



# SOUTHERN JEWISH HERITAGE

VOL. 19, NO. 1

WINTER 2006

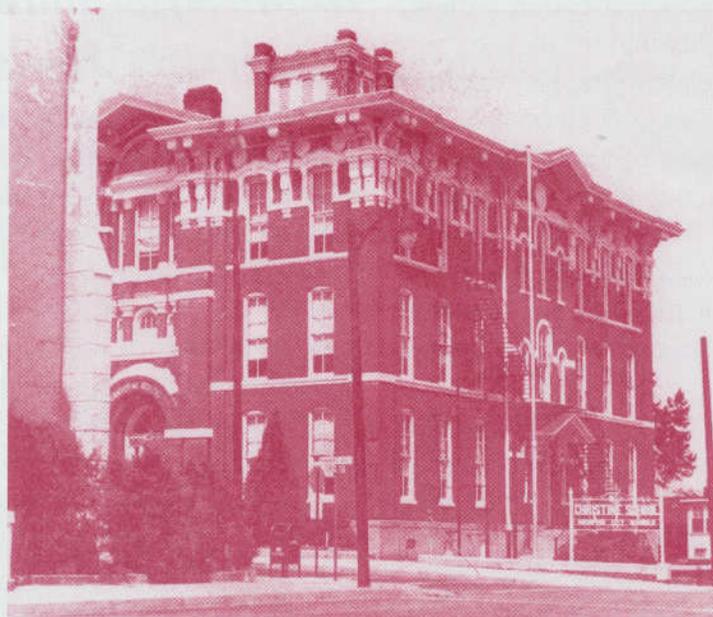
## Many Memphis Jews Learned Their 3 R's At the Old Market Street School

*"School days, school days,  
Dear old golden rule days,  
Readin', and 'ritin', and 'rithmetic,  
Taught to the tune of a hick'ry stick ..."*

This bit of nostalgia had not yet been written in 1872, but school days were certainly on the minds of the citizens of Memphis who experienced

history in the making on January 6 of that year, with the dedication of the first public school building ever to be erected by the City Board of Education. Although public schools had existed in Memphis since 1848, classes were held in rented rooms, usually on the second floor of a downtown building. The city had struggled for twenty-four years to provide free education for its children, and with the completion of the three-story red brick building at the corner of Market and Third, to be named Market Street School, this dream at last was realized.

The new school, which was considered ultra-modern in every detail, boasted a "central heating system," with a pot-bellied stove in each of the four corners of the basement and tall shafts to send the warm air all the way up to the large assembly room on the third floor. Also in



*Market Street School, the first public school building in Memphis*

the basement was a well with a pump, which, when manipulated by a strong boy, could supply water to built-in wash-basins in the twelve classrooms. Even an intercom system was installed, consisting of speaking tubes in the principal's office that led directly to the teachers' desks.

Not so modern were the outdoor toilets, located at the far back of the schoolyard, or the wooden buckets

full of drinking water with tin dippers shared by all the students. The streets of Memphis were still unpaved and often awash with mud, so children would walk to school barefoot, carrying their shoes in their hands. Once they reached the school, they washed their muddy feet at a pump in the yard, then put on their shoes before entering the building.

Market Street School played a significant role in the lives of numerous members of the Jewish community of Memphis. In its early days, the school was in the center of the city's "silk stocking" section; later this neighborhood became a melting-pot, populated with Irish, Italian, and Jewish families. The opportunity for their children to receive a free education was highly valued

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# President's Message . . . .



Edward M. Kaplan

Beginning as early as the first half of the nineteenth century, Jewish men and women have played an active role in virtually all phases of the development of Memphis and the Mid-South. This alone would provide a sufficient basis for collecting data allowing us to track and document these many

contributions. There is more, however, than just the statistical data one finds in a census, or the names of persons one may find in the rosters of local chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, synagogues, and the like. There are the stories of triumph and tragedy, public and personal, which often were not written down but merely passed by word of mouth among the families of those Jews who populated our region.

Thus, the projects of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South are varied, in order that many different aspects of the development of the Jewish community in our region can receive attention. Among our various projects are the following:

- We are currently recording photographic data from the Jewish cemeteries in Memphis, and one will be able to find not only names but also other relevant data concerning our forebears, including possible familial relationships.

- From our oral history project, including many already recorded and others currently underway, one can hear or read eyewitness accounts of those who contributed to our local history.

- The speakers and panel discussions which we present provide insights concerning the issues which are of particular interest to the Jewish population of our area.

- Articles on a wide variety of relevant topics appear in our newsletter.

- Our archives contain personal histories and clippings from newspaper and magazine stories, and these files continue to grow.

Other of our projects can be found by browsing our website, which can be found at [www.jhsmem.org](http://www.jhsmem.org). We hope that you find one or more of these projects of value to you and look forward to your participation with us.

*Edward M. Kaplan*

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*\*Of Blessed Memory*

## *In the Aftermath of Katrina: Preserving Jewish New Orleans*

Catherine C. Kahn, archivist of the Touro Infirmary and former Southern Jewish Historical Society president, reports that the Touro Infirmary Archives, an invaluable collection of New Orleans Jewish history, is in dire need of emergency funds to preserve its collection. Although none of the records were lost in the storm and flood, they are threatened with destruction by mold. A freeze-drying process can save them. The SJHS board has voted an appropriation to help defer the cost, but more will be needed. If you would like to help, please contact:

Touro Foundation  
c/o Bernard Wax  
21 Blake Road  
Brookline, MA 02445-5803

**Browse our website at:  
[www.jhsmem.org](http://www.jhsmem.org)**

by Jewish immigrant parents who had enjoyed no such privilege in Russia or Poland, and eventually the list of alumni of Market Street School (later renamed Christine School) would resemble a veritable “Who’s Who” of Jewish Memphis.

Philip Belz, Sam Cooper, Abe Plough, Sam Schloss—they all learned their three R’s, not to “the tune of a hick’ry stick,” but to the clanging of a large brass bell wielded by Annie Christine Reudelhuber, who joined the faculty of the school in 1878. Market Street School was renamed Smith School that year in honor of Thomas R. Smith, a member of the Board of Education, but even years later, after the name had been changed yet again to Christine School in honor of Miss Reudelhuber, it still was referred to by many former students as “the old Market Street School.”

In the 1873 Yellow Fever epidemic the school suffered the tragic loss of two teachers and thirty-five students. In the epidemic of 1878 it became an emergency

years until her death in 1920.

“Miss Christine,” as everyone called her, was the daughter of German immigrants and had begun teaching as a girl of fifteen before the Civil War. A deeply religious woman, Miss Christine molded the lives of thousands of Memphis boys and girls by instilling morals and character as well as an education. Written on the blackboard of her small office was her prayer, which remained there for nearly four decades, recopied in her flowing handwriting whenever the chalk began to fade:

“As I begin another day,

I ask Thee, Lord, to guide my way.”

In the late nineteenth century, no one would have questioned the political correctness of these simple words in a public school. Nor would any one have dared to question the judgments of Miss Christine, a small woman who never weighed more than ninety pounds, but whose word was law. She carried her brass bell onto the playground, and any rowdy behavior was halted immediately the instant the bell was heard. (Later, in the

1950s, the bell was used at the school as a signal for air raid drills.) Although a strict disciplinarian, Miss Christine was fair and just, and rarely spanked a child, but upon reminiscing about their school days, grown men were said to still recall that “when she shook you, you were so completely shaken that you never repeated the offense.”

Eccentric in her dress, especially in the choice of her hats, which were

always trimmed with long, nodding plumes, Miss Christine would be remembered most of all for her good heart and her loyalty to the cause of education. On the day of her funeral, all the public schools in the city were closed out of respect for her memory, and Hardwig Peres, then president of the Board of Education, delivered a

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Christine School, Class 7-1, 1925

hospital with desks hurriedly replaced by beds. Among those who died in the later epidemic was the school’s principal, who gallantly gave his hospital cot to a woman teacher who was critically ill. At least four different principals already had served the school in the ten years since its opening. Then in 1882 Christine Reudelhuber was appointed principal. Her tenure lasted for thirty-eight

brief oration as part of her funeral service. She was buried in Elmwood Cemetery. Following her death, Christine School became the official name of the red brick building at the corner of Market and Third.

The next principal of Christine School was Florence Dreyfus, who was born in New Orleans, and came to Memphis with her family as a child. She received her early education at Market Street School, became a teacher in 1884, then joined the Christine faculty after teaching for a short time at Alabama Street and Jefferson Street Schools. After the death of Christine Reudelhuber in 1920, Dreyfus, who adhered to the same traditions and standards as her predecessor, took the helm. Her motto, "Do as much good as you can and be as good as you can," was exemplified in her personal life and contacts.

Pauline Levy Sewing Circle, Dollar Shoe Club, and Salvation Army helped with clothing.

Gradually the economy recovered, and under the principalship of Dreyfus, some improvements were made to the school. New lavatories were built adjacent to the building to replace outmoded ones in the basement. The school board purchased the residence behind the school and turned it into a cafeteria. Property beside the building was bought, and the playground was expanded.

After Pearl Harbor, Dreyfus guided Christine School to the forefront of the war effort, selling war bonds and stamps, collecting tin cans, paper, and other scrap material. The building was used for registration and rationing, and many teachers became Gray Ladies, giving of their time and services. In 1944, Florence Dreyfus retired, after nearly sixty years of service to the school,

twenty-two of which she spent as principal. She died in 1951 and is buried in Temple Israel Cemetery.

In May, 1952, Christine School celebrated its eightieth anniversary with a reunion. Former students on the committee that served to organize the reunion included Sam Cooper, Harry Fortas, Will Gerber, Josephine Goldberger, Herman Gruber, Harry Kabakoff, Isaac Loskove,

Ben Morris, Harry Tresan, and Dr. Sam Wener. An alumni fund was established, to be used for aid to the school, students, and the community. During the anniversary program, trophies were presented to two of the first students who attended the school, then known as Market Street School: Julius Boshwit, age 86, and Lena Falk, age 90, whose daughter, Mrs. Barney Plough, accepted the trophy for her. Another highlight of the program was a "School Days Revue," produced by Ben Bluestein.

*Continued on next page*



*Christine School, Class 4 - 1, 1927*

Her first years as principal were during the era soon after World War I had ended, when people prospered and felt that the world was again "safe." Then came the Depression, and the families of Christine School were among those who were hardest hit. Dreyfus sought to help her children, and, inspired by her efforts, neighborhood churches and other organizations came to her assistance. The women of First Presbyterian and First Methodist Churches, along with the Jewish Neighborhood House, helped to provide food. The



Florence Dreyfus

Mayor Watkins Overton gave the principal address, and Ernest C. Ball, city superintendent of education, also spoke. Approximately 1500 students of past and present toured the rooms and halls of the building.

In 1964, just twelve years after its gala reunion, Christine School was razed to make room for a hotel at Second and Market. But it continued to live on, not only in the hearts and minds of former students, but physically as well. After it was demolished, the hand-

made bricks and other materials were salvaged and used in other building projects around the city, including a home on Gwynne Road, built by a couple who were both city school teachers, and another home in the Scenic Hills area.

A bronze marker was later placed at the site of the school. Abe Plough, who attended Market Street School in his early years, unveiled the marker and reminisced about his teacher, Miss Lorena Banks, who taught him “mental arithmetic”—the ability to add, subtract, multiply, and divide mentally without using pencil or paper. Plough claimed that throughout his business acquisitions and negotiations, he never had to use a pencil.

In addition to Plough, the teachers at Market Street/Christine School educated a host of Jewish children, many of whom grew up to play important roles in the development of the greater Memphis community. Among those who became doctors or dentists were Jacob Bronstein, Sam Bryan, Edward Fortas, Harry Jacobson, Henry Moskovitz, Jacob Plesofsky, Milton Schlesinger, Ben Schaffer, David Scheinberg, Milton Seligstein, Neuton Stern, Henry Weiss, and Sam Wener. Some who became attorneys were Will Gerber (former attorney general of Shelby County), Joe and Dave Hanover, Saul Shapiro, and Sam Taubenblatt. Rabbi Max Samfield was a former student, as were bankers Harry Cohen and Abe Lewis, and real estate dealers Charles Haase and Herman Gruber. Well-known merchants included Sol Halle, Elias Lowenstein, Emanuel Klein, and Julius Lewis. In addition to these names are many more that are an intrinsic part of the fabric of the Memphis Jewish community—Alperin, Buring, Blen, Bozof, Delugach, Engelberg, Goldberger,

Jaffe, Loewenberg, Lazarov, Margolin, Padawer, Ridblatt, Rosen—to name only a few.

It has been 133 years since Market Street School opened its doors. Today there are 186 schools in the Memphis city school system; it is likely that few people remain who can still remember the very first one at the corner of Market and Third. If you do, you also may remember the lyrics to the song *School Days*, written in 1907 by Gus Edwards and Will Cobb for the Broadway musical of the same name:

*School days, school days,  
Dear old golden rule days,  
Readin', and 'ritin', and 'rithmetic,  
Taught to the tune of a hick'ry stick,  
I was your queen in calico,  
You were my bashful, barefoot Joe,  
You wrote on my slate, 'I love you so!'  
When we were a couple of kids.*

*Special thanks to Harriet Stern, who researched the information in this article. All photos are from the Memphis Shelby County Public Library.*



Abe Plough unveils marker at site of old Market Street School

# "Looking South from the Mason-Dixon Line"... 30th Annual SJHS Conference held in Baltimore

The Southern Jewish Historical Society (SJHS) held its thirtieth annual conference in Baltimore, Maryland, the weekend of November 4-6, 2005. In November, 2003, this conference was held in Memphis. Sumner Levine of Memphis currently serves as president of SJHS.

The conference began with an optional trip to the United States Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. David Hoffberger conducted a tour of the Naval Academy which included the newly completed Uriah P. Levy Jewish Chapel. This magnificent chapel, recently featured in the Washington Post, is an impressive architectural gem containing stone from Israel. The trip also included a tour of the city with a visit to the Maryland State House, led by Eric Goldstein, Conference Program Chairman, who was raised in Annapolis and is a former guide for the Jewish areas of Annapolis.

On Friday conference participants were offered a tour of Jewish Baltimore, home to over 100,000 Jews. The tour followed the path of Jewish settlement from the immigrant quarter of East Baltimore, to the German-Jewish Eutaw Place neighborhood, to the suburbs of Northwest Baltimore, and included a stop at the Baltimore Museum of Art to view the famous Cone Collection. The tour ended at the Jewish Museum of Baltimore. A "Lombard Street delicatessen lunch" followed, with a multi-media presentation of "Barry Levinson's Baltimore" given by Stephen Whitfield of Brandeis University. The day was capped with services and Shabbat dinner at the historic Baltimore Hebrew Congregation.

Following services on Saturday morning, the day was filled with outstanding panels and speakers, stimulating much discussion from the delegates. Some of the speakers at the

conference were Avi Decter, Director, Jewish Museum of Maryland; Alan Kraut, American University; Leonard Rogoff, Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina; Eric L. Goldstein, Emory University; Elissa New, Harvard University.

One of the highlights of the conference was the Saturday evening program, a staged reading from "Levy's Ghost," a new play about Commodore Uriah P. Levy. This program was co-sponsored by the Bornblum Judaic Studies Program at the University of Memphis.

Another highlight was the traditional "Meet the Authors" panel and book signing on Sunday. Authors who participated were: Clara Silverstein, *White Girl: A Story of Desegregation*; Ellen Umansky, *From Christian Science to Jewish Science: Spiritual Healing and the American Jews*; and Eliza R. L. McGraw, *Two Covenants: Representations of Southern Jewishness*. The brunch that followed featured Dr. Pamela Nadell, Chair of Jewish Studies, American University.

The hospitality and participation of host committee chairman, Peter Hoffberger, and the Baltimore community contributed to the spirit of good will and companionship that was evident throughout the SJHS stay in Baltimore. Memphians Marcia Bicks, Phyllis and Sumner Levine, Syl Marks, and Sarah

Zangwill thoroughly enjoyed the entire weekend's festivities.

It was announced that the following cities will host future SJHS meetings: Little Rock, Arkansas, November 10-12, 2006; Washington, D.C., 2007; Atlanta, Georgia, 2008; Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 2009. Those who recently visited Little Rock on a JHS field trip to the Clinton Library had a fine time. Please make plans to be part of a most fulfilling weekend conference there next year. ☆

## New Jewish Chapel Honors Commodore Uriah P. Levy

The new Jewish chapel at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, has been named for Commodore Uriah Phillips Levy, 1792-1862. Levy was born into a large Sephardic family from Philadelphia, but ran away at age ten to serve as a cabin boy on a trading ship. He returned home for his Bar Mitzvah, but by age fourteen, had gone back to the sea.

By the War of 1812, he had become an experienced sailor and reported for duty as sailing master aboard the U.S.S. Argus. His ship was captured and the entire crew was sent to prison in England. Levy remained imprisoned for sixteen months. After witnessing flogging in the Navy firsthand, he worked to abolish it. He received the honorary rank of Commodore and was the first Jew to command the Mediterranean fleet. Levy identified strongly with Judaism and was one of the founders of the Washington Hebrew Congregation.

An ardent admirer of Thomas Jefferson, Levy purchased Monticello, the late President's estate, in 1836. He restored the property to its original condition, and the house and grounds remained in the Levy family until 1923, when it was sold to the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation.

# Noted Author Eli Evans to Speak in February

On Sunday, February 26, 2006, at 2:00 p.m., noted author Eli N. Evans will speak at the Memphis Jewish Community Center on "Religious Tolerance and the Jews of the South." The program will be co-sponsored by the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South and Bornblum Judaic Studies.

Evans was born and raised in Durham, North Carolina, and is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and Yale Law School. He served in the U.S. Navy and worked as an aide and speechwriter in the Lyndon B. Johnson White House.

Evans' books include *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*, widely considered a classic after thirty years in print; *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate*, a biography of the Confederacy's Secretary of State; and *The Lonely Days Were Sundays: Reflections of a Jewish Southerner*, a collection of essays. *The Provincials* was recently reissued in a new illustrated edition.

In addition to being a writer, Evans has served the educational and philanthropic communities for many years.

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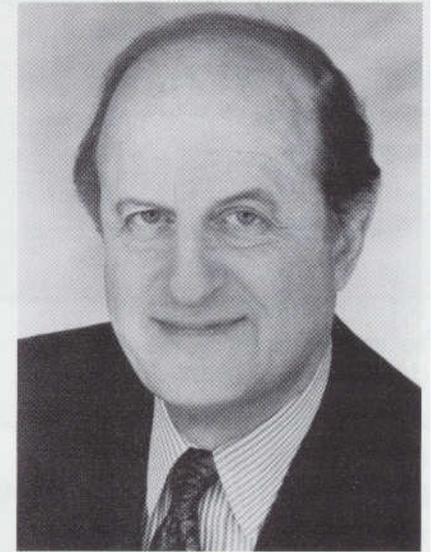
## *The Provincials*—

The new, revised, and illustrated edition of Eli Evans' *The Provincials*, issued by the University of North Carolina Press in celebration of the 350th anniversary of Jewish life in America, has been described by fellow-author Pat Conroy as "the seminal, indispensable book about the Jewish experience in the South." First published in 1973, and updated once in 1995 and again in 2005, the new edition contains family photos and a portrait gallery of notable Jewish figures in Southern history, along with four additional chapters, a new introduction by the author, and a foreword by Willie Morris, former editor of *Harper's Magazine*, who had been so intrigued by Evans' recollections of growing up Jewish in the South that he sent him out to write a series of articles that were later to become the basis of *The Provincials*.

The book is thoroughly researched yet not a scholarly work, having developed out of a series of oral interviews conducted by Evans, plus personal reminiscences of his own family. He tries to draw some generalizations about the Jewish experience in the South as a whole, although he points out some distinctions between Jewish life in the deep South, such as in Mississippi or Alabama, and that of the Southeast, such as in North Carolina or Virginia. He also contrasts the stories of the older German Reform Jews with those of the more recently arrived eastern Europeans.

Perhaps the highest praise for *The Provincials* came from Abba Eban, who said, "The Jews of the South have found their poet laureate. . . . Evans' prose is like himself—stylish, serene, reflective, and relentlessly candid about the issues that moved his generation." ☆

Evans joined the Carnegie Corporation, a national education foundation, in 1968. In 1978, he became the first president of the Charles H. Revson Foundation, overseeing grants totaling more than \$147 million to Jewish causes, urban affairs, education, and biomedical research. After retiring from this position in 2003, he was named president emeritus of



*Eli N. Evans*

the Revson Foundation. Other honors bestowed upon Evans include honorary doctorates from the Jewish Theological Seminary and from the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, as well as election as a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In his commitment to social justice and community service, Eli Evans follows in the footsteps of his parents. His father, Emanuel J. "Mutt" Evans, served as mayor of Durham for six consecutive terms. In that capacity, Mayor Evans led Durham through key years during the civil rights movement, negotiating the first integrated lunch counter in Durham. Eli Evans' mother, Sara Nachamson Evans, was also politically active, as an active Zionist and a founder of the first southern branch of Hadassah.

Eli Evans lives in New York City. ☆

## Program Calendar

**Sunday, February 26, MJCC, 2:00 p.m.**

Eli N. Evans: "Religious Tolerance and the Jews of the South"

Co-sponsored by MJHS and Bornblum Judaic Studies

**Sunday, March 26, MJCC, 2:00 p.m.**

Rabbi David Radinsky: "The Jews of Charleston: From the 17th to the 19th Century"

Co-sponsored by MJHS and Bornblum Judaic Studies

**Thursday, April 27, MJCC, 7:30 p.m.**

Bornblum Judaic Studies Program: Sir Martin Gilbert

**Sunday, May 28, MJCC, 2:00 p.m.**

MJHS Annual Meeting and Panel on Current Situation in Israel

Bluma Zuckerbrot, Gerri Patterson, and Sharon Knaso; moderated by Dr. David Patterson



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