

SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

VOL. 11, NO.1

SPRING 1998

Dr. and Mrs. Neuton Stern ...

Pioneer in Medicine Legacy of Community Service
Each in Their Own Way Made Things Happen

This is the seventeenth in a series of biographical sketches of Jewish community leaders included in our forthcoming book, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt, History of the Jews of Memphis, 1850's - 1960's."

by Dr. Selma Lewis

For forty-five years, until his death in 1969, Bea and Neuton Stern shared in a compatible, happy, devoted marriage. They were different in temperament - - - when are two people ever not different? - - - but, each in his or her own way, they were alike in making significant contributions to the world around them. Dr. Stern's contributions were primarily in the field of medicine, where he shone as the first cardiologist in the Mid-South. Trained at Harvard University for both undergraduate and medical schools, he enlisted in World War I to serve his country. There the newly-graduated doctor was court-martialed by the United States Army for using a vaccine against meningitis, a treatment with which he was familiar before the army was aware of it. He was exonerated. The French government awarded him a medal during the war for helping in the prevention of epidemics.

Following the war Stern remained in England to study for a year with the foremost cardiologist of his time. Then he returned to Memphis, bringing with him the first electrocardiograph machine in the South, only eleven years after the first commercial one was developed. He embarked on the practice of internal medicine and cardiology, sharing office space with Drs. Jake Alperin and Gilbert Levy.

Stern's introduction to Beatrice Wolf, his future wife, came in a direct, straightforward, feet first way. Bea was visiting her brother, Irwin Wolf, a Memphis cotton broker, who hosted a "kiddie party" to which Dr. Stern was invited. Entrance to the



Dr. & Mrs. Neuton Stern

party was by means of a slide at the front door. When he slid down to enter the party, Stern landed at the feet of his future bride. Within a year they were married.

Marriage for Mrs. Stern meant leaving one exciting career for another. A graduate of Smith College, summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa, she had worked as a reporter for The St. Louis Star, where she was a star reporter with "plum" stories. Then, ready for "the big time," she landed a job as a reporter on The New York World, probably the most important

Please see Stern, Page 6

Sumner Levine Elected New JHS President

"The Quiet Voices", Symposium Makes Excellent Program

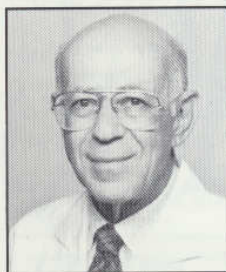
On Sunday, May 17, at the Jewish Community Center, the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South held its annual meeting. Thanks to a great nominating committee headed by former president Steve Biller, ably assisted by Gloria Felsenthal and Marjean Kremer, new officers and members of the Board of Directors were presented and elected. They are as follows: President-Sumner Levine, Vice President-Michael Parker, Vice President-Lynnie Mirvis, Secretary-Peggy Jalenak, Treasurer-Mannie Ettingoff, Editor-David Schneider, Historian-Shirley Feibelman, Legal counsel-Stephen Biller, Directors-Harvey Reisman, Irwin Kaufman, Dr. Robert Kalin, Laurie Scheidt, Buck Boshwit, May Lynn Mansbach, Abe Kriegel, Gil Halpern, and Marcia Bicks.

After the business portion of our meeting, program chairman Joel Felt introduced Berkley Kalin, who along with Mark K. Bauman, edited the book, "The Quiet Voices-Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880's to 1990's". Berkley explained that at a Southern Jewish Historical Society meeting in 1992 in Montgomery, Alabama, various discussions about Memphis rabbis along with other Southern rabbis indicated that rabbinical participation in the civil rights movements had begun earlier and had been far more widespread than previously thought. This was the beginning of an effort to research and document the contributions of these rabbis and was the beginning of "The Quiet Voices".

Berkley then discussed the chapter of the book which he

Please see Symposium, page 2

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MEMPHIS AND THE MID-SOUTH - FOUNDED IN 1986
P.O. BOX 17304, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38187



Dr. Tom Stern

As another Jewish Historical Society year draws to a close, we can look back on an interesting period and look forward to another. Our trip to Clarksdale was a great success. The meeting on Growing Up Jewish in our area was enthusiastically received and provoked much comment. Yet to come is our presentation on Silent Voices: Southern Rabbis in the Civil

Rights Period by co-editor Berkeley Kalin and contributors Patricia LaPointe and Rabbi Micah Greenstein.

Selma Lewis' book is in final prepublication stage and should appear at any time. We will have a book-signing event. All members of the Society as of last year will be given a copy.

As a follow-up to the book, the Board voted to fund a video on the history of the Jews in Memphis. Rob Cooper native Memphian and a highly experienced videographer with PBS and commercial credentials, has just started on this and should finish before the end of the year.

We will acquire tapes and transcripts of interviews as an outgrowth of this project.

We look forward to a trip to Helena in the fall.

It has been a pleasure to serve as your President for the last two years. Anything accomplished can be credited to

Jewish Historical Society of Memphis & The Mid-South

Officers 1996-1997

PRESIDENT	Sumner Levine
1ST VICE PRESIDENT	Michael Parker
2ND VICE PRESIDENT	Lynnie Mirvis
TREASURER	Mannie Ettingoff
SECRETARY	Peggy Jalenak
LEGAL COUNSEL	Stephen Biller
HISTORIAN	Shirley Feibelman
EDITOR	David Schneider

DIRECTORS

Harvey Reisman, Irwin Kaufman, Robert Kalin, Laurie Scheidt, Buck Boshwit, May Lynn Mansback, Abe Kriegel, Gil Halpern, Marcia Bicks

HONORARY OFFICERS

Helen Wax, Marx Borod, Lester Sewel, Laura Spiegler, Elias Goldsmith, Harry Jaffe, Abe Schwab, Judge Irving Struach, Harriet Stern, Leonid Saharovici, Gloria Felsenthal, David Schneider

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Mr. & Mrs. Ron Cohn

Mrs. Betty Schonthal

your Board and others who have been of great help. I look forward to further successes under your new officers. ✨

Symposium *Continued from Page 1*

contributed, "A Plea For Tolerance: Fineschriber In Memphis". William H. Fineschriber served the congregation, Children of Israel, from 1911 to 1924, first as assistant Rabbi and then as Senior Rabbi when Dr. Max Samfield died on September 28, 1915. Rabbi Fineschriber spoke often about human rights and the newspapers quoted him frequently. He became a great friend and confidant of C.P.J. Mooney, editor of the Commercial Appeal.

Rabbi Micah Greenstein, of Temple Israel, who along with his father Howard Greenstein contributed the closing section of the book, "Then and Now: Southern Rabbis and Civil Rights", spoke about the relationship of southern rabbis to their congregants and community. Also, the human side of these issues, the joys and sorrows of southern rabbis during the period of time the civil rights movement was in its infancy and as it grew to become a full-fledged social movement.

Patricia M. LaPointe, Memphis librarian authored the chapter entitled "The Prophetic Voice: Rabbi James A. Wax". She spoke of Dr. Wax's deep emotions and his work in Memphis during the sanitation workers strike and Rabbi Wax's role as head of the Memphis Ministers Association. Rabbi Wax was active in many segments of the community and served as secretary of the Memphis Committee on Community Relations (MCCR). He was deeply committed to his own religious heritage and had a special understanding of mans injustice to man.

After the speakers concluded, they remained to answer questions and sign books which were available for purchase at the meeting. ✨

Dr. Gary P. Zola to Succeed Jacob Rader Marcus

As Executive Director of

The American Jewish Archives

The late historian's student to lead renowned center for the study of the American Jewish Archives

(Cincinnati)... Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, President of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR), announced the appointment of Dr. Gary P. Zola as Executive Director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives. On July 1, 1998, Zola will become the Center's second director—succeeding the institution's founding director and namesake, Dr. Jacob Rader Marcus (1896-1995). Marcus served as the director of the American Jewish Archives for nearly 50 years—from the institution's inception in 1947 until his death in 1995. According to Rabbi Zimmerman, Zola will simultaneously join the College-Institute's faculty as Assistant Professor of the American Jewish Experience.

The American Jewish Archives (AJA) is widely regarded as one of the worlds leading research centers. Located on HUC-JIR's Cincinnati campus, the AJA is dedicated to the collection and preservation of research materials on the history of Jews and Jewish communities in the Western Hemisphere, but primarily in the United States. It's massive collection—consisting of more than 10 million documents—contains an impressive array of memoirs, original documents, genealogical records, books, photos, and images. It is probably the largest collection of source materials found anywhere documenting the history of the Jewish community of a country. The collection also preserves

Please see Zola, page 4

"Register of Burials"

R. Clark Sexton
Vicksburg, Mississippi - 1852 to 1860
by Julius Herscovici

Julius Herscovici is a native of Romania where he received his BS degree in chemistry. He moved to Mississippi 22 years ago where he worked as a concrete engineer and superintendent for Grand Gulf Nuclear Station until his retirement from the Bechtel Power Corp.

Herscovici is an amateur historian and has published several articles on religion in the Vicksburg Post, a local newspaper. His hobby is photography.

Mr. T.J. Jamerson, Vicksburg, Mississippi owns and operates A.J. Martin Marble and Granite Works which specializes in funeral markers. They are the oldest in Vicksburg and possibly in Mississippi. Attending to the needs of the poor and the rich, his firm has an excellent reputation for quality work. In 1966, Mr. Jamerson found a book at the bottom of an old cabinet in his office. It looked like an old journal. On the cover was a label, "Register of Burials" and it was signed "R. Clark, Sexton." This badly worn manuscript is an original record of those who died in Vicksburg and of others in Warren County, Mississippi. The entries begin on March 18, 1852 and end on March 20, 1860. How long this record had been in the office cabinet and who had placed it there, are questions for which Mr. Jamerson has no answers. However, he recognized that the information contained in this log could have historic and genealogical value. Therefore, he presented the register to the local historic museum. Presently these hand written documents are in the Old Court House Museum in Vicksburg, where Mary Lois Ragland, a local genealogist, agreed to type and index the material contained in R. Clark's log. Because of the hand writing and the age of the manuscript, the typing process was an arduous task. To her credit, Mrs. Ragland kept all the original spelling and other features of the log in the transcript.

Who is R. Clark, Sexton? To find the answer to this question, I contacted Mr. Gordon Cotton, director of the Old Court House Museum in Vicksburg, who verified that there are authoritative documents pertinent to the identity of Raynolds Clark, the sexton. He was born in Virginia in 1816, died in Vicksburg, February 28, 1900 and was buried in the Cedar Hill Cemetery, where he had

7 *Warren Co. Slave*
1st *John Williams, Slave, 26y* *Fock Jaw. Hicksburg*
2nd *John, Slave, 33y* *Scorfflow* " "
3rd *Malinda, Slave* *Hospital*
4th *Emmick Hefley, 6 weeks* *Hickburg*
15th *Infant Child* " " 2185
16th *Miss M. Crislow, 16y* *Erythroid Pneumonia* *Hicksburg*
17th *S. Eccleston, 41y* *Yellow fever* *Carnton Miss Jew*
28th *Henry, Slave, 14y* *Hicksburg*
24th *August, Baum, 25y* *Yellow fever* *Carnton Miss Jew*
24th *Rubin, Simons, 30y* " " " *Jew*
25th *White man* *Hospital, 2186*
25th *Infant Child* *Hicksburg 2188*
27th *John, 38y* *Erythroid fever* *Hospital 2187*
29th *R. C. H.* *Yellow fever* *Miss. Bonds, So*

served as a sexton. The Cedar Hill Cemetery is now the City of Vicksburg Cemetery.

At the age of twenty, the young Clark went to Texas to take part in the revolution. Unfortunately, for him, he arrived late, after the decisive battle of San Jacinto.¹ A few years later, in 1838, he moved to Vicksburg, where he married Miss Rowena Gibbs and raised a family of thirteen children. Mr. Clark made his living as a contractor and builder. As a sexton at Cedar Hill Cemetery, Clark saw the need for a coffin manufacturing business and realized this kind of business could complement and extend his main construction business. The building of coffins led Mr. Clark into the mortuary business, which was so successful that he needed additional help and hired John Quincy Arnold. In 1854, Clark turned over the mortuary business to J.Q. Arnold, which later became what is now the Fisher-Riles Funeral Home, the oldest in Mississippi. This background information clarifies why R. Clark kept a record like the one that Mr. Jamerson found in his office.

R. Clark's register contains six columns: Dates, Names, Diseases, Age, Residence, and Grave Number. The cause of death is entered under the columns entitled Diseases. In these columns occur either the spelling of the time or perhaps the misspelling of the author. Nineteen names in Clark's detailed ledger, are marked as "Jews" (see copy of ledger page above).

The entries in the register of Burials include many fascinating details that shed a light on life in Vicksburg in the

middle of the century. For sociological research the data recorded by R. Clark is a treasure. Nineteen names in the ledger are labeled as "Jews" and enticed an overwhelming curiosity. The following table contains all these names and the information entered about each of them. Note: in the following table I kept the original spelling as is found in the manuscript. (See page 4)

The names of some of the illnesses recorded are unfamiliar to the modern reader. To learn their meaning, I contacted Mr. Joe Gerache, a local pharmacist, who offered the following explanation of the maladies. **Cholria** means cholera. Sometime spelled **choluria**. **Brain fever** in a modern lexicon is meningitis. **Painters cholic**, (also called Colica Pictonum) suggests lead poisoning. The word **cholic** said that the person suffered a spasmodic pain in the stomach. While **Conjenstive fever** indicated a malaria fever.²

Reading the entire "Register of Burial," it is obvious that not all the recorded dead were given a grave number. However, none of the Jews were assigned a grave number. This fact, therefore, leads us to the logical assumption that all the Jews were buried in the Jewish cemetery. Researching the Jewish records revealed that only one name from the above list also appears in the old Jewish cemetery records. The other four names although spelled differently refer to the same individuals. The only positive cross reference I found was H. Colman where in both records (Jewish and those of R. Clark) the year 1854 is given as the date

Please see Burials, Page 4

Burials

Continued from Page 3

of his death.

In the table below are the names spelled in the two sources.

Name in the Jewish records	Name in R. Clark's Register of Burlal
Samuel Meyers	Samuel Mayers
Henry Kohlman	H. Colman
A. Rothschild	Angela Roschild
Heiman Feder	Herman Fader

Of the other people, nothing has been found so far that can reveal their final resting place. It can be speculated, but not proven, that perhaps some of them are in the eight unidentified coffins removed from the old Jewish cemetery and reinterred in the new cemetery. If this supposition is true, still unaccounted for are six other bodies.

Unfortunately, these are not the first nor the last Jews whose graves were unmarked. If other documents are discovered, perhaps the enigma will be solved. Until then, let a Kaddish be said in the memories of all 19 Jewish souls.

¹ San Jacinto is in Texas in Galveston-Houston area. In the battle of San Jacinto on 21 April, 1836, about 800 men (mostly recent arrivals in Texas) under the command of Gen. Sam Houston defeated a Mexican army of 1500 men under the command of Gen. Santa Anna.

² Joe Gerache, who has a Ph.D. in pharmacy, owns and operates a pharmacy in Vicksburg. Mr. Gerache has a life long interest in collecting medical instruments and artifacts used in the practice of medicine before and during the Civil War and often gives presentations and lectures about the status of medicine and the treatment of illness in the previous century. ✽

DATE	NAMES	AGE	DISSEASES	RESIDENCE	GRAVE #
Dec. 27, 1853	Sarah Dryfoose	48 y	Cholria	Vicksburg	Jew yard
June 16, 1854	Jacob Seligmann	24 y	Brain Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
July 6, 1854	Samuel Myers	41 y	Painters Cholic	Vicksburg	Jew
Oct. 3, 1854	Abram Choen	171/2 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Oct. 4, 1854	Samuel Raphael	40 y	Yellow Fever	Hospital	Jew
Oct. 6, 1854	H. Herman	30 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Oct. 12, 1854	J.M. Lachs	22 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Oct. 18, 1854	David Nawra (?)	17 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Nov. 5, 1854	H. Colman	44 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Nov. 11, 1854	Herman Fader	16 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
July 26, 1855	S.S. Schewer	26 y	Typhoid fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Oct. 9, 1855	Angela Roschild	76 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Nov. 31, 1855	Amos Fader	12 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Jan. 17, 1856	S. Eschellstern	41 y	Yellow Fever	Vicksburg	Jew
Jan. 24, 1856	August Braun	25 y	Yellow Fever	Canton, Miss.	Jew
Jan. 24, 1856	Ruben Simons	26 y	Yellow Fever	Canton, Miss.	Jew
June 28, 1858	S. Nichilass	50 y	Dis. Unknown	City	Jew
Aug. 19, 1859	Aaron Gradenwohl	4y 6mo	Conjestic Fever	Grand Lake, Ark	Jew
Jan. 8, 1860	Beulina Kierskey	5y 6mo			Jew

Alsace Continued from Page 6

The Alsace exhibition period will coincide with the Splendors of Versailles blockbuster show, expected to draw over 550,000 people to Jackson in Spring and Summer, 1998. The provinces of Alsace and Lorraine have been inextricably bound to the history of the Versailles, with

treaties transferring their ownership from France to Germany to France again having been signed at the Palace. Alsace to America will provide the perfect companion to the Splendors of Versailles by looking at the provincial culture of French-Jewish emigrants from Europe and their settlement as pioneers in the American South. ✽

Zola Continued from Page 2

2 million World Jewish Congress documents, establishing the AJA as an international center for Holocaust research. In 1995, the AJA was renamed The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in honor of the institution's founder.

In heading the AJA, Dr. Zola will serve as Editor-in-Chief of the American Jewish Archives Journal, the director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center for the Study of the American Jewish Experience, and co-director (together with Dr. Herbert Zafren, Director of Libraries Emeritus) of the American Jewish Periodical Center which houses

the nation's most complete collection of Jewish newspapers and magazines on microfilm.

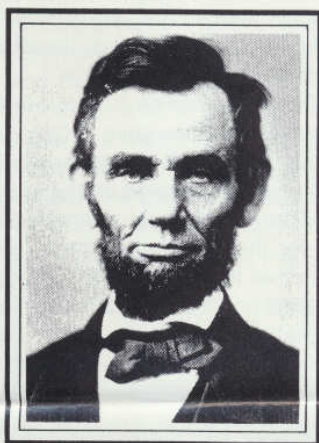
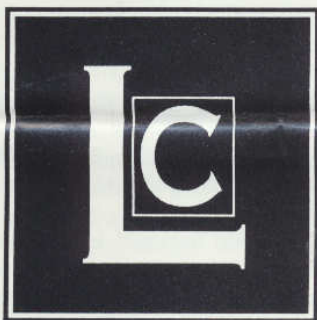
The 46-year-old Zola is a notable scholar of the American Jewish experience. Zola is both a rabbi and a historian. He is the author of *Isaac Harby of Charleston* (the University of Alabama Press: Tuscaloosa, 1994), a major biographical study on the life of one of the founders of the first organized effort to reform Judaism in the United States of America. His numerous articles have appeared in many scholarly publications including *American Jewish History*, *American Jewish Archives*, *Canadian Jewish History*, and the *Journal of*

Reform Judaism. Recently, Zola edited a new collection of essay's on women in the rabbinate entitled: *Women Rabbis: Exploration and Celebration* (HUC-JIR Alumni Press, 1996). His other edited volumes include a revised edition of *Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion at One Hundred Years*, written by Michael A. Meyer (1993), and *To Learn and To Teach: Your Life as a Rabbi*, by Dr. Alfred Gottschalk (1988).

"We welcome Dr. Zola to his new responsibilities. He will carry on the late Dr. Marcus's work with energy, creativity and vision. We believe that the AJA has a great future under his direction," noted President Zimmerman. ✽

THE FELSENTHAL LINCOLN COLLECTION

COLLEGE HILL CENTER
BROWNSVILLE, TENNESSEE



By Gloria Felsenthal

One man's passion for Abraham Lincoln has resulted in an eclectic collection of Lincoln memorabilia in Brownsville, Tennessee, an hour's drive east of Memphis. Perhaps it is fitting that Lincoln, with his legendary small town roots, should be thus remembered in a town with a population of 10,000 and one high school. Indeed, the collection is housed in College Hill Center, a two-story, brick, renovated building, which was the site of the old Brownsville High School for 59 years. But how did this bonanza come to be? Brownsville resident, Morton Felsenthal spent a

lifetime reading about Lincoln, absorbing his philosophy, and amassing books, journals, and objects relating to the 16th president. Upon Felsenthal's death in 1982, the collection was willed to Haywood county under specific conditions: a building to house the collection, proper display conditions, and protection. It was 1989 when College Hill Center was finally restored and funded through the efforts of the Haywood County Historical Society, the Brownsville/Haywood County Parks and Recreation Department and involved volunteer activists. The Felsenthal Lincoln Collection resides in two small rooms on the first floor. (The second floor is home of the Haywood County Museum.)

The seeds for Morton Felsenthal's growing interest in Lincoln may have been sowed by his grandfather, Moses Felsenthal, who received a letter from Lincoln in 1858. Morton's father, Harry, surely passed on some germ of collection fever when he picked up a piece of log from Lincoln's birthplace of Hodgenville, Kentucky; Morton was a teenager in 1915 when his father brought home the log cutting. Who knows when a passing interest in possessing a few

items began to turn into a passion? For certain, the interest went beyond a desire to possess objects. One of the first items the visitor notices upon entering the exhibit is a first edition set of the 5 volume biography of Lincoln by Carl Sandburg, with Morton Felsenthal's name gold-leafed on the spine and the front cover of each volume. Several glass-fronted barrister bookcases house biographies and histories relating to Lincoln and the Civil War and pre-war period, including a 9 volume set, The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln.

Morton Felsenthal's daughter, Betty Schonthal, who married and moved to Chicago, remembers her father's visits to Chicago as opportunities for adding to the collection. The Abraham Lincoln Bookshop, owned by Lincoln scholar Ralph Newman, was a place where Felsenthal could shop as well as share the delights of Lincoln scholarship.

Lincoln portraits abound in the museum—lithographs, pencil sketches, busts, photographs, cartoons, campaign buttons are exhibited throughout the two rooms. One likeness is purported to be the earliest known portrait of Lincoln. Several of the pieces are creations of

Please see Felsenthal, Page 6

*Memorabilia on display
in showcase and
on walls in
one of the
Museum's Lincoln
Room*



Morton Felsenthal, a painting dated 1949 and a painted woodcarving dated 1963. Lincoln's sense of humor receives top billing in a quotation hanging on the first wall encountered. Responding to a citizen who accused him of being two-faced, Lincoln is reported to have replied, "Ladies and gentlemen, if I had two faces, would I wear this one?" Felsenthal also shows his own playful side. He apparently took pleasure in collecting Lincoln Day editorial cartoons, often writing the cartoonist for a signed copy of the original. One cartoonist signed his name and added a note: "Thanks for the ties." (Felsenthal was a sales representative for Beau Brummel Neckwear.)

The imposing College Hill Center, with its 15-foot ceilings and 12-pane windows, has a rich history dating back to 1850, when it first opened as Brownsville Baptist Female College. Today, its history is even richer, as repository of a collection which celebrates two men: Abraham Lincoln, leader, visionary, statesman, and philosopher, who left a heritage that a century later would be extolled by another man, Morton Felsenthal, who found inspiration in Lincoln and shared it with a county.

Sources: *Jackson Sun*, 2/11/97; *Brownsville States-Graphic*, 9/28/89, 11/22/90; telephone interview with Betty Schonthal, 5/3/98; visit to Museum, 4/22/98. ★



Additional Lincoln Displays

newspaper of that city at that time.

Marriage became the focus of Mrs. Stern's life, but it also gave her the opportunity to lead in new and exciting ways in the community. She was a founder and first president of the Memphis Section of the National Council of Jewish Women and served on its national board for many years. She was a member of the board of directors of the Health and Welfare Planning Council of the Memphis Community Fund (now the United Way), the organization concerned with long-range plans for organizations serving the city's needy. She also served on the Budget Committee of The Community Fund. During World War II she was in charge of publicity for the American Red Cross, worked as a volunteer for Family Service of Memphis, and Traveler's Aid. She headed an effort that arranged for Jewish women to take charge of the desks at Traveler's Aid on Sundays so Christian women could observe their Sabbath.

Another facet of Mrs. Stern's volunteer work led to professional, paid work. Always a prolific reader, several books a week being the norm, she began to give book reviews for all sorts of groups. Goldsmith's hired her to go to work for them, giving book reviews in their auditorium downtown, where about 100 would gather every Saturday afternoon to listen to her. She did this for about ten years, in the 1930s and 1940s. Her book review of *Gone With the Wind* was so popular that she had to repeat it on five to seven consecutive weeks. It is probable that her presentations reflected the lively sense of humor she displayed when she wrote the story of her own family's life, entitled "Who's Afraid of the Paragould Wolfs?"

Dr. Stern, meanwhile, was also involved in numerous civic endeavors. He was a founder of the American Heart Association, of the local Heart

Association, and of the Memphis Academy of Medicine, an organization of internists. He was the editor of the *Memphis Medical Journal* and the author of four published books: *Physical and Clinical Diagnosis*, *Rare Diseases*, *Bases of Treatment*, with co-author and son, Dr. Thomas Neuton Stern; and *Understanding Sexual Behavior*. He also wrote two unpublished books on philosophy and one on art, indicative of the wealth of his intellectual curiosity and interests. His hobby was painting, begun after a heart attack. On his seventy-fifth birthday his students, friends, and patients endowed in his honor a visiting professorship at the University of Tennessee Medical School, where he was a Clinical Professor. It has brought annually, ever since, the most outstanding cardiologists in the country for lectures.

The Sterns' son Tom and daughter-in-law, Harriet Wise Stern, in 1992 endowed The Neuton Stern Chair in Cardiology at the medical school. The person selected to occupy the chair must be "a teacher, researcher, and clinician," as was the man in whose name the chair was endowed.

At Dr. Stern's funeral on July 15, 1969, Rabbi James A. Wax gave a talk, "In Appreciation for the life of Dr. Neuton S. Stern." In his message he stated of Dr. Neuton Stern, "He had a prophetic concern for the welfare of others. He was sensitive to humanitarian needs; alert to social and moral responsibilities. His sympathies were with the unfortunate and the deprived. He was, indeed, a man of sterling character. He was a distinguished member of a distinguished calling. He had an exalted place in the medical profession. He was a scholar in the field of medicine. And even as he brought healing to others, he found time to teach and to contribute to medical knowledge." Eulogies are not always deserved; this one was. ★

Source: Interview with Dr. Thomas N. Stern, Memphis, July, 1992.

Alsace to America: Discovering a Southern Jewish Heritage

Presented by the Museum of Southern Jewish Experience

May 29 through August 31, 1998

Mtel Centre; Jackson, Mississippi

Presented by the Museum of Southern Jewish Experience, Jews emigrated to the Mississippi River region from Alsace and Lorraine, two important provinces in France, throughout the 19th century. This exhibit will reflect the life and times of

these pioneers, why they left Europe and how they became an integral part of the commercial, political and social fabric of their rural communities in America. Jews continued to celebrate their cultural heritage along the Mississippi River

corridor, while adapting old world customs to new world experiences. Artifacts and history have been collected from both sides of the ocean to express an identity lost and found as Jews sought

Please see Alsace, Page 4

Jewish Life in the Deep South

This article reprinted by permission from the brochure "Cultural Corridors, Discovering Jewish Heritage along the Mississippi River", published by the Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience in Utica, MS.

In the nineteenth century, Jews living in Europe faced a variety of limitations on their freedom, stemming from the anti-Semitism that permeated all levels of society. They were told where they could live, which occupations they could pursue, and when or if they could marry.

In addition to these restrictions on their personal freedoms, anti-Jewish riots periodically erupted during times of economic distress. Faced with this lack of opportunity in their homelands, some 250,000 Jews—with only what they could carry on their backs—left Central Europe for the New World.

While most of these Jews settled in northeastern cities, especially New York, some elected to make their lives in the South's villages and towns. Their reasons were varied: the region's burgeoning cotton and sugar economy and the lure of wealth this economy promised, and, in the case of Alsatian Jews, a kin-ship between Louisiana's French culture and their own.

Whatever their reasons, a process of "chain migration" developed. Men saved their earnings and paid the passage of family members or friends. In some cases, a man's neighbors or relatives heard of his success and decided to make the journey themselves.

The economic role Jews played in their new home was, by and large, the same as in the old country.

Because laws confined European Jews to commercial pursuits, most began their careers as peddlers, clerks, or salesmen upon arriving in America.

Rural areas became a promising location for those Jewish businessmen. Among the south's largely agricultural population, cash-poor farmers relied on storeowners to sell them goods on credit. In return, merchants took payment in



Robert F. Lee Geisenberger, youngest son of Benjamin Geisenberger, poses with his brothers during the Spanish-American War in 1898.

cotton, sugar or other cash crops at the end of the growing season.

Over time, Jewish settlers in the South became increasingly accepted into society as a whole, yet they strove to maintain and preserve their separate religious burial customs and at the heart of their community was the synagogue.

This effort to preserve their traditions was not without turmoil. Disagreements among Jews over religious practices splintered many congregations. Some insisted on a traditional worship service and adherence to age-old dietary laws, while others wanted to "Americanize" prayers and allow non-kosher foods in the kitchen.

High acceptance levels proved a great benefit, as Jews living in the South during the nineteenth century faced little hostility from their neighbors. Most men were respected for the mercantile services they provided, and many Jewish citizens

attained positions of economic, political and social prominence.

While Jews maintained their cultural heritage through memberships in ethnic clubs, they also joined citywide organizations such as the Masons and

charitable societies. A number of southern Jews moved from membership to leadership when they won election to local, state, and national office. Some men, such as Judah P Benjamin, served in leadership positions during the Confederacy, while others amassed great wealth as merchants and investors. These were people who reached the pinnacle of success and

whose Jewish heritage did not hold them back.

In their institutional affiliations, economic endeavors, and family life, Jews in the Deep South resembled Jewish citizens in other parts of the country. However, three factors made the southern experience unique: (1) a rural lifestyle that isolated Jews from others of their religion and brought them into closer proximity to non-Jews; (2) early rejection of a Jewish homeland (Zionism) for fear that support of Israel might lead neighbors to question their patriotism to the South; (3) the need to come to terms with their region's bi-racial society. In this matter, Jews were forced to grapple with their southern identity during both the slave-holding period and Civil Rights movement.

The odyssey of the southern Jew has moved from its pinnacle in the early twentieth century to its decline. Arrival of the boll weevil in the 1910's and the resultant end of the cotton-based economy caused two important trends. It ushered in a period of population shift away from the rural South, and accelerated a movement of second- and third-generation Jews from mercantile to professional status. Today, all that remains in some once-thriving Jewish communities along the Mississippi River are markers in the cemeteries. ♣

Museum of the Southern Jewish Experience Offers Cultural Corridor Tours

A drive along the Jewish Cultural Corridor of the Mississippi River offers a journey through history in the Deep South. From Civil War to Civil Rights, bagels to grits, the Jewish pioneers of the South have adapted Old World customs to New World experiences, contributing significantly to the rich culture of the American South.

For information on days and hours that attractions are open, please call or stop by the tourist information bureau or Chamber of Commerce in each town or city. Bus tours of the Jewish cultural Corridors are available to groups by calling the Museum of the southern Jewish Experience at (601)366-6352 or 362-6357. ♣



M.M. Ullman and Company opened a store in Natchez in 1878.

Making Jewish History Today

On the 150th year anniversary of Rhodes College of Memphis, Tennessee, one of the finest liberal arts colleges in the U.S.A., an Award on Holocaust education was established by two leaders of the Memphis Jewish Community.

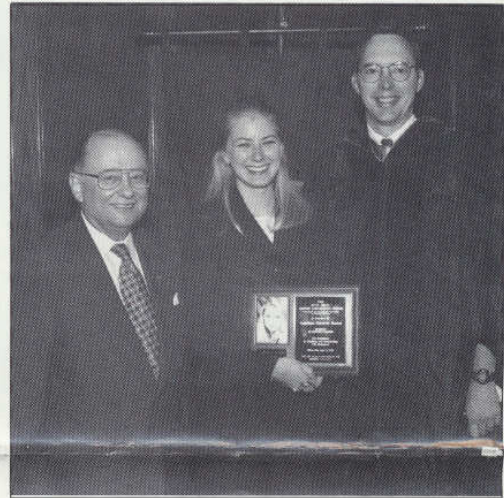
Well known businessman Jack A. Belz, former Rhodes College member of the Board of Trustees and Leonid Saharovici, a Holocaust survivor and former Language Instructor at Rhodes College decided to endow a yearly Award on Holocaust Studies. The Belz-Saharovici Award is given to a student at Rhodes College who has done exemplary work in the Holocaust Course (Religious Studies 232) and who has subsequently conducted original research on some aspect of the Holocaust in a Directed Inquiry Senior Paper or Honors Project. The Award is Co-sponsored by the Tennessee Commission on Holocaust Education. It includes a cash award which will enable the recipient to travel and visit the United States Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C.

The history of Holocaust Education in the State of Tennessee has recorded important successes in the last 15 years under the influence of the Tennessee Commission on Holocaust Education, the second such Government institution created in U.S.A. Jack A. Belz and Leonid Saharovici have been founding members of the Commission and have been nominated by three Governors of Tennessee and served with dedication for four terms, contributing immensely to the remembering movement in our state. Their decision to endow this Award at Rhodes College came as a result of the tremendous success of the highly acclaimed Holocaust course offered at Rhodes College by Professor Stephen Haynes. Mr. Leonid Saharovici has lectured several times on the Holocaust to the students at Rhodes and was profoundly impressed with the students' interest in studying and researching this traumatic page in Jewish History.

Professor Stephen Haynes, renowned author and educator, has taught the Course in Holocaust to over 250 students who have taken this class in the last nine years. In 1994 an essay on Holocaust was required to all candidates applying for admission at Rhodes. The teaching of the Holocaust in public and private schools in Tennessee has generated an interest among the students of this great institution of higher learning and has motivated them to take this class and learn more about this dark moment in history and the need to prevent men's inhumanity to men.

The Award was given for the first time at the 1998 Rhodes College Award Convocation, Tuesday, April 21st. Announcing the Awards Dr. John M. Planchon, Dean of Academic Affairs, has praised the establishing of the Belz-Saharovici Award. The first recipient of the Award was Angelique Elizabeth Bermel, a senior at Rhodes. She has conducted research on the role of gentile rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust. Her research was utilized in her Religious Studies Senior Paper.

THE BELZ-SAHAROVICI AWARD IN HOLOCAUST STUDIES



Leonid Saharovici, Angelique E. Bermel
Professor Stephen Haynes

(Jack Belz, who attended the Presentation
had to leave before pictures were taken)



SOUTHERN
JEWISH HERITAGE

P.O. Box 17304 • Memphis, TN 38187

Address Correction Requested

