Jews and Georgians

A Meeting of Cultures

1733 - 1983

GEORGIA 250
1733 - 1983

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National Endowment for the Humanities
Georgia Endowment for the Humanities
National Foundation for Jewish Culture
Georgia Semiquincentenary Commission

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A Meeting of Cultures

1733 - 1983

Sponsored by
the
Atlanta Jewish Federation
at the
Schatten Gallery
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia

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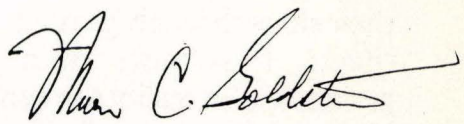
Welcome

Dear Friends:

The Atlanta Jewish Federation takes great pride in the sponsorship of this major exhibit, "Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983". The first Jewish colonists arrived in Georgia a scant five months after the colony's founding 250 years ago. Almost from the start, Georgia's Jews have lived by the words of Hillel - "Separate not thyself from the community!"

The sense of community has always been a guiding tradition of Judaism. Jews have a history of active participation both in their own community and in the affairs of the larger general community.

The Jewish Community of Atlanta offers "Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983" to the State of Georgia on the occasion of her Semiquincentenary Celebration. Please join us in enjoying this array of artifacts and memorabilia which tells the incredible story of our Jewish past — a past that has helped to shape our present and that will surely guide our future. Shalom.



Marvin C. Goldstein, President,
Atlanta Jewish Federation.

Foreword

Going back into history is somewhat akin to reaching blindfolded into a grab bag. Each episode comes out individually wrapped, surrounded by its own location, time and individuals. Each epoch has its own special shadings . . . sometimes with undertones from a previous era, but always with wide swaths of new color. Small, seemingly insignificant incidents, when examined, illustrate and explain events which fit into larger patterns. The basic human condition is always the same, but how individuals respond to the events and circumstances of their world is what makes history.

"Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983" is a communal reaching back to the beginnings of the State of Georgia and Jewish participation since 1733. It has enabled Jewish Georgians to recall and reexamine their collective and individual past so that this exhibition can tell their story through pictures, documents and artifacts. It is more than just a Jewish experience . . . in reality the exhibit traces the entire history of the state in all regions, in all periods, and in all strata of society.

It is an intimate look into the lives of a small ethnic group who worked, loved, played, dreamed, and died alongside of their neighbors of all creeds, backgrounds, and colors. It is a south Georgia drawl with Yiddish inflections. It is a 100 year old hand made quilt with lovely flowers generously interspersed with six pointed Stars of David. It is mustard greens flavored with schmaltz instead of fat-back. It is the traditional Sabbath table heavy with heirloom silver. It is Southern hospitality seen through Biblical texts which speak of welcoming the stranger because "you were once a stranger in the land of Egypt". It is total acceptance by election to some of the highest positions in government and abject rejection by the lynching of Leo Frank.

It has been a distinct privilege for me to have served as chairman of this exciting adventure into the past. A native of the neighboring state of Louisiana, I feel I have finally become of Georgian.

Oglethorpe, the utopian Englishman, and Sheftall, the Prussian Jew, are now real, vibrant personalities. The German peddlers who traveled the backroads on foot to reach the hard-working farmers they serviced have my admiration. The Jewish men from the American Revolution to the present day, who volunteered for military service along with their neighbors, fought and died for me. The Jewish business and professional men and women who invested their talents and resources for the betterment of the entire community helped to build the Georgia I know. The synagogues and temples which grew contiguous to churches and cathedrals are testaments to the promise of religious freedom for all.

"Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983" is an important statement to each of us; while viewing the accomplishments of the past, we understand our individual obligation to the future.

Projects of this magnitude never "just happen". For almost two years prior to the November 13, 1983 opening, large numbers of individuals have devoted countless hours to the planning and execution of this project. Their collective expertise, creativity, energy, and dedication were essential. The original concept of the exhibit grew out of a discussion between Dr. DAVID GEFFEN, a native Georgian now living in Jerusalem, and GORDON SUGARMAN, a former Atlantan then spending the year in Israel and now a resident of Jerusalem. GEFFEN wrote the first proposal for the project. DAVID SARNAT and the staff of the Atlanta Jewish Federation, especially MAX KLEINMAN, JANE LEAVEY, and MOSHE GITTLESON, have been untiring in their support. Dr. MARK BAUMAN of Atlanta Junior College and Dr. LOUIS SCHMIER of Valdosta State College served as historical consultants and super-sleuths of Georgian Jewry. SHIRLEY BRICKMAN and her coterie of volunteers whose names are listed elsewhere identified and collected the Atlanta material, while BETTY MELAVER headed the acquisistions effort in Savannah. LOUISE SHAW and JEFF REDDING designed the exhibit with their special talent for combining creativity with historical accuracy. Dr. PERRY BRICKMAN produced the multi-media video segment. We are especially appreciative of the cooperation of the individual families whom we interviewed and who shared their private histories as well as allowing us to exhibit their treasured memorabilia.

We are also grateful to the many institutions who have cooperated and made their collections and advice available to us: Congregation Mickve Israel, Savannah; Atlanta Historical Society; Georgia Department of Archives and History; University of Georgia; Emory University; Georgia Historical Society; Martin Luther King Jr. Center; and the American Jewish Historical Society of Waltham, Mass.

Special mention must be made of the American Jewish Historical Society and Mr. EDWARD ELSON. Through their combined effort, the October edition of *American Jewish History* has been devoted to Georgian Jewish history.

We also extend our collective appreciation to our publisher, BILL ADAMS, whose technical advice, talent, and expertise made the release of this publication possible.

The exhibition and accompanying activities were funded by grants from the following sources: National Endowment for the Humanities, Georgia Endowment for the Humanities, Georgia Semiquincentenary Commission, and the National Foundation for Jewish Culture. We recognize them for their generous support and faith in this project.

Doris H. Goldstein

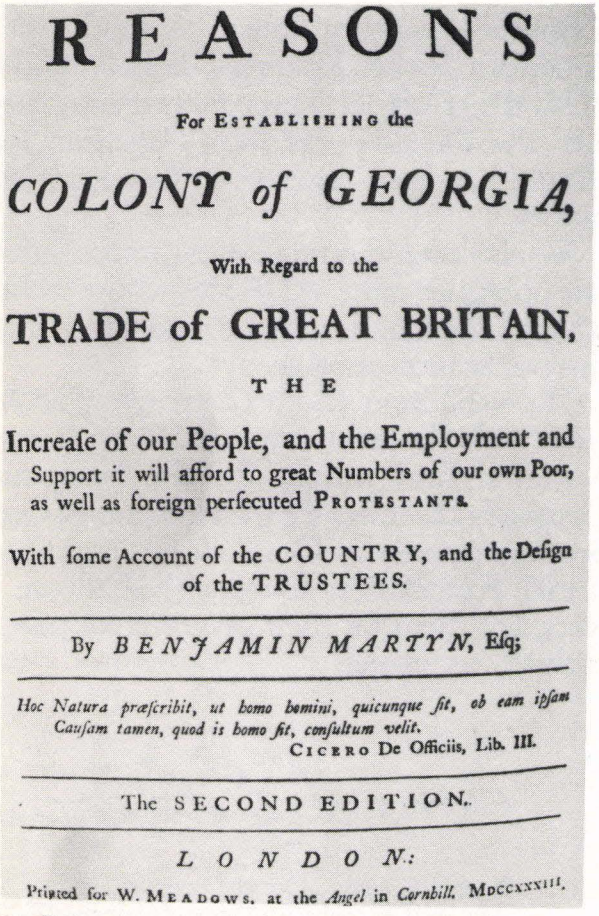
Doris H. Goldstein, Overall Chairman,
"Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983".

Introduction

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of ages past; ask your father, he will inform you, your elders, they will tell you."

Deuteronomy 32.7

It is in the spirit of this biblical charge that you are welcomed to this exhibit of 250 years of Jewish experience in Georgia. But, please, do not be a detached and distant spectator who merely walks by and looks at these artifacts as little more than a group of meaningless antiquarian curiosities; or one who stares at the people in the photographs as if they were lifeless images. You will miss a great deal if you do. Instead, breathe life into them; experience them; become a part of them; Let them evoke moments of poignancy, inspire nostalgia, stir your emotions, stimulate your imagination and dramatize, for you, the importance of their stories. Let the people in the photographs and the owners of the artifacts live. They were intriguing, complex, real people.



REASONS

For ESTABLISHING the

COLONY of GEORGIA,

With Regard to the

TRADE of GREAT BRITAIN,

THE

Increaſe of our People, and the Employment and Support it will afford to great Numbers of our own Poor, as well as foreign perſecuted PROTESTANTS.

With ſome Account of the COUNTRY, and the Deſign of the TRUSTEES.

By BENJAMIN MARTYN, Eſq;

Hoc Natura præſcribit, ut homo homini, quicunque ſit, ob eam ipſam Cauſam tamen, quod is homo ſit, conſultum velit.
CICERO De Officiis, Lib. III.

The SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

Printed for W. MEADOWS, at the *Angel* in *Cornhill*. MDCCXXXIII.

Advertisement published to promote new colony of Georgia, London, 1732.

Imagine yourself with Mordecai Sheftall as he plots revolution with the other "Liberty Boys" against the English Crown; bleed with Louis Merz at Antietam, where he defended the Confederate States; walk the peddler's trail in Central Georgia with Harry Lazarus; listen to the chanting of the liturgy in Hebrew and English in homes, rented halls, synagogues and temples as Jews throughout Georgia remain true to their heritage. Only then can you hope to learn about these Jews, appreciate them, take pride in their accomplishments, and understand both their achievements and the debt we owe to them.

Taken collectively, the artifacts and photographs in this exhibit belie the distorted and prejudicial simplicities that Jews were "eternal aliens" in Georgia society who were never inclined to associate with the surrounding Non-Jewish community; that they are newcomers on the Georgia scene who have not had sufficient time to make any meaningful contribution; and, that Georgians, with some exception, have never extended a welcoming hand to them. The items in this exhibit dramatize a story as old as Georgia itself. A story of a People haunted by centuries of civil oppression, physical isolation and fanatical religious persecution who fled their homelands out of desperation and travelled to meet the unknown in the New World.

They came thousands of miles across the expanse of oceans and continents to create a new life for themselves and for future generations of their people. They settled throughout Georgia from Bainbridge and Valdosta and Brunswick in the south, to Dalton, Rome and Winder in the north, and from Savannah and Augusta in the



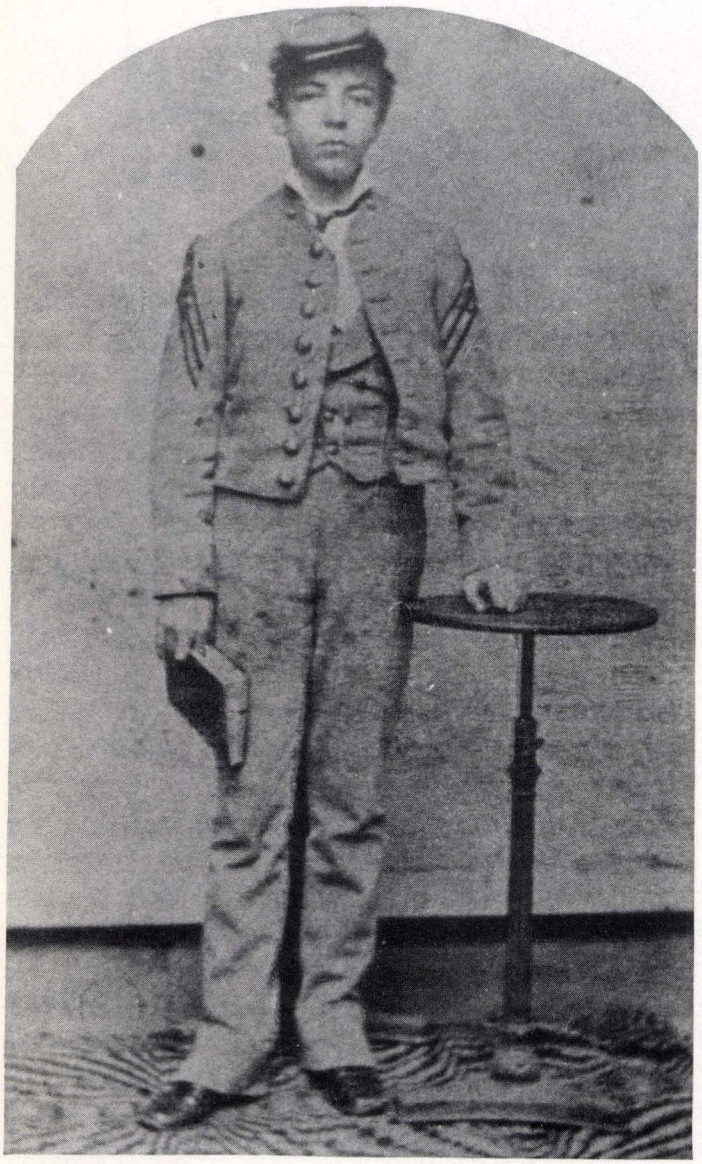
1st. Sephardic wedding in Atlanta, 1912. Courtesy of Sol Beton, Atlanta, **Ga.**

east, to Columbus and Fort Gaines in the west. These average Jews pioneered, lived and sustained themselves alongside their gentile neighbors in innumerable locations throughout Georgia. In so doing, they made a treacherous crossing over vast cultural chasms.

As you walk among these exhibit items, witness how they made the transition from Old World Pariahs to Georgia citizens. Realize that most of these Jews not only came to terms with the difficulties they faced and became part of the Georgia tradition, but created and influenced the character of many Georgia traditions and institutions themselves.

There is not an era in Georgia history that does not feel the presence of Jews or benefit from their contribution. They were governors, senators, representatives, mayors, aldermen, councilmen, county treasurers, bank presidents, club presidents, lodge presidents and state grand masters, sheriffs, police chiefs, inventors, butchers, bakers, and candlestick makers. They were leading entrepreneurs in merchandising, canning peaches, marketing pecans, and— much to the gratitude of Coca Cola and other soft drink and beer companies—they were fashioning bottle-washing machines before the advent of aluminum cans and no-return bottles. They were professionals and blue collar workers. They were leaders and followers. They were prominent and unknown. They were like everyone else.

Each of these tens of thousands of Jews is historic because each story is important. The presence and activity of each of them is a vital thread without which the patterns in the fabric of Georgian society could not have been woven.

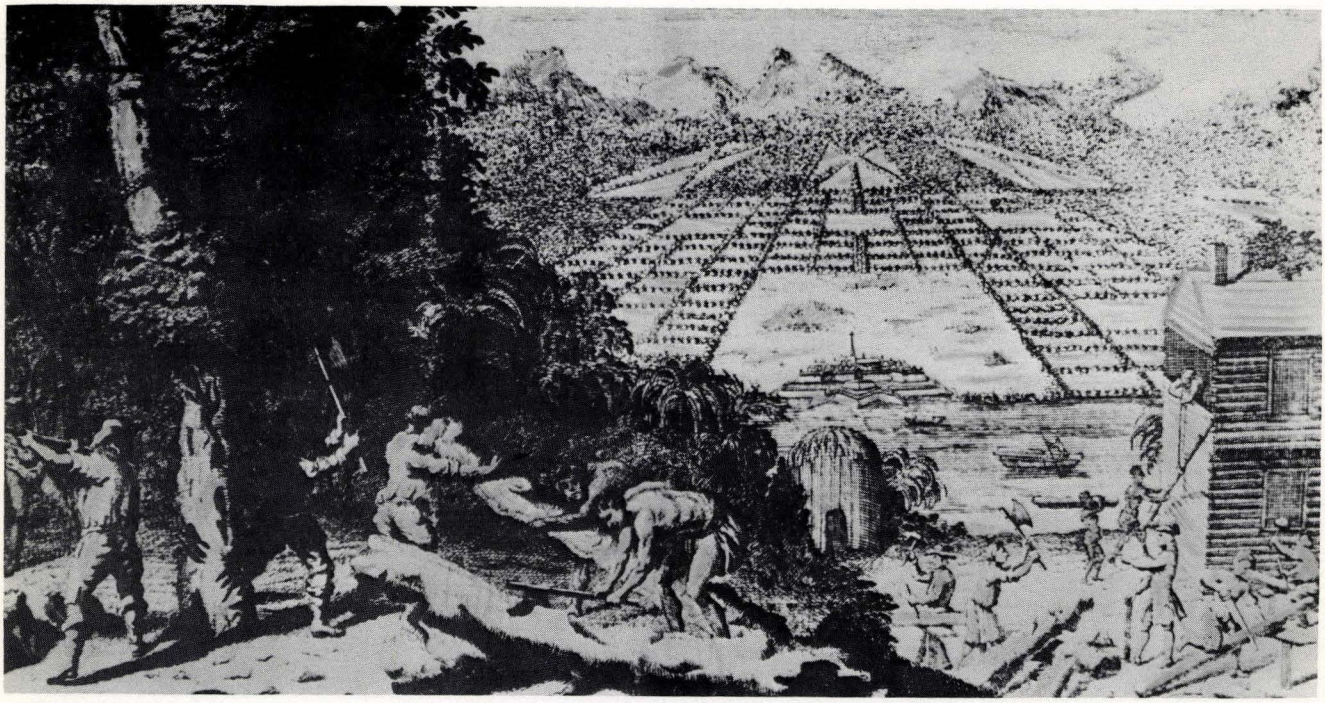


Heymen; student at Southern Military Academy, Marietta, 1859. Courtesy of Cobb Memorial Library, Valley, Ala.

The exhibit, "Jews and Georgians/A Meeting of Cultures: 1733-1983" attempts throughout its five divisions, to portray the panorama of the Georgian Jewish experience and the diversity of that experience in a region of this country, the south, not usually known for its diversity, but rather for its homogeneity. The five sections of the exhibit represent overlapping components of Jewish experience. *FROM DAY to DAY* focuses upon the traditional Jewish life cycle events and depicts Jewish life within the family unit. *THE COLONIAL ERA* dramatizes the beginnings of Jewish settlement in Georgia, Jewish interaction with the non-Jewish community, and the beginning formation of the Jewish communal structure. *JUDAISM in the NEW WORLD* illustrates the development of congregational life throughout the state, while highlighting the concentration of Jewish population in the larger metropolitan areas of Georgia. This section depicts Georgia Judaism through the annual calendar of Jewish holidays and ritual observance. The forth section of the exhibit, *BUILDING A COMMUNITY* is designed to show Jews serving each other through the development of Jewish community social services; Jewish involvement in service areas of the general community, Jews as patriots, Jewish participation and involvement in government and politics and, in general, Jewish contributions to the society in which they lived—from the Colonial era to the present. The *FREEDOM of OPPORTUNITY* section illustrates Jewish participation in all phases of economic endeavor. In some areas, Jews were pioneers, in others they joined in and became part of established traditions; yet, wherever they were involved, they brought their own life experiences to bear upon their work and were, in turn, affected by the traditions of southern culture. The history of Jewish life in Georgia is indeed a *meeting of cultures.*

The Colonial Era

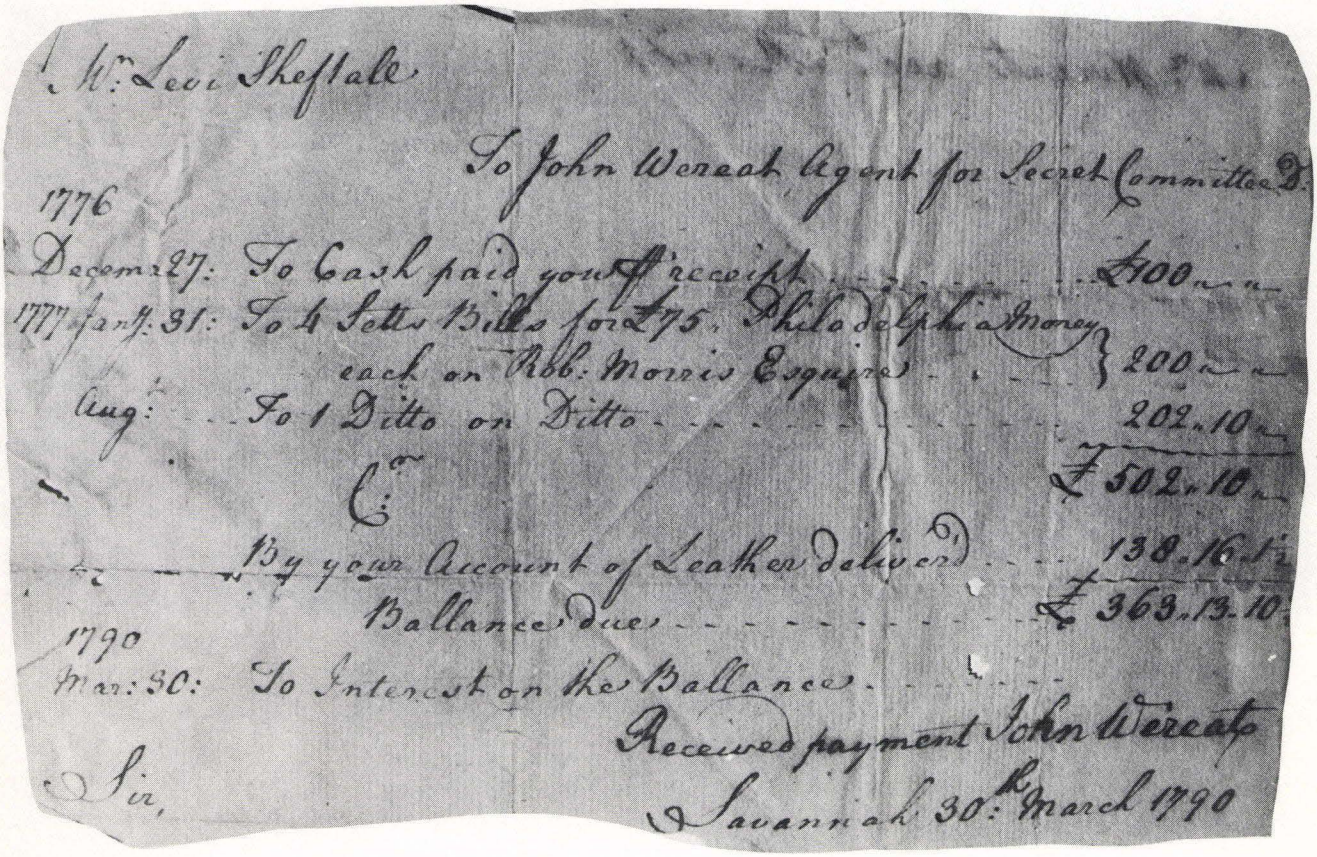
The England of the 1720's and 30's was a land of poverty and debt amidst wealth. A group of Anglican clergy and a former general and member of Parliament, James Oglethorpe, requested a charter from the King to establish a colony in part to provide the able poor a new chance. They received a temporary and restricted



A Woodcut of the settlement of Savannah, 1733.
Courtesy of the Atlanta Historical Society, Atlanta, Ga.

form of government called a "trusteeship", and designated commissioners to assist in raising funds. Three of the commissioners were wealthy and influential members of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation of Bevis Marks in London. This congregation and these commissioners had been concerned with the plight of impoverished Jews, many of whom were refugees

from the Inquisition. Poor relief was essentially left to private benevolence; the creation of a colony like Georgia could open an opportunity for the poor Jews as well as the gentiles. The Jewish Commissioners raised a substantial amount of money and sent a shipload of Jews to Georgia before the Trustees could intervene. It should be noted that not all of the Jews who sailed were without means and that the London sponsors remained concerned with the spiritual and physical well-being of the migrants.


Mr. Levi Sheftale

To John Wereat Agent for Secret Committee D.

1776
Decem. 27: To Cash paid your Receipt ... £100 ~ ~
1777 Jan.y: 31: To 4 Setts Bills for £75. Philadelphia Money
each on Robt. Morris Esquire ... } 200 ~ ~
Aug.t ... To 1 Ditto on Ditto ... 202.10 ~
£ 502.10 ~
By your Account of Leather deliv.d ... 138.16.1½
Ballance due ... £ 363.13.10½
1790
Mar: 30: To Interest on the Ballance ...

Received payment John Wereat

Sir,

Savannah 30th March 1790

Receipt from Levi Sheftall, agent for Secret Commmittee for Revolution in Georgia, to John Wereat, Savannah, March 30, 1790. Courtesy of Keith Reid Collection, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, **Ga.**

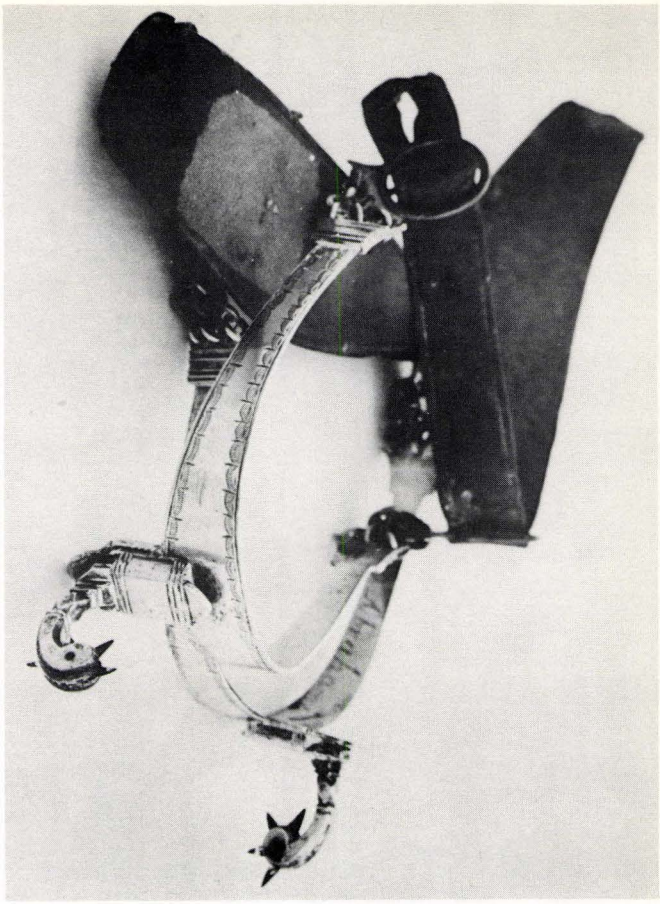
Mordecai Sheftall (1735-1797), Savannah, circa 1780's.
Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. B.H. Levy and Congregation
K.K. Mickve Israel, Savannah, Ga.



On July 11, 1733, five months after James Oglethorpe landed in the colony of Georgia, forty-two Jews arrived in Savannah aboard the WILLIAM and SARAH. They were the largest group of Jews to sail on one ship for North America in colonial times. Oglethorpe had not been told of their coming. Since the colony's charter guaranteed freedom of religious expression and observance to all, except Papists, he decided to allow them to land and notified the colony's Trustees in England of his action. The Trustees were so afraid that "the settling of Jews in Georgia will be prejudicial to the colony", that they rushed to squash publicly any notion that Georgia was to be "a Jews colony". They instructed Oglethorpe that the Jews be discouraged from settling in the colony and counseled him to " use his best endeavors that they be allowed no kind of settlement with any of the grantees" even to the extent "that the Jews be removed from the colony of Georgia".

Oglethorpe ignored the Trustees. An epidemic had been ravaging the colony and Dr. Samuel Nunes, one of the would-be Jewish settlers, provided medical assistance without charge. Also influencing Oglethorpe's decision could have been the fact that some of these settlers could afford to purchase land and the others were sponsored by Bevis Marks Congregation in London. Rather than becoming a burden on the Trustees' philanthropy, the Jewish immigrants from Germany welcomed the Salzburger immigrants in their native language. A vigneron from Portugal, Abraham De Lyon, introduced the port and malaga wine culture into the colony. While a few Jews failed economically, some became suppliers of goods to the colony or planters of means.

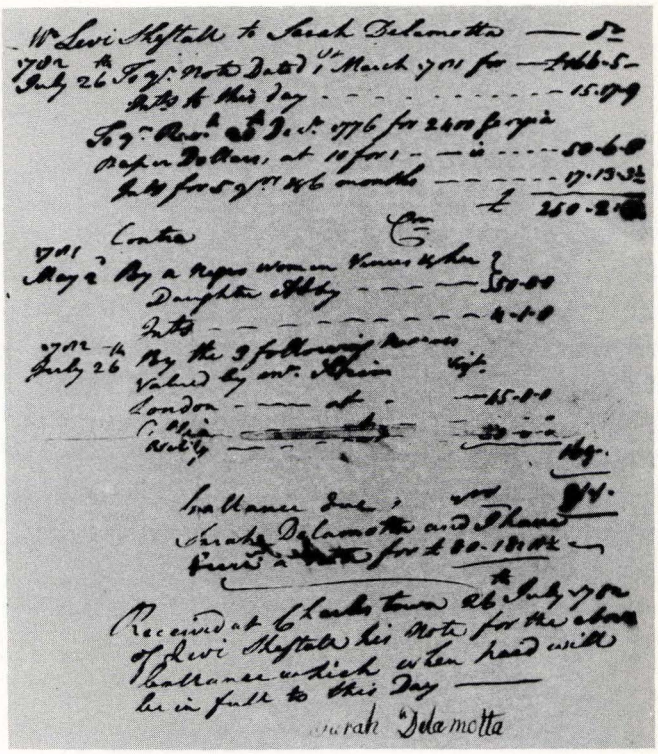
Two years after their arrival, the Jewish colonists organized Congregation K.K. Mickve Israel along the Sephardic ritual. They were provided with liturgical items including circumcision boxes and a Sefer Torah by the London Jewish community. The colonists flourished, and their numbers increased through birth and immigration until 1741. In that year, the English went to war (the war of Jenkins' Ear) with Spain. Fearful of being captured and burned at the stake as heretics, the Sephardic Jews fled the colony for Charleston. Jewish presence in Savannah was maintained only intermittently by some of the German Jews until 1762 when permanent settlement resumed.



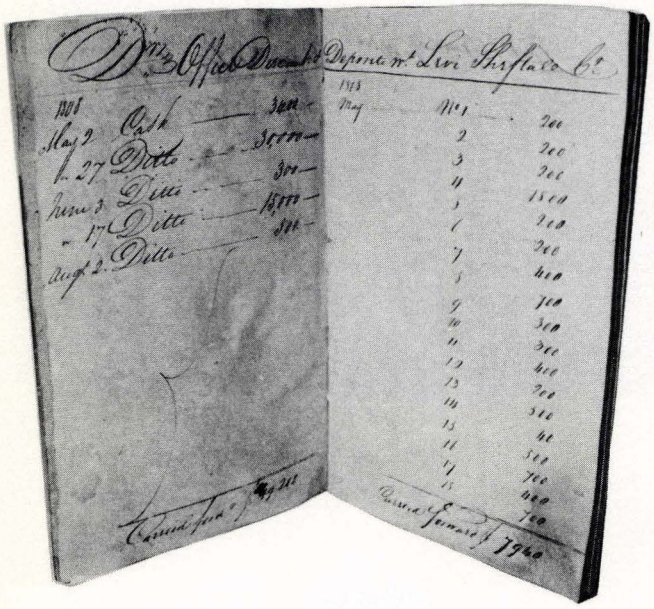
Minis spurs from the War of 1812. Courtesy of Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga.



Bris Kit, circa 1834. Courtesy of the American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Mass.



Receipt from Levi Sheftall to Sarah Delamotta for sale of negro woman, Savannah, July 26, 1782. Courtesy of Keith Reid Collection, University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, **Ga.**



"Journal". Levi Sheftall Receipt Book, Savannah, circa 1776. Courtesy of University of Georgia Libraries, Athens, Ga.

With such an early and long presence, the Jews of Savannah have had unique experiences amongst Georgia's Jews. Led by the Sheftalls and Minises, they were in the forefront of the revolutionary movement. Substantially accepted and assimilated, usually maintaining their Jewish identity, they were elected to numerous offices, helped found the Union Society, the oldest charitable organization in Georgia, and Solomon's Lodge, the oldest active Masonic Lodge in the hemisphere. Like their non-Jewish counterparts, they became planters, slave owners, and merchants. They were Georgians and Jews.

From Day to Day

Jews came to Georgia from countries all over Europe. In 1733, the colony's earliest Jewish settlers were Sephardic Jews fleeing Spanish and Portuguese persecution and were assisted by co-religionists in London. From the 1820's, Jews from Germany accounted for the largest wave of immigration. These Jews sought economic opportunity and relief from the general European revolutions of 1848-49. They generally entered America's northern port cities and, especially after the Civil War, travelled South peddling their wares or joining already settled family members.





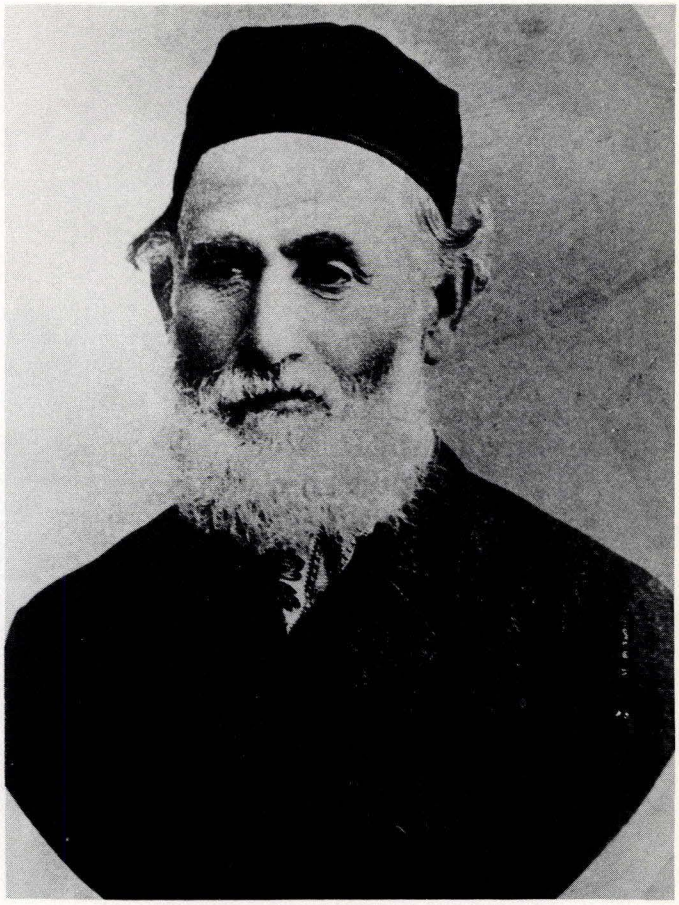
ABOVE: Yahrzeit photo taken as remembrance to bring to America, Georgia, Russia, 1910. Courtesy of Jacob Poller, Cairo, **Ga.**

LEFT: Hirschovitz boy dressed in first suit of American clothing, early 1900's. Courtesy of Hyman Winner, Savannah, **Ga.**

From the mid-1880's through World War 1, Jews from Southern and Eastern Europe, and particularly Russia, flooded into Georgia and numerically overwhelmed the earlier immigrants. They were victims of discrimination, refugees from war-torn areas seeking economic opportunity. Unlike earlier waves of German Jews, who tended to settle in small communities, these immigrants were concentrated in the big cities.







ABOVE RIGHT: Rosh Hoshana card sent by Nathan Golivesky from Valdosta to Bailystok, Poland, 1904. Courtesy of Hannah Golivesky, Valdosta, Ga.

ABOVE: Anna Mendelson, immigrated to Rome, Ga. from Lithuania, circa 1900. RIGHT: Louis Mendelson, born Kovna, Lithuania, died Rome, Ga. 1917. Courtesy of Mrs. Oscar Borocoft, Rome, Ga.

A smaller group of immigrants, Sephardic Jews from the disintegrating Ottoman Empire, travelled to Atlanta from 1906 through the 1920's. From the 1930's until after the end of the Second World War, a new group of European Jews fled the Holocaust of Hitler's Germany and made their way to Georgia's cities. Since the 1960's, there have been substantial groups of Jews from Russia and from a number of Arab Countries, notably, Iran, who have come seeking religious freedom and human rights. In addition to settlers from foreign countries, Jews from America's northern communities and smaller southern cities are drawn to Atlanta, a rapidly growing, vibrant mecca in the Sunbelt. These immigrant waves, although not accounting for huge numbers of people, belie the traditional view of the South as a homogeneous region.

The various immigrant sub-communities created a kaleidoscopic picture, yet were somewhat unified by their religion. The emphasis of the Jewish religion on family life reinforced the immigration pattern of a man bringing parents, cousins, younger brothers and sisters, wives and children and relatives once he had established roots.



Cheyatovich family, Kovono, Lithuania, 1905. Courtesy of Henry Taylor, Quitman, Ga.

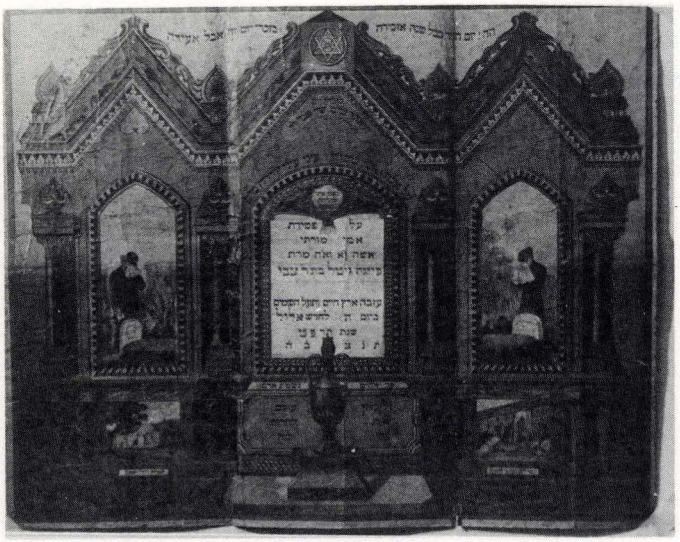


Tanenbaum family dairy farm, Martinez, circa 1906. Courtesy of Anne Scheider, Augusta, Ga.

RIGHT: Carrie Dawson, teacher at Johnson Street School, 1908. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



Death certificate of Fanny Dunn, Dublin, 1929. Courtesy of Shirley Dunn Reisman, Atlanta, Ga.



The Jews adapted Georgian lifestyles. Jewish children played and were educated like other Georgians. Young adults continued their educations in Georgia, conducted social lives, married and began families. Adults cooked, shopped and dressed like other Georgians. There are records in the 18th Century of several Jews being involved in duels—thus following the practice of some members of high society in defense of honor.

In the late 19th Century, Jewish members of the upper middle class used calling cards when they made their afternoon social calls. Until the mid 20th Century, the elderly either maintained their own life styles or remained within the larger family unit. The community usually supervised the passing of generations through the maintenance of burial plots and ritual, much as it had overseen the introduction of life with the bris and baby naming ceremonies. Acculturation is evident in such items as bris clothing, remarkably similar in design to baptismal gowns and pictures of children collecting Easter eggs.



Briss dress and petticoat worn by Isadore Heiman, Atlanta 1899. Courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. Leonard Heiman, Atlanta, Ga.



The Tra-la-la Girls, Bainbridge, 1898. Courtesy of Grace Kolnke, Quincy, Fla.



BELOW: I.P. Miller Cuba with parents and sister, Cordele, 1920. Courtesy of Ida Pearl Cuba, Atlanta, Ga.

In spite of acculturation on some levels, the social life of Jews tended to be separate from that of the rest of the community. Jewish social fraternities and clubs were organized partly as a result of exclusion from those established by non-Jews and partly by choice. For example, Jews joined the Masons and were accepted to the point of receiving state-wide offices, but many times, they became members of Jewish lodges. Many Jews were joiners who united to maintain their identity and also to be with others from similar background.



Three pieces of silver service belonging to Alexander family, Atlanta, 1847 and 1913. Center front: child's Kiddush cup presented to J.M. Alexander. Courtesy of Cecil and Hermione Alexander, Atlanta, Ga.



Morris and Fannie Lichtenstein, Atlanta, 1893. Courtesy of Jack Lichtenstein, Atlanta, Ga.



Wedding dress of Henrietta Smith Stern, Albany, Ga., 1873. Courtesy of Mrs. Carlton Lentz, Anniston, Ala.

Handmade Quilt, each square completed by a different person, Atlanta, 1853. Courtesy of Cecil and Hermione Alexander, Atlanta, Ga.



Unlike many northern communities where large numbers of Jews lived in close proximity, in Georgia the Jewish communities were smaller and scattered. Social clubs travelled from city to city and maintained ties with their counterparts in surrounding states. These ties provided a network for men and women from all over the south to meet and marry. The club pattern illustrates diversity within the Jewish community—German, Eastern European, and, in Atlanta, Sephardic Jews formed their own Sephardic Societies.

Georgia's Jews exemplified the Georgia life styles, in the small towns and in the cities. Their experiences as Georgians were often modified by their religious and immigrant backgrounds, therefore forming an ethnic variation of the regional society.

Judaism in the New World

The Jews in Savannah, "seem nearer the mind that was in Christ than many of those who call him Lord", wrote John Wesley in his diary in 1737. Through a complex mixture of elements in Georgia that made the colony a fertile seed-bed for Jews, it was probably this religious perception of Jews reflected in Wesley's words that acted as a benevolent catalyst and allowed the Jews to grow roots and to become an integral part of the Georgia landscape. Most gentiles emphasized the morality of charitable and social responsibility in the Jewish character, rather than ritual performance, which they believed had been shaped by the Jews' religious heritage as "God's chosen ministers of the Book". This respectful religious stereotype, with some notable exceptions, proved sufficient to moderate bigoted voices and generally to provide credentials for acceptance.



Rabbi Edward Browne, served congregations in Atlanta and Columbus, circa 1870's. Courtesy Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



Cantor Abraham Hurvitz, Savannah, circa 1890's. Courtesy of Allen Gottleib, Savannah, Ga.



LEFT: Sephardic pillow case used in circumcision ceremony. Courtesy of Regina Tourial.



RIGHT: Bar Mitzvah tallith bag belonging to Sidney Pearlman, 1928. Courtesy of S. Pearlman, Valdosta, Ga.



LEFT: Dryer family preparing for the Sabbath, Dublin, 1919. Courtesy of Carrie Oppenheimer, Jacksonville, Fla.

Yet, while most gentiles were willing to accept religious distinction, most refused to accept a visible cultural separatism. Consequently, as the gentiles beckoned the Jews to become a part of Georgia society, they exerted an unspoken pressure upon the Jews to adopt southern lifestyles. Judaism, however, had developed into an ethnic religion. It was, therefore, inescapable that any process of cultural change would require a modification of religious life.



RIGHT: Bar Mitzvah of Julius Palefsky, Savannah, 1933. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



Valdosta Hebrew Congregation Sunday School Class Chanukah project 1973. Courtesy of Dr. Louis Schmier, Valdosta, Ga.

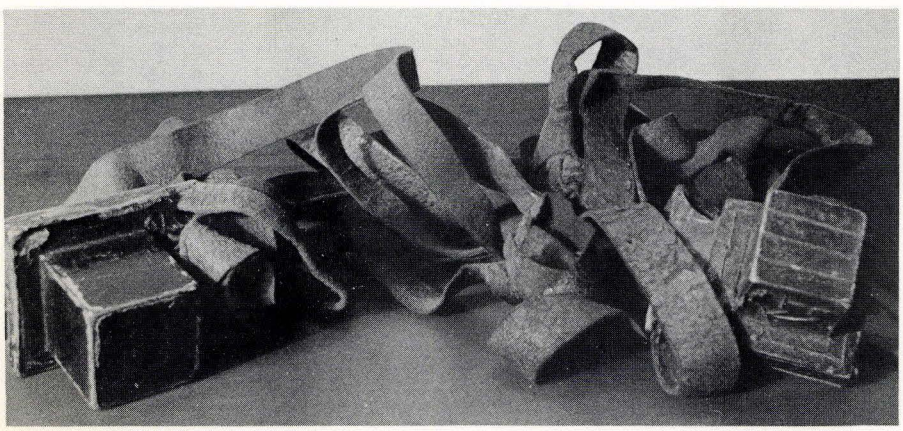


Seder scene, Savannah, 1897. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.

Two broad criteria were used for evaluating the utility of Old World religious traditions. The first was to retain and alter those traditions that allowed Jews to be religiously different without appearing or acting differently from their gentile neighbors. The second was to emphasize the traditional Judaic sense of moral responsibility as a viable substitute to demanding ritualism. The Jewish response during the past 250 years in Georgia, however, has not been uniform. The great diversity of contemporary Georgia Jewish



Tefillin bag, made in Sedowa, Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania. Used by Georgia Jewish peddler, circa 1882. Courtesy of Louis Schmier, Valdosta, Ga.



Tefillin, made in Sedowa Kovno Gubernia, Lithuania. Used by Georgia Jewish peddler, circa 1882. Courtesy of Louis Schmier, Valdosta, Ga.



Mrs. Victor Kriegshaber and Fannie Boorstein, Atlanta, 1913. Courtesy of Sol Beton. **Atlanta, Ga.**

Life reflects partly the fact that the process of accommodating to gentile Georgia society is at different stages since Georgia Jews arrived in different "waves" over the last two and a half centuries. Moreover, Jews came not only at different times, but from different lands bringing with them cultural, historic and religious experiences. Therefore, the judgement about what communal, congregational and individual religious traditions to discard, preserve or modify was not always the same.

A diverse religious life was established and became centered around congregations which were founded all over the state. In the past 250 years, there have been thirty-eight congregations in Georgia—most are still flourishing, a few have foundered. Seventeen of the thirty-eight existed in the metropolitan Atlanta area where the majority of the Jewish population settled.

Building a Community

The involvement of Georgia Jews in community service was characterized by several themes. The Jewish religion teaches, and historical experience demonstrates, a strong desire to serve and help others. Service was a way of showing that Jews were Georgians and Americans and should be accepted as such. In some cases, service was a proving ground for Americanism. The broad involvement of Jews in public service is a testimony to one aspect of their acceptance by the general community. With few exceptions, in Georgia, ethnicity was ignored or secondary and the person's position on issues and recognition in the community was paramount.

Purim celebration, Congregation Adath Yeshurun, Augusta, 1909. Courtesy of J.B. Marks, Lakeland, Fla.



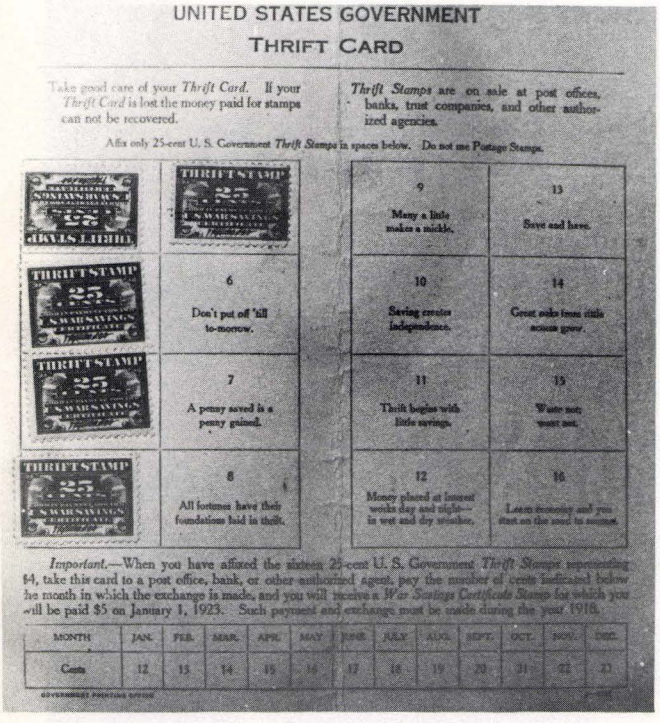


Civil War hat band and U.C.V. pin belonging to Anseln Sterne, circa 1863. Courtesy of Mrs. Carleton Lentz, Anniston, Ala.

Jews have held virtually every position in Georgia's government with the exception of U.S. Senator. Some sources indicate that David Emanuel, who served as the state's sixth governor by virtue of his being president of the State Senate, was Jewish. Three Jews served as mayors pro tempore in late nineteenth century Atlanta before Sam Massell achieved the elective position in the 1960's. Herman Meyers became the mayor of Savannah in the 1890's, coinciding with a pattern of Jewish mayors in southern coastal cities during that era. There have been numerous Jewish city councilmen, aldermen, state legislators and judges. Phyllis Kravitch, whose attorney father defended black clients long before such a position was popular, became the first Jewish woman to serve on the Federal Court of Appeals. With the presidency of Jimmy Carter, many Jewish attorneys from Georgia became prominent advisors and leaders of national government policy.

Jews have served as school board members (David Mayer was a founder of the Atlanta public school system), police chiefs, clerks of the Savannah market and keepers of the powder. Beyond the cosmopolitan centers of the big cities, Jews were elected to similar positions in towns like Athens, Albany, Rome, and Oscilla. They were appointed to planning commissions and state boards and other municipal bodies.

U.S. Government thrift card, Atlanta, 1917. Courtesy of Hazel Karp, Atlanta, Ga.



UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

THRIFT CARD

Take good care of your *Thrift Card*. If your *Thrift Card* is lost the money paid for stamps can not be recovered.

Thrift Stamps are on sale at post offices, banks, trust companies, and other authorized agencies.

Affix only 25-cent U. S. Government *Thrift Stamps* in spaces below. Do not use Postage Stamps.

		9 Many a little makes a mickle.	13 Save and have.
	6 Don't put off 'till to-morrow.	10 Saving creates independence.	14 Great oaks from little acorns grow.
	7 A penny saved is a penny gained.	11 Thrift begins with little savings.	15 Waste not, want not.
	8 All fortunes have their foundations laid in thrift.	12 Money placed at interest works day and night—in wet and dry weather.	16 Learn economy and you start on the road to success.

Important.—When you have affixed the sixteen 25-cent U. S. Government *Thrift Stamps* representing $4, take this card to a post office, bank, or other authorized agent, pay the number of cents indicated below the month in which the exchange is made, and you will receive a *War Savings Certificate Stamp* for which you will be paid $5 on January 1, 1923. Such payment and exchange must be made during the year 1918.

MONTH	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APR.	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Cents	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23

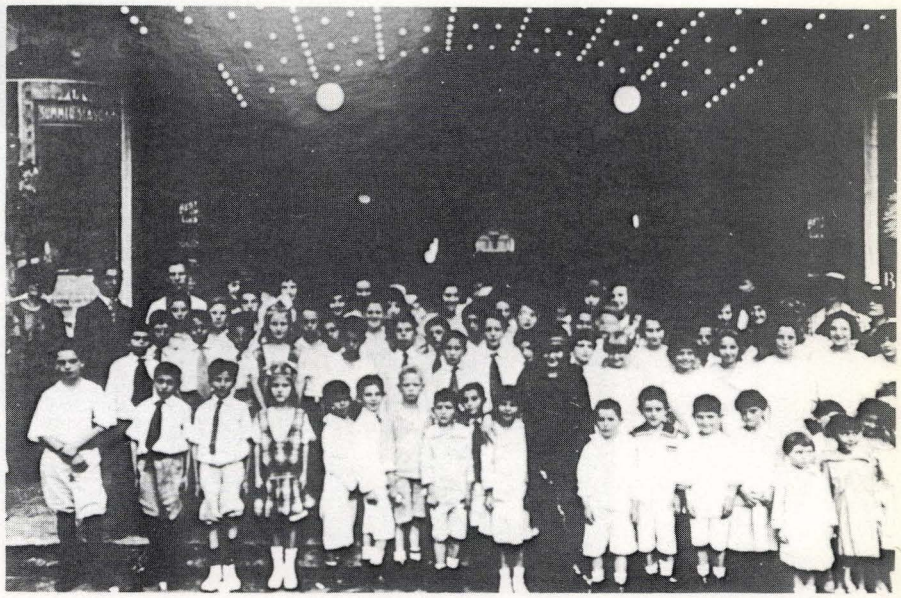


Hon. Elliott Levitas, 4th District Congressman, greeting Anwar Sadat. Courtesy of Elliott Levitas, Atlanta, Ga.



Selig Borochoff as sheriff, Columbus, circa 1905-1910. Courtesy of Mrs. Oscar Borochoff, Columbus, Ga.

Orphan's of Hebrew Orphans's Home at the movies, Atlanta, 1929. Courtesy of Jewish Children's Services, Atlanta, Ga.

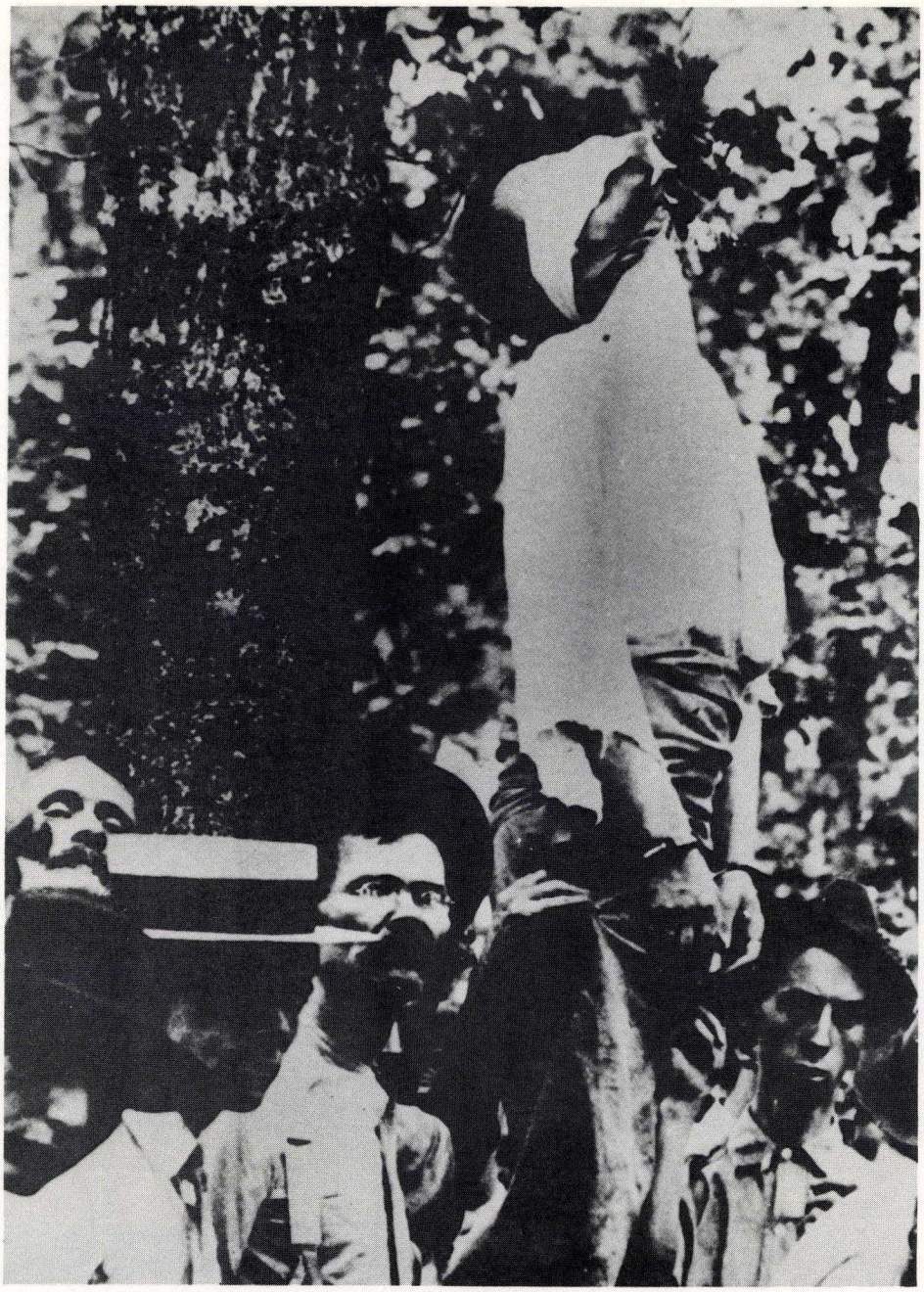


There were very few "Jewish issues", although Jews did tend to support positions not in total harmony with community stands. Jews have been in the forefront of civil rights movements for blacks, women, and Cuban refugees in Georgia. Morris Abrams, originally from Fitzgerald, argued the case of Wesberry vs. Sanders before the U.S. Supreme Court and successfully established the principle of "one man, one vote" for congressional apportionment.

In the late 1940's, Rabbi Jacob Rothschild used his pulpit to openly take a positive position supporting civil rights for blacks. He and his wife took the initiative in honoring Martin Luther King Jr. with a dinner on the occasion of King's return to Atlanta after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Obviously not all of Georgia's Jewish population was so liberal. Many remained quiet on rights issues either because they accepted southern mores, or because they feared a negative anti-Semitic backlash.

Martin Luther King receiving Steuben glass bowl from Rabbi Jacob Rothschild, Atlanta, 1965. Courtesy of Janice Rothschild Blumberg, Knoxville, Tenn.





Crowds milling around after lynching of Leo Frank, Marietta, August 16, 1915. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.

Occasionally, anti-Semitism did raise its ominous head. Sometimes elections were held on Saturdays or Jewish holidays even after protest. Although Henry Alexander was elected to the state legislature in 1911, when his religion became better known, he lost his re-election bid. No Jews were elected to office in Atlanta between 1913 and the 1930's, the era of the Leo Frank case

and the Ku Klux Klan, even though they enjoyed disproportionate success before and after that period.

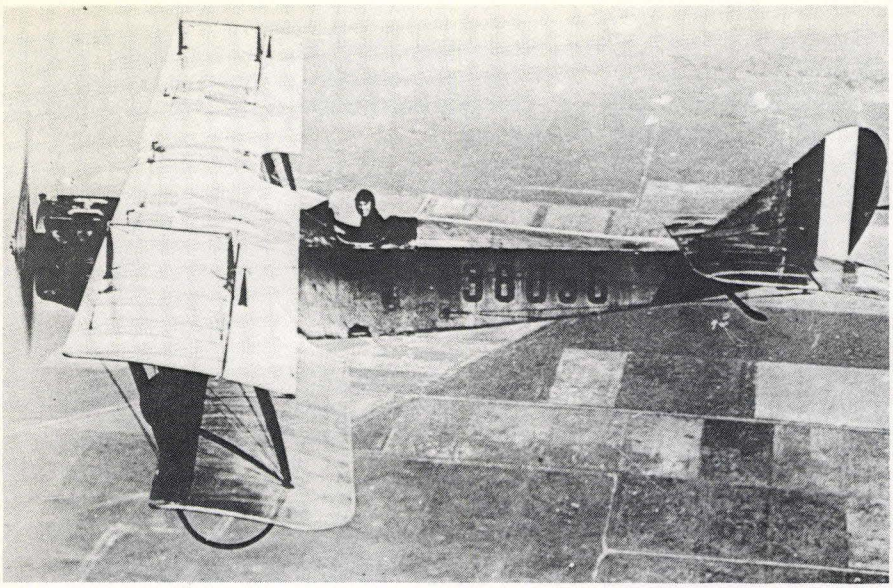
Because Jews were involved with the sale of alcoholic beverages, prohibition campaigns were sometimes tinged with anti-Semitic utterances. Rhoda Kaufman, founder and leader of the state department of social services, was hounded from her position by an anti-Semitic smear campaign during the 1920's.



Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, circa 1920's, Savannah, Ga. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archive and History, Atlanta Ga.



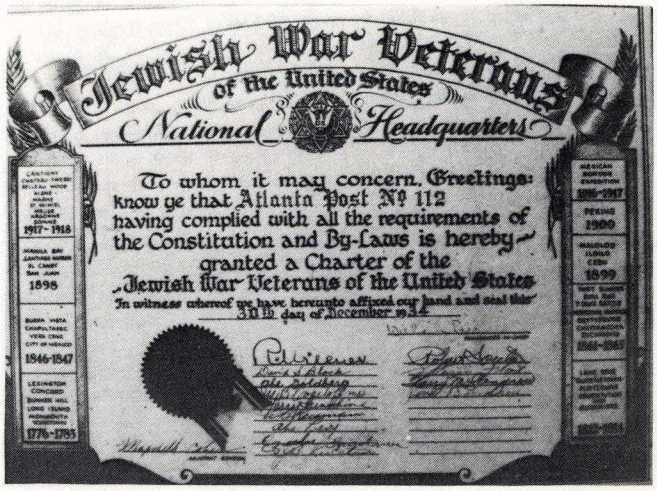
Union Soldiers being visited by Jewish relatives in Albany, 1867. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, GA.

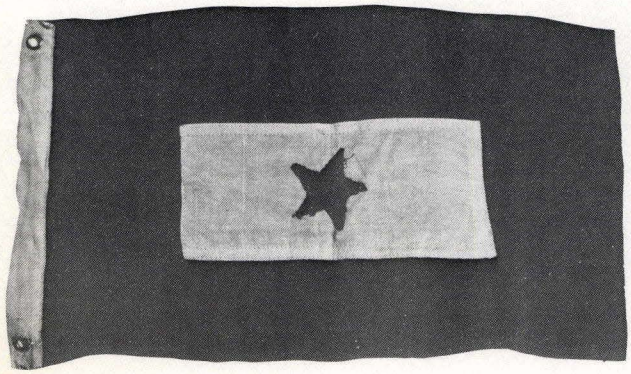


Isadore Belloff flying patrol on Georgia coast, Savannah, 1918. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.

Jews in Georgia have fought and supported every war America has been involved in. Mordecai Sheftall was a leader of the "Parochial Committee" which protested British policies from 1775. He later became Commissary General to the Georgia militia and helped provide provisions for the Georgia Patriots. He and his son were captured by the British as important rebels and ultimately exchanged. During the Civil War, many of the states Jewish residents fought for the Confederacy. Aaron Haas became a blockade runner and David Mayer was the governors supply officer. David Steinheimer, on the other hand, opposed slavery and fled the state when threatened with being drafted. Georgia Jews won the Croix de Guerre from the French government for heroism in World War I, served with distinction during World War II and a Jew became a brigadier general in the states national guard unit during the Korean War era. On the home front, Jews were deeply involved in Red Cross, government bond drives and U.S.O. activities.

Jewish War Veterans' Charter of Atlanta Post 112, Atlanta, Courtesy of Isadore Perrell, Atlanta, Ga.





Roy Bauer family flag flown during WWI. Courtesy of Josephine Heyman, Atlanta, Ga.



Boy Scout Troop of the Jewish Educational Alliance, Savannah, 1915. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.

A strong sense of cultural awareness and a desire to contribute to the building of their communities led Jews to participate in the establishment of opera associations and symphonies, ballet companies and art institutes throughout the state. Jews helped found the Atlanta Historical Society and the Burns Club and served on the Stone Mountain Memorial Association. Jewish professionals and laymen offered their expertise to secular social service agencies, helped develop the Union Society, the oldest charitable organization in the state, and numerous community chests in cities and towns throughout Georgia. As leaders of the Masonic Order and the Shriners, they built hospitals. Medicine, in fact, has been a primary avenue of social service. Dental and Cancer clinics funded by Jews have long served the poor. Joseph Hirsch, for example, was a major leader of Grady Hospital.

Beyond the specific contributions of individual Jews and of the Jewish community at large to the public interests of Georgia, Jewish involvement, dedication and financial commitment offered examples for others to emulate. A small minority of the overall population, Jews have served as standard bearers of involvement for others.

Carl Sanders campaigning for Governor, talking to local leader, George Scheer, Eatonton, 1943. Courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Fred Scheer, Atlanta, Ga.

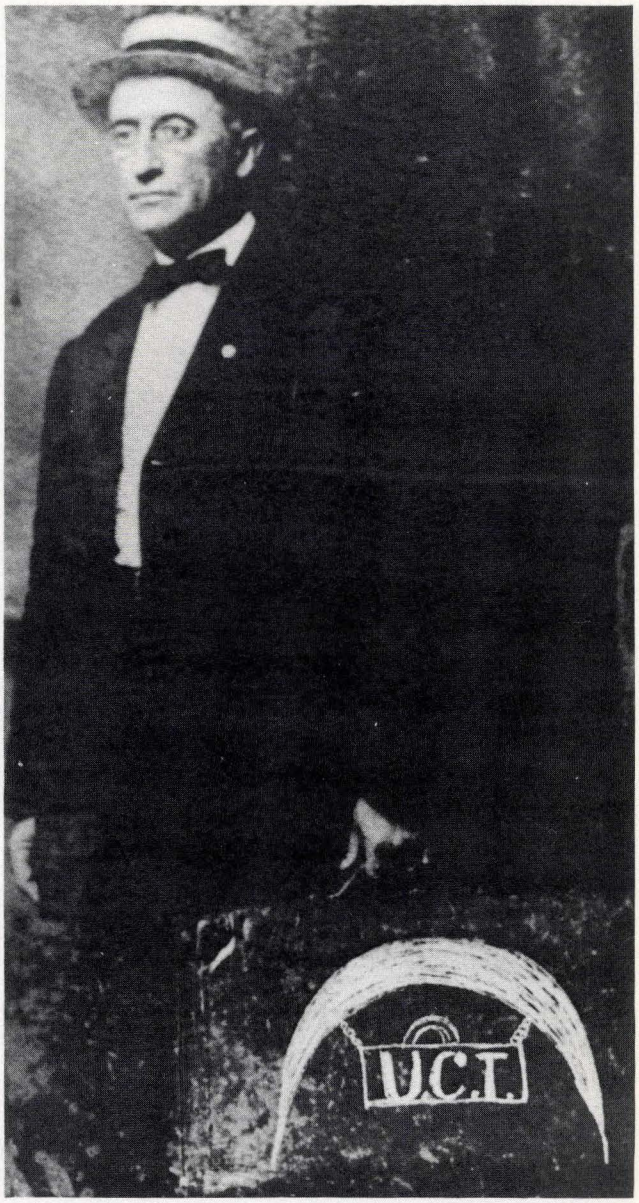


Freedom of Opportunity

In addition to religious and political persecution, the most important reason Jews left Europe was their desire for economic freedom of opportunity. The availability of jobs and the openness of business markets largely determined where the immigrants settled and how they lived. The marketplace in Georgia, with its reliance on agriculture and the resultant rural, small-town life style discouraged the growth of a large Jewish population, and, at the same time, exerted a strong influence on those Jews who did come.

As an outgrowth of its concern for the rising number of Jewish poor, the city of London's Jewish community began raising money for the new Georgia colony. Although many of Georgia's early colonists brought with them servants and enough money to purchase plots of land, others needed a subsidy from the Bevis Marks congregation in London

The early Jewish citizens succeeded in establishing themselves economically. Almost from the beginning, they tended to enter the commercial fields. Yet, following the example of fellow Georgians in the post-Revolutionary era, families such as the Sheftalls and Minises began to accumulate large landholdings. These vast tracts of property became the foundation of the plantation life style.



Julius Michel, travelling salesman, Macon, 1895.
Courtesy of Mrs. Ben Pearlman, Palm Beach, Fla.



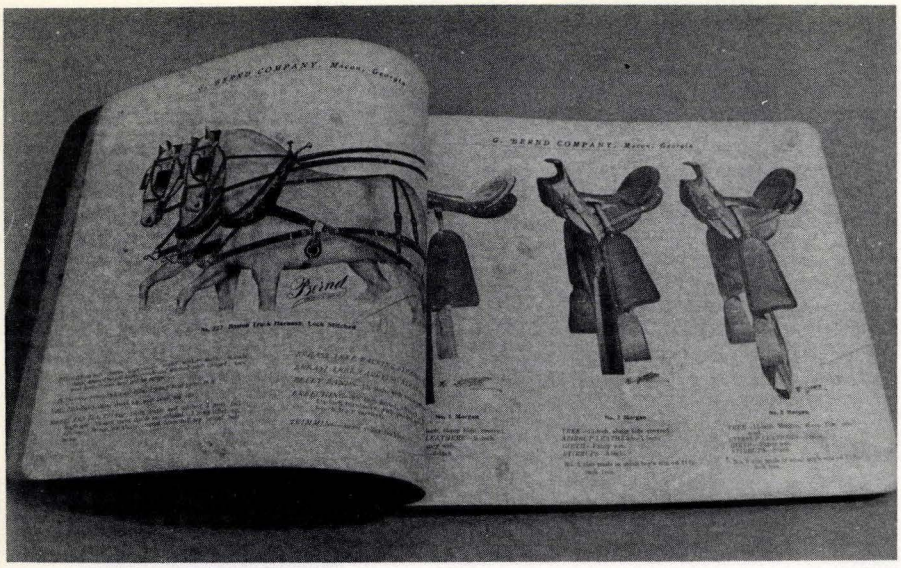
Delivery truck, W. Feinberg's furniture store, Thomasville, Ga. circa 1919. Courtesy of Joe Feinberg, Thomasville, Ga. and Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



Stanley Elkan as resident engineer for Central Georgia Railroad, 1925. Courtesy of Stanley Elkan, Macon, Ga.



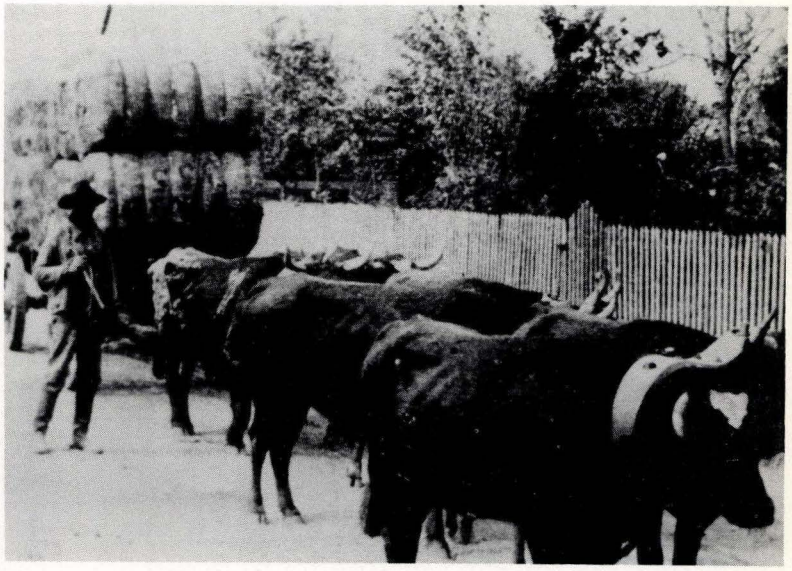
Jewish peddlers selling their wares at a south Georgia turpentine farm, circa 1906. Courtesy of Wayne Lazarus, Atlanta, Ga.



Catalogue of G. Bernd Co., largest saddlers in the south, Macon, 1905. Courtesy of Gus Kaufman, Macon, Ga.

BELOW: Joe Marks jobbing cotton, Valdosta, circa 1895. Courtesy of Leornard Kornman, Nashville, Tenn.

Eventually, as a consequence of landholding, Jews were engaged in the buying and selling of slaves. They farmed and marketed tobacco, rice and cotton. Their agricultural involvement continued on a smaller scale after the Civil War when some Jews turned to cotton factoring. Jews were pioneers in efforts toward crop diversification with the development of the pecan and peach industries.





In most of the European countries of their origin, Jews had not been allowed to own land. Thus, they had entered trades, commerce, and, because of the religious emphasis on learning, the professions as well. This historical tradition set the Jews apart from other Georgians occupationally, and the southern plantation and small farm life appealed to only a small minority. Also, because plantation life spread out the population, it was a drawback to the Jews' need for a concentrated, large group in order to carry on the practice of religion.

LEFT: Christmas at Yachum & Yachum, Savannah, 1925. Courtesy of Louis Schmier, Valdosta, Ga.

Most Jews arrived in Georgia with very little money. They entered occupations where they could start on a small scale yet have the opportunity to accumulate wealth and expand. The German Jews of the 19th century spread out from New York and other immigrant ports to become peddlers—combination travelling salesmen and mobile department stores. These peddlers offered necessary and much needed items which were difficult to obtain in the small, scattered towns on their routes. They sold whatever they could carry on their backs or transport by horse and buggy.

A peddler could start his business with a small stake or obtain items on credit. He frequently returned to a city or town to observe Shabbat and, finally, to settle there. Settling often entailed partnerships, frequently with family members, and also entrance into town life. Frequent moves from town to town, or in and out of the state, were not unusual for these peddlers.

The "dry goods" stores were the fore-runners of the department stores that may be found in small Georgia towns today. These stores provided the capital and experience for larger endeavors. The Strauss family left Georgia because of an anti-Semitic outburst during the Civil War and later, founded Macy's in New York. After opening a store in Savannah, the Rich brothers travelled to Atlanta to found a major department store chain. The Solomon family in Savannah and Joseph Jacobs in Atlanta opened large pharmacies, and the Altermans established Food Giant.







TOP: Form used in the pressing of hats, Atlanta, 1920. Courtesy of Sol Beton, Atlanta, Ga.
ABOVE: Sigfried Schwartzweiss (1st. on left) and two friends, Waynesboro, Georgia, circa 1880. Courtesy of Martha Moses, Statesboro, Ga.
LEFT: Float used for 4th of July Parade sponsored by Roobin's Department Store, Cordele, circa 1920. Courtesy of Sam Roobin, Cordele, Ga.



Max Siegel's groceries and kosher meats, Atlanta, circa 1940's. Courtesy of Harold Siegel. **Atlanta, Ga.**

Advertisement, "Original Kosher Butcher", Atlanta 1889. Courtesy of Atlanta Historical Society, Atlanta, Ga.



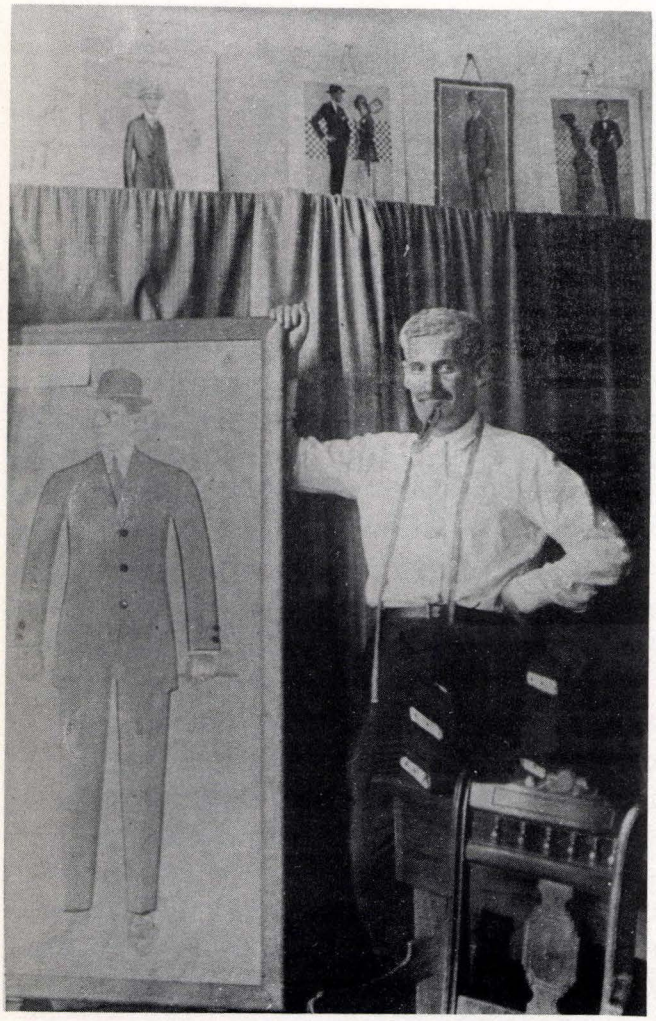
Some Eastern Europeans, like their German counterparts, started with peddlers' back-packs and later purchased wagons to expand their peddlary routes. Others tended to begin with small stores in the larger cities where they could better maintain their orthodoxy and survive economically. Typical were grocery and tailor stores and pawn shops. Financing was difficult because starting a business in the city required significant capital which banks were not willing to lend without collateral. In some cases, individuals like Hyman Mendel, who had begun accumulating wealth in the wholesale business, offered goods on credit. Other Jews who had come early in this migration, started finance companies and loan associations. They organized what was then the second Morris Plan Program in the country. The Morris Plan recognized that a man's potential, indicated by his good character and his ability, could be just as important as collateral. A beginning businessman, or later, people who wanted to purchase a home, could obtain a loan with three character references.

Many Sephardic Jews re-established their old world trades in Georgia and were able to emulate the Eastern Europeans' pattern of adjustment. Typical of their occupations were leather crafts and shoe repair, delicatessen ownership and hat and cloth pressing establishments. With similar ingenuity as the German Jews in middle Georgia who developed an automatic bottle washing process that revolutionized the soft drink industry, David Ajonelo patented an auto-soler which mechanized the shoemaking business.

Georgia's Jews involved themselves in a variety of industries such as rug manufacturing, office supply distribution, and the manufacture or



Zaban Co. truck, Atlanta, circa 1930. Courtesy of Laura Dinerman, Atlanta, Ga.



Breman Tailor Shop, Savannah, circa 1922. Courtesy of Mrs. Murray Marcus, Tifton, Ga.

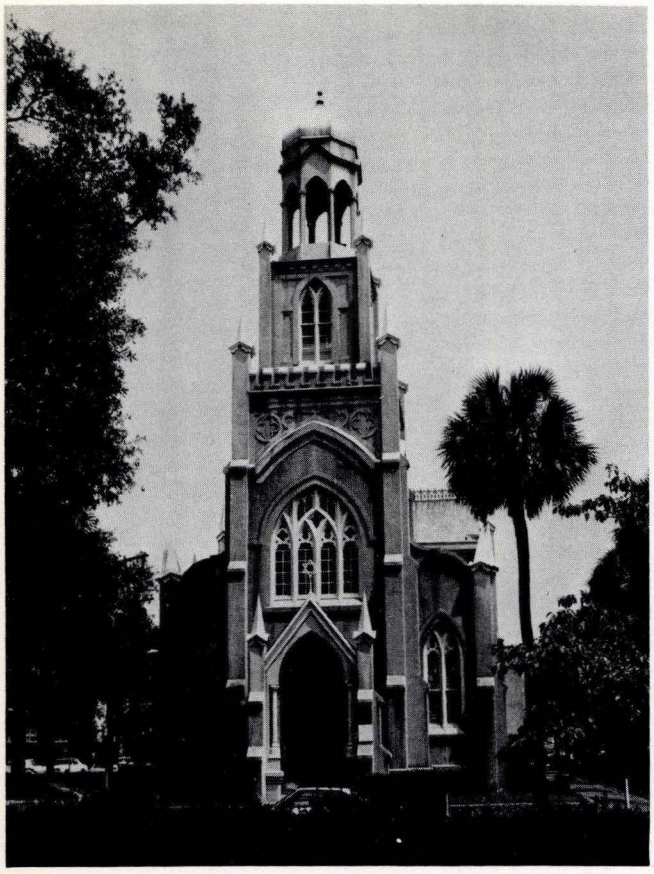
supply of chemicals, linens, jewelry, insurance, building supplies, and many more. Harry Schlesinger and Frank Lowenstein were pioneers in the chocolate candy business, while other Jews built scrap yard operations into steel production plants.

Jews also entered the professions. Jewish teachers such as Henrietta Stone of Albany, established girls' schools in the late 19th century. Annie T. Wise became the first female high school principal in Atlanta when she was appointed to head the newly established Commercial High School.



Sidewalk cornerstone, Macon Paving and Contracting Company, Macon, Ga., 1883. Courtesy of Stanley Elkan, Macon, Ga.

Exterior view of K.K. Mickve Israel, Savannah, 1983. Courtesy of S. Perry Brickman, Atlanta, Ga.



Jews read for the bar in the 1800's and became members of influential law firms. Harold Hirsch pioneered in areas of patent and fair trade law and, while Vice President and Chief Counsel for the Coca Cola Company, formulated the plans for an independent bottlers' association. Medicine, architecture, and academia on the college and university level have large representations of Jews.

Occasionally, religious differences set Jews further apart from the Georgians. Sunday closing laws forced observant Jews to shut down their businesses on both Saturday and Sunday, thus making the typical six day business week impossible. Sometimes, Jewish businessmen were brought to task for breaking these Sunday Blue Laws. Contrary to the southern evangelical tradition of prohibition, Jews had few qualms about opening liquor stores and saloons.

The relationship of many Jews to blacks after the Civil War contrasted sharply with prevalent southern white tradition. Jewish peddlers often did business with black customers. Victims of prejudice themselves, Jewish businessmen wanted the patronage of black customers and, in many cases, did not accept southern racial orthodoxy. They made efforts to treat their black customers with the same personal respect and to extend the same credit policies to them as they did to their white customers. In Atlanta, for example, many Eastern European and Sephardic Jewish businesses were initially located adjacent to the black community and thus did much trade with the blacks. Abe Goldstein was one of the first Atlanta businessmen to hire black salesmen to deal with both his black and white customers.

Jews living as a part of Georgia's southern society by their cultural traditions and by the ethics of their Judaism which, among other things, emphasized the value of each human life, the responsibility for the well-being of others, and the obligation of contributing to the society in which they lived.

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Conclusion

As amply demonstrated by the preceding narrative, the history of Georgian Jewry is long, distinguished and eventful. Yet, the most important years for Georgian Jewry may lie ahead.

Because of economic changes within the United States, including the decline in manufacturing as a source of jobs, there has been a significant demographic shift in the general population from the Northeast and Middle West to the Sunbelt states, including the Southeast and Southwest. Georgia, particularly Atlanta, has benefited from this population shift.

Using the population statistics from the American Jewish Year Book, which are probably conservatively stated, Georgian Jewry grew from 22,555 to 25,135 from 1961 to 1972, or 11.4% population gain. Over the next decade, however, the population growth was 12,265, or a 48.9% population increase. The total population

Inside Montgomery St. Synagogue, Savannah, 1919. Courtesy of Vanishing Georgia Project, Georgia Department of Archives and History, Atlanta, Ga.



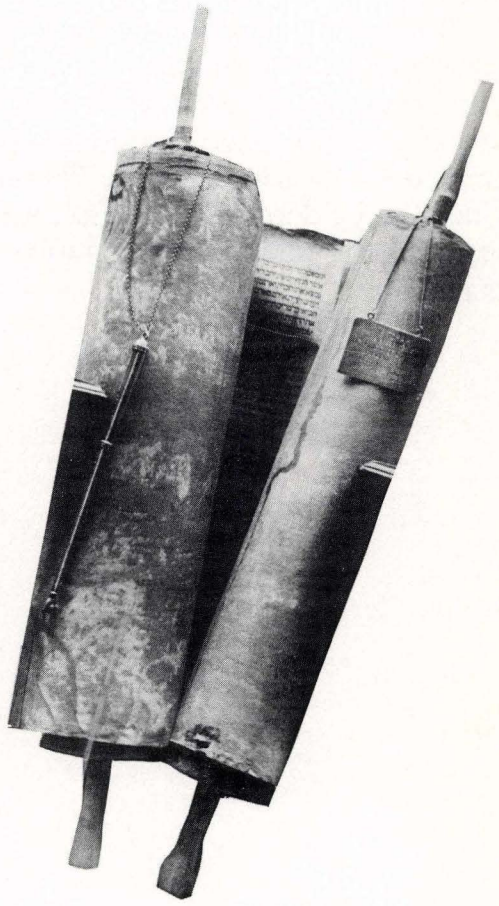


Wedding dinner for Rubye Rich and Oscar Struass at the Kimball House, Atlanta, circa 1910. Courtesy of Margaret Weiller, Atlanta, Ga.

growth over this two decade span was 14,845 to a total population of 37,400 Jews, or a 66% growth factor. This increase was largely an urban phenomenon and is manifested most significantly in Atlanta. The seven county Atlanta area increased its population by 26.2% from 1970 to 1981.

According to projections by the Atlanta Jewish Federation, the counties which exhibited the greatest growth also included a disproportionate number of Jewish households. Thus, there has been a 40% growth in synagogue memberships in the northern suburban areas of Atlanta from 1970 to 1981. "Jewish surnames" have multiplied similarly in those areas for the same years. Synagogues have tripled in numbers from the mid 1960's to early 1980's. Now, Atlanta synagogues literally cover the entire landscape of the Atlanta metropolitan area. Similarly, Jewish agencies' services touch every geographic area in Atlanta, with the greatest concentration in far north suburban areas and midtown.

The Atlanta Jewish Federation initiated a Jewish population study in the summer of 1983, and the results will not be available until the end of 1984. It is evident, however, that the city's Jewish population hovers around 40,000. This population estimate for Atlanta alone is astounding, when set against the American Jewish Year Book's statistics for the entire state.



Torah Scroll, Savannah, circa 1740's. Courtesy of K.K. Mickve Israel, Savannah, Ga.

In addition to growth in numbers of families, Atlanta has become a magnet for Jewish singles in the south. The Atlanta Jewish Community Center has approximately 1,500 singles as part of its membership. Studies have demonstrated the need for extensive expansion of day-care and nursery school facilities to take into account changes in occupational patterns among Jewish families, particularly the role of women in the work force.

What do all these trends mean for Atlanta Jewry? It is evident that there must be a significant expansion of financial resources and building programs in order to meet the needs of a Jewish population that has mushroomed in terms of numbers as well as geographic space. Synagogues and agencies must conduct significant and non-traditional outreach programs for these pockets of population in order to establish appropriate contacts and services. The emphasis may need to be decentralized and centrifugal, rather than the traditional emphasis on centripetal factors.

The American Jewish community's populataion is not growing and has even exhibited some absolute decline over the past few years. The population growth in the Southeast, as well as Atlanta, has therefore been at the net expense of other regions. Atlanta may become, over the next generation, particularly if current population trends continue, one of the major Jewish hubs of activities in the nation.

Atlanta will be what Daniel Elazar characterizes as a "Jewish cosmopolitan center". The Atlanta and Georgia community must respond to these challenges, not only by serving as the Regional Headquartgers for numerous institutions, but also as a center for culture and Jewish identification within the region.

It should be Atlanta's challenge and privilege to serve as a major historical resource for the south, to promote and exhibit the finest Jewish art, and to sponsor the most extensive series of Jewish musical programs. Rather than serving as an exemplar of how Jewish life was able to *survive* as a small minority within a larger host culture, and overcoming the many trials and tribulations which this might imply, Atlanta Jewry must be an example of the best that Jewish life can offer in a pro-active sense.

Atlanta should demonstrate that Jewish life in the diaspora, particularly the "Southern" diaspora, has not only a depth in institutional life, but also a depth in spirit, as manifested in the Jewish culture of her people. Over the span of 250 years, the Jewish presence in Georgia has grown from a tolerated tiny minority to an integral part of the state. The next 50 years will determine whether Atlanta will become a successor to the great Northeastern centers of creative Jewish civilization. Time and numbers are on Atlanta's side.

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Formerly Assistant Executive Director,
Atlanta Jewish Federation.
Presently Assistant Executive Director,
United Jewish Federation of Metro-West,
New Jersey.

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This Exhibit and the development of this bibliography are first steps in the establishment of a Georgia Jewish archives. Readers who are familiar with materials such as family and congregational histories, personal diaries and other manuscript sources which would add to this body of knowledge are urged to contact the Atlanta Jewish Federation.

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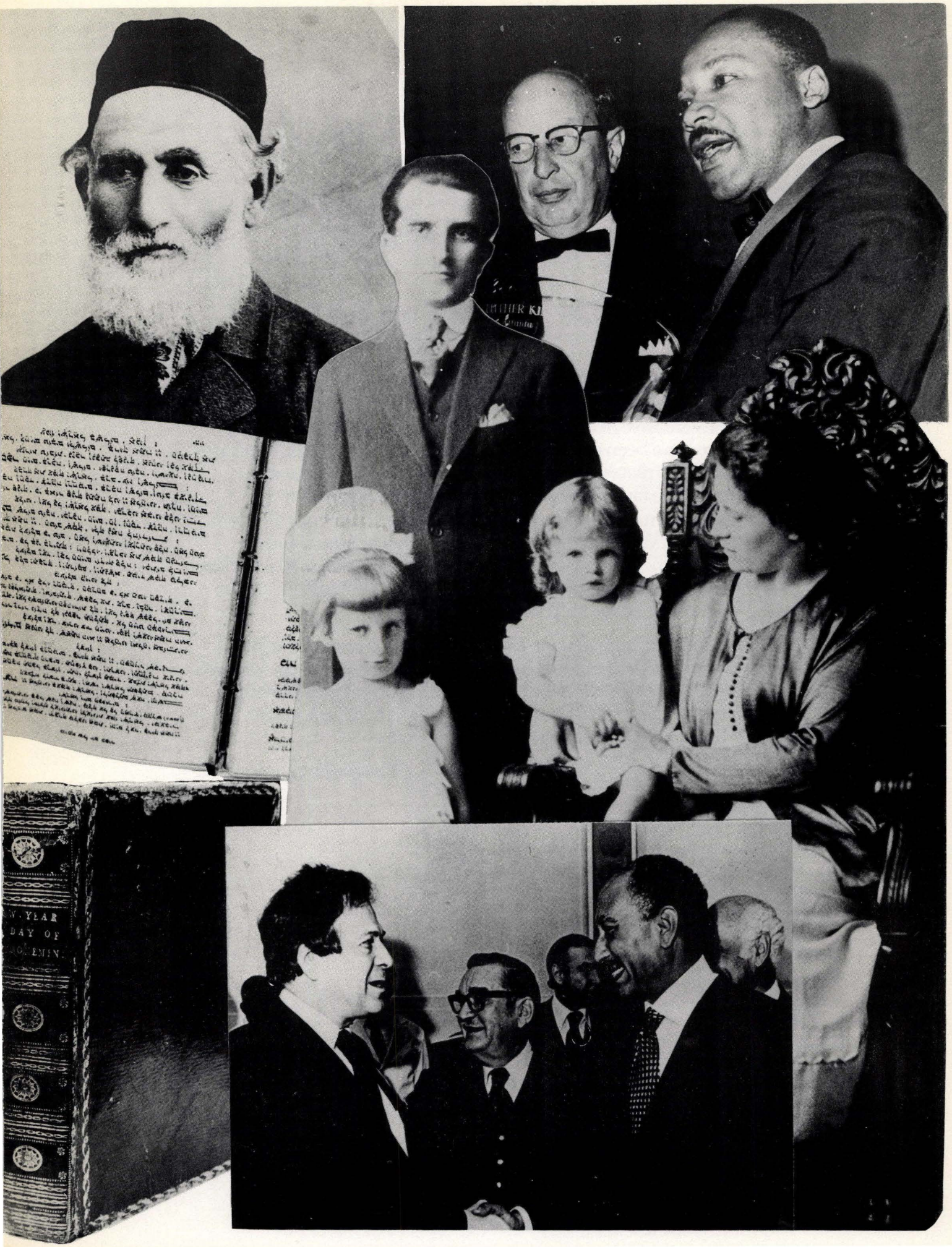
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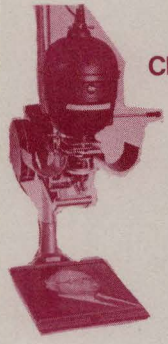
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The people, places and events depicted in this exhibit are representative of the Jewish experience in Georgia. Certainly, there have been scores of others in each city, town and rural area who have played significant roles in the development of the State. The fact that their names are not mentioned in this display in no way reflects upon the value of their contributions to Georgia's Jewish community. It may have been that their families chose not to participate by loaning memorabilia or that the material available did not appropriately fit into the broad perspective of this exhibit.

We have attempted to provide a broad panorama of the Jewish experience throughout the state and anticipate that the research begun with this effort will continue, deepen, and ultimately result in the establishment of a Jewish archives for Georgia which will be all-encompassive in its scope.

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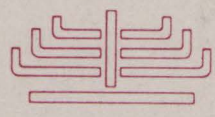


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