their food stories, recipes, and photographs. Because the book encompasses South Carolina and not just Columbia, we needed representation from across the state and developed a "wish list" of families and recipes that would be geographically

balanced. As a result of good contacts and productive leads, we will publish 65 essays and many family recipes that come to us from Jewish and non-Jewish individuals, those with roots in Europe and in Africa, women and men whose culinary traditions have borne fruit in the Palmetto State.

We learned that men as well as women were involved in creating southern Jewish cuisine—

Jack Kahn, the pickle man from Charleston, Groucho Miller from Columbia, and Casey Manning from Dillon, to name just three—and that women were not only homemakers and caregivers but also creators of food businesses who worked outside the home.

Arnold Wengrow, formerly of Columbia, writes about his grandmother: "Rachel Pearlstine Wolff lived one of those stories that are legend for southern Jews in small towns. Widowed in 1914, with three young children, she took over

the businesses her husband had started on Main Street in Allendale in 1873. She also kept a kosher boarding house for Jewish salesman who needed to stay during cotton and watermelon buying season. She raised chickens and took them in crates tied to the top of the car to Augusta, Georgia, to be killed by the kosher butcher."

Our initial intent was to celebrate the Jewish food table. As our exploration progressed, we became aware of the intimate connection between South

Carolina's Jewish food culture and the Black women who worked as cooks and housekeepers in Jewish homes. Just as we examine the diverse ingredients found in our favorite meals, we seek to acknowledge the contributions of individuals previously under-represented or altogether left out of our kitchen tales. African American influences combined with traditional Jewish recipes from our immigrant ancestors form the basis of what we now recognize as southern Jewish cuisine,



Above: Lyssa Harvey (l) and Rachel Barnett in a field of broccoli at Clayton Rawl Farms, Lexington, SC, January 2021. **Below:** Renowned cookbook author Joan Nathan shares culinary tips in the kitchen of Richland Library Northeast, Columbia, SC, February 2019. **Photo:** Megan Plott. *Courtesy of Historic Columbia.*



by Rachel Gordin Barnett and Lyssa Kligman Harvey

with regional specialties such as collard greens, black eye peas, rice and gravy, and fried chicken coexisting alongside brisket, tzimmes, and kugel.

We have received stories and recipes from families representing a broad spectrum of observance, from those who keep strictly kosher to others who unapologetically embrace southern foodways, no matter how *treyf*. Some, like Donald Sloan from Myrtle Beach, have adopted a "don't ask, don't tell" policy when eating out. Natalie Moses, who grew up eating pork and plenty of shellfish in Sumter, South Carolina, characterizes her family's food identity as "pretty diluted."

The stories that have surfaced form a mosaic of ethnic identities. From the Moise family that arrived in Charleston in 1791, we received a rum cake recipe that harkens to their Sephardic roots. Jews exiled from Spain and Portugal were deeply involved in the Caribbean economy through the sugar cane industry. We chose this recipe because of the rum/sugar cane connection. From the descendants of the Ashkenazic Cohen family from Eutawville come a mélange of recipes that feature readily available local produce: figs and peaches for southern jams and chutney; cabbage and fish for traditional East European recipes such as stuffed cabbage and gefilte fish. From Annie Gailliard, an African American woman who lived in the uptown neighborhood of Charleston known to some as "Little Jerusalem," comes an okra gumbo recipe. Annie worked for and lived next door to the Firetag family, and this "told" recipe has been passed down to generations of Firetags.

Food is a powerful repository of memory and history, and we have assembled an unintentional archive through the lens of shared food memories. For example, when the Lash family was interviewed on Zoom about their parents and their business, Lash Kosher Meat Market in Charleston, the siblings told stories of family, festivities, life cycle events, and, of course, food. They laughed, cried, and reminisced. In preparation for the interview, Lyssa listened to and read the two-hour oral history of Lila and Alex Lash recorded by the College of Charleston's Jewish Heritage Collection. From these sources, Lyssa wrote an essay for our forthcoming book that will serve as a permanent record of the family's food history.

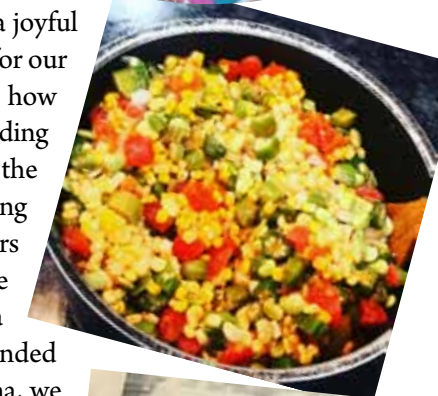
Rheta Aronson Mendelsohn, raised in Orangeburg, aptly describes the hybrid diet of southern Jews: "Truly, we ate like our southern neighbors but with a few notable exceptions—Granny and Mother did not cook with bacon grease or store it in a special little can on the top of the stove. They always used Fleishmann's margarine. Our menus included things our neighbors knew nothing about—chopped liver, herring, blintzes, bagels, lox, brisket, potato and noodle kugel, matzo

balls, matzo brei, and more. So, when we went to the beach every summer, we took along fried chicken, barbeque, and deviled eggs, as well as chopped liver, herring, and brisket."

Kugels & Collards has been a joyful journey not only for us but also for our contributors, who have told us how much they have enjoyed recording or writing their memoirs for the book. When we started collecting Columbia's food stories four years ago, we did not realize that we were actually gathering the history of a Jewish community. As we expanded the project across South Carolina, we were delighted to receive stories about families from small towns where Jews no longer live. Asked about his food memories, Ernie Marcus, who now resides in Washington DC, transported us to his grandmother's home in Eutawville, where "a mix of traditional Southern fare like fried chicken, rice and gravy, okra and tomatoes, and dishes passed down from Eastern Europe" were served. Vivid and emotional recollections like his will live on in *Kugels & Collards* and help preserve the deep and multi-faceted history of southern Jews.

Rachel Gordin Barnett and Lyssa Kligman Harvey are authors of the food blog *Kugels & Collards*.

Top to bottom: Annie Gailliard (1904–2003). **Photo:** Lynda Denberg. Lyssa Harvey's rendition of Mrs. Gailliard's okra gumbo. Rose Louise Rich Aronson and her kugel recipe were featured in *The Times and Democrat*, Orangeburg, SC, July 1986. Images courtesy of *Kugels & Collards*.



Through a Wide-Angle Lens

by Nora Katz and Josh Parshall

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life (ISJL) supports, connects, and celebrates Jewish life in the South by providing educational resources, cultural programming, and spiritual services to communities and individuals across a 13-state region. Historical preservation and interpretation have been a core component of the ISJL's work since its founding. While our collecting efforts and archival holdings have changed in recent years, we continue to approach the Jewish South with a region-wide lens and with an interest in the development of southern Jewish history as a subfield.

From 2000 to 2012, the ISJL operated the original Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience (MSJE) in Utica, Mississippi. While we once collected materials for the museum, that collection has passed on to the new MSJE, which recently opened in New Orleans. We no longer collect physical artifacts, but we do maintain archival holdings and participate in digital collection initiatives.

Among the materials that stayed with the ISJL is our oral history collection, which precedes the founding of the organization itself and is comprised of 800 recordings from 17 states, including hundreds from Mississippi and 80 from Texas. Many of the interviews address small-town Jewish life in places where conventional historical sources are limited. As with other oral history collections, the ISJL interviews offer a rich resource for historical interpretation and fill in missing details, such as the lived experiences of women, whose voices are often absent from traditional repositories.

In a moment of transition—as the MSJE collection moved to New Orleans and the ISJL approached its 20th anniversary—we realized that our institutional records held significance for others in the subfield of southern Jewish history. We formally established the ISJL Institutional History Archive in 2019. Archival materials provide us with a window into early conversations that shaped the organization as it exists today, and shed light on southern Jewish history and its development. The archive includes books, slides, photographs,

scrapbooks, news articles, internal correspondence, publicity and marketing materials, recordings of events and interviews, and even golf balls from charity tournaments.

The archive serves as a resource both for internal institutional memory and for outside researchers who want to learn more about the emergence of interest in southern Jewish history and heritage and its connection to questions of memory and identity. What does it mean to interpret and share this history? How has discussion about and scholarship on southern Jewish history changed in the past 50 years? This metanarrative has been largely overlooked in southern Jewish public history work, and we are excited to begin telling that story through the ISJL's collection.

The pandemic has provided a unique opportunity to expand the archive of southern Jewish life. Like other cultural institutions, the ISJL began recording our community members' experiences during one of the most tumultuous years in recent history. We have conducted dozens of interviews via video calls, gathering accounts of daily life from southern Jews, and have joined forces with other organizations to document the impacts of COVID-19 across the region. One project, coordinated and hosted by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, aims to develop a digital collection telling the story of American Jewish life during the global health crisis. An oral history initiative spearheaded by the Council of American Jewish Museums includes partners from around the country, and we are focused specifically on adding southern voices to this national collection.

All of our archival and collecting efforts—which are ever-changing and adapting to the moment—are meant to uplift southern Jewish voices and explore the emergence of southern Jewish history as a topic of academic study and public history.

Nora Katz is Director of Heritage and Interpretation and Josh Parshall is Director of History at the Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.



Nora Katz, Director of Heritage and Interpretation (center), with History and Heritage interns Rose Steptoe and Mimi Brown in the ISJL Institutional History Archive, 2019. Courtesy of Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life.

It Began with a Phone Call

by Rachel G. Barnett, Executive Director

A phone call and an email set in motion a chain of events that led to a grand mitzvah. On April 30, 2021, Gary Kramer, originally from Whiteville, North Carolina, left a voice message for Jewish Heritage Collection (JHC) curator Dale Rosengarten asking for advice: what could be done with a memorial tablet from Temple Beth El in Rock Hill, South Carolina, that had been stored at Beth Israel in Whiteville since 1963, the year Beth El closed its doors? “We are looking to place this piece of South Carolina Jewish history in a respectful manner,” he wrote in a follow-up email. Dale immediately referred him to me.

How the sparsely populated plaque marking the yahrzeit, or anniversary of death, of 13 former Rock Hill residents had come to Whiteville became clear later, but with Beth Israel disbanding and selling its building, the first order of business was to find the tablet a home.

Dale sent me a list of contacts in Rock Hill, including several people interviewed for JHC in 1999, and the group began firing off emails and bringing others into the conversation. I just managed to keep up as the Rock Hill natives proposed ideas. Harriet Goode suggested as a resting place the Jewish section established in 1983 in Forest Hills Cemetery. She also mentioned a Friedheim family burial ground in Laurelwood Cemetery. We reached out to Noah Levine of the Jewish Legacy Project to ask if he knew of any “out of the box” options for the disposition of memorial plaques. He sent photos of a small building on the site of a Jewish cemetery in Messen, Pennsylvania, and a plan was hatched.

Gerry Schapiro, who has lived in Rock Hill more than 50 years and originally hails from New York, called to discuss creating a small structure like the one in Messen but soon came up with a better solution. The City of Rock Hill owns a multi-purpose building adjacent to Laurelwood Cemetery. Gerry met with the Rock Hill City Manager and secured permission to hang the plaque on a wall in the building. A dozen or so emails later, the crated tablet was on its way back to Rock Hill.

Meanwhile, I learned that when Beth El closed, the synagogue was sold to the Mormons who later sold it to an AME church. The building is standing—I was able to snag a Google photo of it—and with the help of local historian Paul Gettys, we are now researching the congregation's history for JHSSC's *Documenting South Carolina's Synagogues* project.

The Society's stewardship succeeded in repatriating the Rock Hill memorial tablet and opened a new avenue of activity for us—the preservation of objects orphaned when synagogues close or stores go out of business. We are fortunate to have Pillars and members whose financial support enables us to assist when such situations occur, and to be associated with organizations that can provide guidance and research assistance.

So why did the plaque go to Whiteville? One explanation involves family connections between Rock Hill and Whiteville. Another is the circuit-riding rabbi program, funded by Charlotte businessman and inventor I. D. Blumenthal, whose route included both towns.

Pillars

Anonymous

Susan and Charles Altman, Charleston, SC
Ellen Arnovitz, Atlanta, GA
Rachel and Henry Barnett, Columbia, SC
Harold Brody, Atlanta, GA
Alan and Rosemary “Binky” Cohen, Charleston, SC
Alex and Dyan Cohen, Darlington, SC
Joan Cutler, Columbia, SC
Neil and Carolyn Draisin, Charleston, SC
Lowell and Barbara Epstein, Charleston, SC
Lilly and Bruce Filler, Columbia, SC
Richard and Belinda Gergel, Charleston, SC
Steven J. Gold, Greenville, SC
Claire Goldberg, Charleston, SC
Stuart and Rebecca Greenberg, Florence, SC
Max and Ann Meddin Hellman, Charleston, SC
Alan and Charlotte Kahn, Columbia, SC
Jerry and Sue Kline, Columbia, SC
Michael S. Kogan, Charleston, SC
Jan and Larry Lipov, Charleston, SC
Susan R. Lourie, Columbia, SC
Audrey and Mark Mandel, Mt. Pleasant, SC
Albert and Robin Mercer, Athens, GA
Susan and Joe Norton, Charleston, SC
Edward and Sandra Poliakoff, Columbia, SC
Alan and Anne Reyner, Columbia, SC
Dick and Brenda Rosen, Myrtle Beach, SC
Robert and Susan Rosen, Charleston, SC
Jeffrey and Mickey Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Sandra Lee Rosenblum, Charleston, SC
Joseph and Edie Rubin, Charleston, SC
Stephen and Jennifer Savitz, Columbia, SC
Fred and Ellen Seidenberg, Columbia, SC
Larry Simon, Isle of Palms, SC
Mark and Gayle Sloan, Myrtle Beach, SC
Gail (Altman) and Ronald Spahn, Baltimore, MD
Richard Stern, Boston, MA
Haskell and Dale Toporek, Augusta, GA
Anita Zucker, Charleston, SC

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