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"Savannah's Jewish Women and the Shaping of Ethnic and Gender Identity, 1830-1900"

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Savannah Jewish Women
and the Shaping of Ethnic and Gender Identity, 1830-1900

by Mark I. Greenberg

Jewish women in the nineteenth-century South faced both ethnic and regional limitations to their full participation and equality in the public sphere. Yet within this setting, Savannah Jewish women managed to carve out meaningful and productive lives, and they played a significant part in shaping their family's ethnic identity. Restricted in their opportunities during the antebellum period, the Civil War marked a watershed event for southern women by enabling them to take on roles previously considered unacceptable. These gains proved limited in the short run, though the legacy of women's wartime service had far reaching consequences. In the 1880s and 1890s a new urgency warranted their renewed and energetic participation in public affairs. Having proven themselves in the 1860s, middle- and upper-class women took on the mantle of leadership to meet a new threat to southern society and their identity as Jews.

Women's revitalized public roles grew out of the massive influx of southern and eastern Europeans to the United States after 1880. These immigrants required social and financial support in their first months in America, and their sheer numbers threatened to disrupt many aspects of American life. Though Savannah became home to fewer Russian and Polish Jews than many other cities, their migration nonetheless endangered the social, political, and economic inroads that second- and third-generation German Jews had made into "genteel" Christian society. In part to help these newcomers adapt to American customs but also to solidify or enhance their own social status and German-Jewish identity, Savannah women sought to shape the new immigrants' behavior.

A local chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), became the vehicle for these activities. NCJW's institutional structure exemplified traditional feminine characteristics and responsibilities ascribed Jewish women but also empowered them through leadership development and community service. In this duality, the Council was both backward and forward looking. Savannah's NCJW operated largely within antebellum society's notions of a woman's "proper place" because this strategy offered the least resistance. At the same time, the group consciously sought to revive acceptance of the expanded public roles first sanctioned during the Civil War. Savannah Jewish women's activities thus shed important light on immigration and ethnicity in nineteenth-century Georgia, on the difficult campaign launched for greater power in the public realm, and on the subtle mix of continuity and change in southern women's gender roles.

To understand the world of Savannah Jewish women, a brief overview of their demographic and ethnic composition is in order. Savannah Jewry dates to July 1733, just five months after James Oglethorpe's arrival in Georgia; however a stable community failed to gel until the late 1820s.[1] For more than a century, war and out-migration kept the city's predominantly Sephardic[2] Jewish population small and made religious services and ethnic institutional development sporadic at Congregation Mikve Israel.[3] Economic transformations in South Carolina brought a few large, third-generation families to Savannah in the 1830s, thus providing the numbers and wealth necessary for growth. Abraham A. Solomons, Solomon and Octavus Cohen, and Mordecai Myers--who traced their ancestors to pre-Revolutionary America, and before that to Amsterdam and London--had enjoyed considerable, though declining, success before arriving in Georgia. The Myers and Cohen families had helped to found the Georgetown, South Carolina, mercantile community in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century

Solomon Cohen became a member of the prestigious Winyah Indigo Society and director of the Bank of South Carolina. He served as Georgetown's intendant mayor and later as a state legislator. Mordecai Myers enjoyed similar political, social, and economic achievements.[4]

Migration to the city caused the Jewish community to increase steadily for the remainder of the century, reaching a total population of approximately 350 in 1860, 750 in 1880, and 1,700 in 1900, nearly half of which were female. The numerical increase accompanied an important ethnic transformation. Southern-born Jews continued to comprise a sizable portion of all Jewish residents, but from the Civil War through 1900 they lost ground to German newcomers and after 1880 to immigrants from Eastern European. These demographic changes are most strikingly revealed among Jews twenty years of age and older (see chart below).

Nativity of Savannah Jewry Ages Twenty and Older, 1850-1900[5]

	1850	1860	1880	1900
W. Europe[a]	4 (4.4%)	5 (2.8%)	15 (4.2%)	16 (1.6%)
E. Europe[b]	1 (1.1%)	5 (2.8%)	9 (2.5%)	211 (20.8%)
Germany[c]	34 (37.4%)	96 (54.6%)	137 (38.5%)	374 (36.8%)
North&West	3 (3.3%)	9 (5.1%)	49 (13.8%)	87 (8.6%)
South	49 (53.8%)	61 (34.7%)	142 (39.9%)	324 (31.9%)
Other[d]	0	0	4 (1.1%)	3 (0.3%)
Total	91 (100%)	176 (100%)	356 (100%)	1015 (100%)
% Foreign	42.9	60.2	46.3	59.2
% Native	57.1	39.8	53.7	40.8

[a] England, Holland

[b] Russia, Poland, Rumania

[c] German states, Austria, Bohemia, Hungary

[d] Caribbean islands

Factors propelling German and then Eastern European Jews to the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries defy easy explanation, but the sheer number of immigrants (over 200,000 Germans and more than 2,000,0000 Jews from the Russian Empire) demonstrates an unmistakable theme. A long history of European antisemitism affected nearly all aspects of Jewish life. Restrictions on occupation, residence, even the right to marry plagued Jews in most Central and Eastern European communities at some point in their history. In addition, political persecution and periodic antisemitic riots threatened the very lives of Europe's Jewish residents.[6]

Despite their total numbers in America and concentration in Northeastern urban areas, Jewish immigrants to Savannah never accounted for much of the total or foreign-born population. During the eighteenth century, Jews comprised only 1 percent of the city's total residents, a ratio that increased to barely 3 percent over the next 100 years. Irish and German immigrants far exceeded Jews in total and relative numbers. In 1860, for example, almost 60 percent of adult white males had been born in foreign countries; Irish made up just over half this amount, with Germans a distant second at nearly 10 percent. By 1900, immigrants in Savannah had fallen considerably to approximately 6 percent, but Germans and Irish still formed the largest groups.[7]

Jews' small numbers in Savannah and the relatively large contingent of southern-born citizens within the Jewish community fixed women in a world heavily influenced by southern cultural patterns. Men placed the southern lady on a pedestal by glorifying motherhood and the noble self-sacrifice of the matron, yet a far more negative side existed. The honor ethic, central to the region's way of life, enhanced male stature and initiative by requiring that women exercise restraint and abstinence, suppress feelings, and remain dependent, subordinate, and docile.[8] Also, unlike the North's middle-class revolution, with its plethora of reform movements to give women a growing voice in community affairs, the antebellum South missed this transformation and its related reforms. Thus southern women remained publically silent on many pressing social matters.[9]

The patriarchal nature of traditional Judaism held equally constraining views of women's roles. It relegated the female to the private sphere of home and family and excluded her from many of the educational, career, and other opportunities afforded her menfolk. She might hold sway over the kitchen but exercised little influence in community institutions such as the synagogue, clubs, or Hebrew Benevolent Society.[10] Thus together, Jewish and southern culture worked to reinforce the limited range of women's activities.

Work outside the home proved one area largely off-limits to Jewish women. In the nineteenth-century South, husbands and fathers dominated the business world and oversaw the commercial education of their sons. An apprenticeship under the watchful eye of an experienced merchant served as a rite of passage into white-collar work and increased a man's chances for economic success and respect within society. Few women in Savannah's predominantly German- and southern-born Jewish community were able to join their menfolk in mercantile pursuits and thus had little influence over this important aspect of daily life.

Between 1850 and 1880 enumerators indicated an occupation for under 6 percent of Jewish females between ages sixteen and sixty, almost all of them unmarried. When asked about employment, an overwhelming majority of women described themselves (or were described by their male relatives) as "at home" or "keeping house."[11] If some helped in the family business from time to time, their work went unrecorded, as neither public nor private records reveal this activity. Men aspiring to gentility thought it degrading for their wives and daughters to concern themselves with commercial affairs and as a result many women never acquired much knowledge in this area.[12]

Fearing that something might suddenly happen to him, Savannah merchant Abraham Minis became concerned that his wife Lavinia had no inkling of his business activities or how to manage money. In a long letter to her he meticulously listed his assets and offered advice: "I would recommend you to endeavor to leave a little money ahead of your immediate wants. . . . Avoid debt, never borrow money if you can possibly do without it. Have a receipt book and take receipts therein for all you pay, filing away your bills."[13] Given these instructions, one suspects that Lavinia had seldom or never before performed commercial transactions.

Women's absence from the business world did not mean they held unproductive roles in the household economy. To the contrary, from their position within the home, Jewish mothers and daughters made contributions to the family's income.[14] In 1880 almost 25 percent of Jewish households contained boarders, down approximately five points from twenty years earlier.[15] In most cases, houses contained three or fewer lodgers, which might supplement rather than substitute for a husband's and/or son's income. In the instance of widow Mena Berg, six tenants provided the household's main source of revenue in 1880.[16]

As an economic strategy, keeping boarders occurred most often among recent immigrants and only rarely among Savannah's more established Jewish families. Differences in immigrant and southern-born Jews' financial resources partially explain this behavior. In 1860 the average value of real and personal property owned by first-generation Savannah Jews was $7,126. For Jews born in the United States the average reached $14,107.[17] Considerably wealthier than newcomers to the city, established Jewish families had less financial incentive to supplement male earnings.

Cultural considerations may have played an equally important role in the decision to take in boarders. Seventy-five percent of the time, lodgers living within a Jewish household were German-Jewish immigrants themselves, most of them single men seeking short-term housing. By making a temporary home for their fellow countrymen and coreligionists, women provided a familiar environment for the newcomers and substituted for absent mothers, sisters, and wives. For the men who had come to Savannah without a familial support network, the common German language, food, religious background, and other customs that room and board offered drew links to the Old World, enabled men to maintain their ethnic identity, and eased the transition to American life. Although no explicit evidence exists to indicate women's conscious desire to exclude non-Jews, it surely was no coincidence that far fewer Christians than Jews lived in their homes.[18]

The high percentage of Savannah Jewish households with live-in servants suggests the relative importance of cultural rather than purely economic motivations for taking in boarders. In 1860 fully 50 percent of Jewish homes contained house servants and/or slaves. Twenty years later domestic help could be found in 67 percent of homes.[19] Moreover, the vast majority of houses with just a few boarders contained servants to help wives and daughters with the

additional work load these non-family members brought. Had Jews taken in tenants for purely economic gain, it stands to reason they would have minimized the expense of caring for these people by eschewing the use of paid help.

A small number of Jewish women took the full burden upon themselves and thus maximized their profits. Henrietta Roos cared for two tenants in addition to her spouse and five young children. As a stable keeper, husband Joseph Roos likely received a meager income and could not afford to hire servants. More often, however, domestic help lessened or even substituted for a mother's and/or daughter's responsibilities to her renters. For example, Fanny Lowenthal boarded three single men in her home in 1880, had four adult daughters living with her, and employed four black servants.[20]

Women's responsibility for keeping a Jewish home and thereby fostering the ethnic identity of its members went beyond the cultural services extended to boarders.[21] One of the most common manifestations of a household's religious commitment was whether it contained a kosher kitchen. Jewish dietary law (*kashruth*) prohibits the consumption of pork, shellfish, and various other products. Further, it requires the strict separation of dairy and meat products and the slaughter and preparation of red meat and poultry according to ancient custom. In a kosher kitchen separate dishes, silverware, and cooking implements for preparing meat and dairy menus must be maintained for daily use, and the annual eight-day Passover holiday requires an additional set of dishes and a massive cleaning to remove all leaven goods from the home. Because Jewish law prohibits preparing food on the Sabbath or holidays, meals for these days customarily were made in advance and left warming on the stove. Without these meticulous efforts, Jewish households were unable to practice Judaism according to ancient tradition.

Through their control over the kitchen, wives and mothers fostered the Jewish identity in other ways as well. Particular food customs accompanied many Jewish holidays, and women made an effort to incorporate these elements into home life. For example, Miriam Cohen's cookbook contained recipes for Passover "soup dumplings" (presumably matzo balls) and "koogle." Lavinia Minis baked "Haman's ears" for her family to commemorate yearly Purim celebrations, and she sent Passover matzos and other holiday foods to her son Jacob, who was away at university. At the other extreme, Lavinia encouraged her husband and sons to adhere to Jewish custom and fast on the Day of Atonement.[22]

Lavinia Minis's efforts in this last regard underscored her own religious upbringing and desire to further Jewish observance among family members.[23] She never wrote, worked, or traveled on the Sabbath but instead rested and read prayers at home or in the synagogue. She encouraged her husband and children to follow her example. Lavinia enjoyed considerable success in this endeavor. "I do not think you will ever regret having kept the sabbath holy Abram dear, although it is not more than a right minded man should do," she wrote her less-observant fiancé in early 1851.[24] Lavinia's religious devotion seemed to have had the desired effect on her husband, for the following year she lamented: "I cannot tell you my dear Abram how deeply I regret being the cause of your violating one of our holy days. . . . I who knew you were so particular in every respect, regarding our Sabbath and festivals."[25] Lavinia's children showed a similarly strong commitment to their Jewish heritage. While at university, son Jacob had a Jewish roommate with whom he could share holiday observances. "He follows my example and keeps Saturday as well as possible under the circumstances. I lend him my prayer book every sabbath," Jacob informed his mother.[26] These words likely affirmed Lavinia's

belief that from her position within the home, she held significant influence over the Jewish identity of family members.

Women's efforts to foster Jewish identity outside the home enjoyed few outlets during the mid-nineteenth century, as Jewish institutions offered females limited areas for expression or leadership. In the Orthodox synagogue, wives and daughters held no vote in congregational activities and, according to Jewish law, were relegated to separate seating areas where they could not lead any part of the religious service.

On matters pertaining to fund raising for synagogue projects and Hebrew school education, women were permitted to exert some influence, and here they shined. For example, Miriam and Henrietta Cohen provided leadership in March 1843 by organizing a community fair involving "the ladies of the congregation." As "hawkers of wares" (mostly baked goods) over several days, they raised in excess of $1,500. A second, smaller fair a few months later brought $100 more. The women requested the synagogue board form "a permanent fund, the interest of which is to be appropriated to the maintenance of a suitable reader [rabbi] for the congregation."[27] Honoring the women's wishes, the all-male board invested the money and soon thereafter used the funds to hire the first full-time rabbi in Savannah's history.

Women exercised congregational leadership once again when it came to Mickve Israel's Sunday school. The opportunity arose because Jewish custom placed children's religious education primarily within the female sphere of responsibility. "When the child first begins to think, it is his mother who infuses into his mind the first ideas . . . who instructs him concerning the great Being who is the creator of all," Philadelphia Rabbi Isaac Leeser instructed Jewish women. Thus without contravening Judaism, Savannah women could capitalize on an important role in synagogue life.[28] To this end, prominent southern-born ladies including Miriam Moses

Cohen, Virginia Cohen, Fanny Minis, Eugenia Hart, and Rachel Cohen helped to establish Sunday school classes and bore the brunt of the school's teaching load. Carefully supervising these efforts were congregation president Solomon Cohen and Rabbi Jacob Rosenfeld.[29] Women enjoyed limited leadership in the endeavor.

The Sunday school offered roles to native-born women, whereas the Ladies German Benevolent Society of Savannah (established in 1853) functioned as the primary Jewish group for immigrant wives and daughters. As an auxiliary to its male counterpart, the society served a variety of self-help functions for its dues-paying members. In the event of sickness, a woman received a physician's services and any prescribed medicines from a druggist. In the event of death, her sisters oversaw preparations for a Jewish burial and attended the funeral. The group also set aside funds to help the local Jewish poor, primarily destitute women. Unfortunately, the women enjoyed little room for independent action in their affairs. In 1857, for example, members wished to hold a ball to help fill their coffers. Having agreed among themselves, they were compelled to refer the matter to five gentlemen from the male Jewish benevolent society. The men met, sanctioned the dance, and the women proceeded with their plans. Some year later, when "disobedience and discord" threatened to split the society, it once again deferred to male authority to settle the internal dispute.[30]

With the onset of the Civil War in 1861, the region found itself embroiled in a battle to preserve its very way of life. Ironically, in the course of fighting the war, women found unprecedented opportunities to step beyond their traditional roles and express thoughts and behaviors previously deemed unacceptable for a lady. In these years of crisis were laid the seeds for future action.[31] Female defiance of southern custom and male authority was evident in the

actions of Savannah native Eugenia Levy Phillips. Her intense and vocal attachment to the South and the justice of its cause landed her in jail, twice. On the first occasion, Union officials believed her a Confederate spy and imprisoned her in Washington, D.C., for three weeks during August and September 1861.[32] Following her release and expulsion from the capitol, she moved to New Orleans and came into conflict with Union General Benjamin F. Butler, who had conquered the city in April 1862. Within two months of his arrival in Louisiana, Butler characterized Phillips as "an uncommon, bad, and dangerous woman, stirring up strife, and inciting to riot." These comments came after she allegedly was seen celebrating during the funeral of a Union soldier. Butler soon banished her to Ship Island off Mississippi in the Gulf of Mexico where she remained for approximately three months in the summer of 1862.[33]

Phillips's diary, kept during her ordeal, reveals a woman willing to renounce her captors' domination and to risk everything for the Confederate cause. "Tonight we mutinied against authority," she wrote of her efforts to secure better living conditions while under house arrest in Washington. "I am determined now, if I can, to ascertain authoritatively what are our *rights* and *privileges* as prisoners, and no longer to take anything by sufferance or favor." In the aftermath of her prison sentence from the despised Benjamin Butler, Phillips wrote: I suppose I must have felt like a man crazy for a fight. . . . I appealed to the shades of departed heroines and martyred ones, too, whose wrongs paled to those of mine." Far from a disgrace to the image of a southern lady, Levy's tenacity and dedication to the southern cause sustained her through the war and fostered a sense of sisterhood. "To the *women of the South* I look for approval," she wrote of her rebelliousness and personal suffering.[34]

Confederate women's actions extended beyond questioning male authority. Even before fighting began in April 1861, they organized themselves to help the southern cause. Women's

aid societies and sewing groups sprung up around the region to roll bandages, make cartridges, and prepare sandbags for use in fortifications. As early as May 1861, Savannah's Confederate States Volunteer Aid Association collected clothing for soldiers and solicited donations for the benefit of the families that men left behind. Some northern generals believed that women's labor on behalf of the Confederacy was so significant that it actually prolonged the war.[35]

In a more individual effort, Phoebe Yates Pember spent much of the war as matron of Chimborazo Hospital in Richmond. Under the supervision of a senior medical officer and with the help of numerous assistants, she oversaw nursing operations in the second of the hospital's five divisions and attended to the housekeeping, dietary needs, and comfort of over 15,000 men. Moreover, she offered warmth and femininity craved by the soldiers and served as sister, mother, or sweetheart to many. One dying boy called her over to hear his final words: "I am an only son and my mother is a widow. Go to her . . . and tell her that I died. . . . Say how kindly I was nursed, and that I had all I needed. I cannot thank you for I have no breath, but we will meet up there [in heaven]."[36]

Women's good works came with a price. As the first female administrator appointed to Chimborazo, Pember needed to overcome the "appalling" stereotype "that such a life would be injurious to the delicacy and refinement of a lady--that her nature would become deteriorated and her sensibilities blunted." Because of these sentiments, she met opposition to her activities from some of the men under her command. A hospital surgeon noted her arrival by remarking with disgust that "one of them had come," and she often found herself blocking the staff's efforts to pilfer supplies, especially whiskey, placed under her control.[37] On one occasion an aggressive hooligan named Wilson seized her by the shoulder and assaulted her with vulgar language. She threatened away the assailant with a gun she kept hidden in a pocket.

Her willingness to resort to violence underscored the importance Pember placed on women's wartime roles and to the Confederate cause in general. She expressed these sentiments in explicitly Judaic terms. "I lifted my voice and congratulated myself at being born of a nation, and religion that did not enjoin itself forgiveness on its enemies, that enjoyed the blessed privilege of praying for an eye for an eye, and a life for a life, and was not one of those for whom Christ died in vain. . . . I propose that till the war was over they should all join the Jewish Church, let forgiveness and peace and good will alone and put their trust in the sword of the Lord and Gideon."[38] Jewish identity gave Pember the emotional and spiritual strength she needed to deal with war's terrible human costs and to continue working for the South's ultimate victory.

Pember's convictions and commitment to the Confederacy and its sick and wounded earned praise from Richmond socialites, who described her as "brisk and brilliant" with "a will of steel under suave refinement."[39] When the war finally ended in April 1865, she remained at her post and cared for her patients until Federal authorities took control of the hospital. Prior to her death in 1913, she spent much of her time traveling in America and Europe.

Pember's return to private life after the Civil War appears typical, for records during the 1870s and 1880s indicate few public opportunities for Savannah Jewish women. Yet beneath the surface, change was underway that would have repercussions for the future. While the industrializing economy led to greater hardship for many poor women, among the South's emerging middle class these changes tended to give wives and daughters more free time to pursue outside interests such as education and membership in women's clubs. For Jewish females, reform impulses within Judaism, which led to mixed seating, roles for women in the

service, and Temple sisterhoods, merged with social and economic transformations to facilitate their increased influence in community affairs.[40]

Rather than compete directly with men for public power, however, women applied traditional characteristics and responsibilities ascribed to a "lady"--purity, piety, nurturer, moral guardian--to fashion expanded social action that stressed benevolent activities on behalf of the nation's poor. By adopting what scholars have termed "domestic feminism," members insisted that their efforts directed at immigrants and the needy extended motherhood beyond the confines of the home. Instead of redefining their "proper" sphere, women merely extended its scope.[41]

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), established at the Jewish Women's Congress during the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, epitomized one of the earliest and most significant efforts by Jews to employ domestic feminism in order to justify and expand the growing number of charitable women's clubs in America. By placing the quest for greater public roles in a Jewish setting, NCJW also worked to reinforce ethnic identity among its members. Sadie American, a Council founder, expressed connections between women's traditional roles, social action, and Judaism during a speech before Congress attendees: "As Jews . . . certain problems are forced upon us to be solved which present themselves to no one else--certain circumstances and conditions, certain privileges and duties, certain aptitudes and powers are ours, and therefore certain work lies before us, peculiarly our own, demanding our first attention."[42]

In the aftermath of American's speech, a resolution committee presented the objectives of the organization she had in mind. The NCJW would unite Jewish women interested in solving problems in religion, philanthropy and education; organize and encourage the study of Judaism and Jews' contribution to world history; apply this knowledge to improving Sabbath schools and

to social reform efforts; and work against religious persecution against all peoples. Delegates to the Jewish Women's Congress immediately began organizing council sections in the cities in which they lived, and NCJW board members traveled the country encouraging chapters. By 1896, fifty local sections included just over 4,000 members.[43]

In October 1895 NCJW Secretary Sadie American arrived in Savannah, and at the invitation of Rabbi Isaac Mendes spoke on Sabbath morning at Congregation Mickve Israel to a large gathering of women. Though no record exists of Mendes's motivations for inviting American to his temple, he likely felt that a NCJW chapter in the city would foster a commitment to Jewish education and causes among his flock. American's call for a Savannah section received an eager response, and thirty-eight people quickly enrolled.[44]

Uniting the group was a shared desire to advance the course of Judaism, engage in literary pursuits, further intellectual self-improvement, and work for societal improvement. In keeping with national practices, the women arranged themselves into "neighborhood circles," each with its own leader, and formed committees on religion and philanthropy. Overseeing chapter activities were elected officials. In addition to weekly gatherings held by each circle and regular meetings of the board, council members met collectively each month as well.[45]

The format and content of Council's monthly meetings reveal the importance women placed on their Jewish identity, education, leadership, and reform. Gatherings typically began with the reading and confirmation of the previous month's minutes, reading correspondence from the national office, and a discussion of new business. This was followed by oral and written reports from the officers, circle leaders, and philanthropy and religion committees. Having dispensed with these matters, attention turned to the literary portion of the agenda, where each circle presented an original essay. On one occasion Dora Simon spoke on "The Future of

the Jewish Women of the South." Rosa Roos admonished shopping on the Sabbath; members debated whether the home or outside world exerted more influence on American Jewry; and they learned about biblical figures. At a number of meetings, Council discussed proper Sabbath observance.[46] Through a better understanding of current social issues and their cultural heritage, Savannah Jewish women sought to take control of their lives and their community.

At least once during the year, the chapter held a citywide reception at the Young Men's Hebrew Association. The event offered an opportunity to attract new members, raise funds for the Council's charitable work, and present German-Jewish women's activities in a public forum. A large crowd gathered on April 26, 1896, for Savannah's second such event. Chapter president Grace Mendes began the program with a Jewish prayer, another member delivered an essay, and someone read the biblical story of Judith and Holofernes. Selection of this particular text was not coincidental. Found in the Apocrypha of Catholic and Protestant versions of the Bible, it does not appear in any Judaic text.[47]

The story of Judith and Holofernes tells of Assyrian leader King Nebuchadnezzar who sent his general Holofernes to punish the western nations because they refused to join him in a war. Holofernes marched against them, and all except the Israelites submitted. At this point, Achior, leader of the Ammonites, warned Holofernes that God would defend the Israelites so long as they remained faithful. Holofernes, however, disregarding the warning, surrounded the Israelites in the ancient Palestinian town of Bethulia, near Jerusalem. The pious and beautiful widow Judith (Hebrew for "Jewess") volunteered to deliver the Israelites after rebuking them for losing faith in God when under siege. She went to the Assyrian camp, pretending to be an informer against her people, and charmed Holofernes, who invited her to a banquet in his tent. At the banquet, Holofernes became drunk and fell asleep. Judith seized a sword, beheaded him,

wrapped the severed head in a bag, and returned with it to her people. The jubilant Israelites then attacked the leaderless Assyrians, who fled in panic. Council members chose this test to appeal to the proceeding's culturally mixed audience, to reveal the importance of women during biblical times, and to demonstrate their learning in the Old and New Testaments. Most importantly, the passage informed listeners of women's potential for real action. Following the story, those gathered discussed whether Jewish women of modern times compared favorably with those of ancient times.[48]

Within just a few months of the chapter's founding, Savannah section embarked upon its most ambitious social reform project. It was an enterprise that fell squarely within women's traditional sphere of influence-- educating the young--and addressed the impact and welfare of Eastern European immigrants to the city.[49] Sometime in the spring of 1896, Council treasurer Dora Simon saw a number of Jewish children playing on Bryan Street in the city's Russian immigrant district. They were "amusing some coarse working men by silly pranks that they were told to do by these men," Simon later recalled. Conscience-stricken by this scene, she decided something had to be done to take these children off the street and prepare them to enter the public schools in the "proper manner."[50] In March 1896 Simon brought her concerns to fellow board members. After lengthy discussion, the board recommended creating a Mission School, designed to prepare youngsters age four to six to "enter the Public school well equipped in clothing, [with] a fair idea of American manners, and cleanly [sic] in person."[51]

The language used by Simon and her fellow councilwomen to justify the school suggests that more than a genuine concern for the welfare of Savannah's Eastern European Jews motivated their activities. Council's predominantly second- and third-generation German Jews felt that the influx of poor, foreign-looking Russian refugees threatened their acceptance within

Christian circles by lumping all Jews together in the minds of Savannah society. Throughout the United States acculturated Jewish communities feared a rise in antisemitism as "inferior . . . ignorant, bigoted, hypocritical" newcomers descended upon their towns and cities, taking scarce jobs and housing from the existing population.[52] Some cities, especially ports of entry like New York, sought to limit the impact of these immigrants on Jewish-Christian relations by relocating them to the interior. A wide variety of organizations emerged to Americanize in dress, speech, and deportment those foreigners that remained. In taking this public role, German Jews were able to define their own social status and ethnic identity relative to the newcomers.[53]

The self-serving component to the Council's kindergarten effort should not detract from the energy, enthusiasm, and determination with which Savannah members embarked upon their mission. Under Simon's leadership and with the fund raising efforts of the Philanthropy Committee, Savannah's first Jewish preschool began operations at Turner's Hall, in the heart of the Russian neighborhood, in November 1896.[54] In the initial stages, women donated books, a wash basin, slate board, and pencils to the school. Each day two ladies reported for duty to help the kindergarten's only paid employee, and the Philanthropy Committee held regular benefits to raise funds. In December 1898 Savannah section established a "Little Sisterhood," composed of girls age twelve to sixteen, to help with the children and in order to groom the young women for eventual membership in the chapter.

At first, the women's efforts paid dividends. In its first two years the Mission School grew from twelve to thirty pupils, but by April 1899 the project had begun to falter. Russian-born families viewed Council's work as intrusive and its attitude condescending, for enrollment dropped to nineteen, and officials were forced to close the facility.[55] Placing the preschoolers in someone else's care proved an unsatisfactory solution, however. When board members visited

the Kate Baldwin Kindergarten the next fall to check on the children, they found its explicitly Christian curriculum totally unsatisfactory for cultivating the ethnic heritage of Jewish youngsters. Fund raising efforts began in earnest, and the Board secured promises from dozens of mothers to make use of the Mission School if it reopened. On November 1, 1899, a revitalized kindergarten once again offered immigrant youngsters a Jewish setting in which to be prepared for entry into Savannah's mainstream, public school system.[56]

The National Council of Jewish Women's Mission School stands as the most ambitious and successful public effort to further Jewish identity and expand women's roles in nineteenth-century Savannah. The school was not the only endeavor. Sporadically during the second half of the 1800s, Savannah Jewish women created new opportunities to express their munificence and leadership in the public sphere. Despite cultural obstacles in both Jewish and southern culture to their full equality, women empowered themselves by working within and at times stretching the boundaries of accepted gender roles. By negotiating their dual identities as Jews and women, they sought to overcome limitations in Jewish and southern culture and to find avenues for advancement. Drawing from Judaism, they made the most of their influence over food ways and holiday observance to cultivate religious identity in themselves and household members. They also directed the Jewish education of their children and of Russian-Jewish immigrants. The history of Savannah Jewish women speaks to the boundaries southern and Jewish culture set on gender norms, to women's ability to draw from past experience and present circumstance in order to alter these roles, and to the importance ethnic heritage played in women's evolving private and public lives.

Notes

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1 On the early history of Savannah Jewry, see Malcolm H. Stern, "New Light on the Jewish Settlement of Savannah," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 52 (March 1963): 169-99; Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983* (Savannah, 1983), 1-57; John McKay Sheftall, "The Sheftalls of Savannah: Colonial Leaders and Founding Fathers of Georgia Judaism," in *Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Jewish Historical Society*, ed. Samuel Proctor and Louis Schmier with Malcolm Stern (Macon, 1984), 66; Kaye Kole, *The Minis Family of Georgia, 1733-1992* (Savannah, 1992); and David T. Morgan, "Judaism in Eighteenth-Century Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 58 (Spring 1974): 41-54.

2 Sephardic Jews descended from families that lived in Spain and Portugal as early as the Roman period. As a result of the Spanish Inquisition, many Sephardic Jews made their way to Europe, the Caribbean, and America. See *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), XIV, 1164-68

3 At the turn of the nineteenth century Temple Mickve Israel had about one dozen families, though numbers increased to about eighty persons thirty years later. This growth paralleled Savannah's own development. The city's population increased 50 percent, from 5,166 in 1800 to 7,776 in 1830. See Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: American Jewish Population Data, 1585-1984* (Lanham, MD, 1990), 52-53; Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati, 1985), 31; and Department of the Interior, Census Office, *Report on the Social Statistics of Cities*, pt. II (Washington, 1887), 173.

4 On South Carolina's economic woes and the Jewish families who left the state for Savannah, see Alfred Glaze Smith, Jr., *Economic Readjustment of an Old South Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820-1860* (Columbia, 1958), vii, 7, 14, 17, 25-26; William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, *The Web of Progress: Private Values and Public Styles in Boston and Charleston, 1828-1843* (New York, 1985), 10, 14; Barnett A. Elzas, *The Jews of South Carolina: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Philadelphia, 1905), 241; James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 16-17, 191; Malcolm H. Stern, comp., *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654-1988*, 3rd ed. (Baltimore, 1991), 35, 278; and Charles Joyner, "A Community of Memory: Assimilation and Identity among the Jews of Georgetown, S.C., 1761-1904," in possession of the author.

5 For a discussion of the federal census records and methodology used to compile these statistics, see Mark I. Greenberg, "Creating Ethnic, Class, and Southern Identity in Nineteenth-Century America: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-1880" (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 1997), 273-78.

6 Avraham Barkai, "German-Jewish Migrations in the Nineteenth Century, 1830-1910," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 30 (1985): 304, 306-07; Rudolf Glanz, "The Immigration of German Jews up to 1880," in *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 2-3 (1947-1948): 85; Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore, 1992), 7, 14-15; Steven M. Lowenstein, "Governmental Jewish Policies in Early Nineteenth Century Germany and Russia," *Jewish Social Studies* 46 (no. 3-4, 1984): 303-20; Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770-1870* (Cambridge, 1973), 16-21; Gerald Sorin, *A Time For Building:*

The Third Migration, 1880-1920 (Baltimore, 1992), 20-29; Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825-1855* (Philadelphia, 1983), 28-48; Salo Baron, *Russian Jews under Tsars and Soviets* (New York, 1964), 81-84; Jonathan Frankel, "The Crisis of 1881-82 as a Turning Point in Modern Jewish History," in *The Legacy of Jewish Migration*, ed. David Berger (Brooklyn, 1983), 13; Simon Kuznets, "Immigration of Russian Jews to the United States: Background and Structure," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 35-124.

7 Dennis C. Rousey, "From Whence They Came to Savannah: The Origins of an Urban Population in the Old South," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 79 (Summer 1995): 311-12; Edward Matthew Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens: The Irish Immigrant Community of Savannah, 1837-1861" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990), 43; Herbert Weaver, "Foreigners in Ante-Bellum Savannah," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 37 (March 1953): 1-3. On the postbellum South's immigration woes, see Henry Marshall Booker, "Efforts of the South to Attract Immigrants, 1860-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1965), 47, 49, 56, 69, 116-23; Rowland T. Berthoff, "Southern Attitudes Toward Immigration, 1865-1914," *Journal of Southern History* 17 (August 1951): 329, 333-36, 343-45; and James A. Dunlevy, "Regional Preferences and Migration Settlement: On the Avoidance of the South by Nineteenth-Century Immigrants," in *Research in Economic History: A Research Annual*, vol. 8, ed. Paul Uselding (Greenwich, CT, 1983), 226, 246.

8 A vast literature exploring these themes exists. See, for example, Catherine Clinton, *The Plantation Mistress* (New York, 1982); Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York, 1983); Steven M. Stowe,

Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Rituals and the Lives of the Planters (Baltimore, 1987); Victoria E. Bynum, *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1992), 1-11.

9 Elizabeth Fox Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 37-99; Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860* (New York, 1978), 84-85, 119, 18-39; Elna C. Green, *Southern Strategies: Southern Women and the Woman Suffrage Question* (Chapel Hill, 1997), 6; Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (New York, 1996), 5-6.

10 Faith Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting: The National Council of Jewish Women, 1893-1993* (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 51-52; Charlotte Baum, Paula Hyman, and Sonya Michel, *The Jewish Woman in America* (New York, 1976); Jacob R. Marcus, *The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980* (New York, 1981).

11 Census reporters used this phrase repeatedly. Low employment rates for Savannah Jewish women conform to patterns during the period under consideration (1830-1900). See William Toll, *The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations* (Albany, 1982), 48, 64; Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family, and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York, 1991), 157. In her *A Time for Gathering*, 81-82, Hasia R. Diner noted that memoirs and autobiographies of American Jewish women demonstrate that they participated actively in the labor force, usually behind the counter of the family mercantile business. Nothing in the Savannah sources supports this assertion.

12 Suzanne Lebsock, *The Free Women of Petersburg: Status and Culture in a Southern Town, 1784-1860* (New York, 1984), 38; Eleanor Miot Boatwright, *Status of Women in Georgia, 1783-1860* (Brooklyn, 1994), 5, 96; Mitchell Gelfand, "Progress and Prosperity: Jewish Social Mobility in Los Angeles in the Booming Eighties," *American Jewish History* 68 (June 1979): 418; Ira Rosenwaike, "Characteristics of Baltimore's Jewish Population in a Nineteenth-Century Census," *American Jewish History* (nos. 1-4, 1994): 137.

13 Abraham Minis to Lavinia Minis, February 28, 1876, fol. 29, box 2, subser. 25, ser. I, Minis Family Papers, collection #1505, Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection, Savannah.

14 The terms household and family are not synonymous. A "household" contains both kin relations (i.e. family members) and nonfamily members such as boarders and servants. A "family" contains only kin relations.

15 By way of comparison, 43 percent of Irish households in the city contained boarders in 1850 and 29 percent in 1860. See Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens, 129, 133.

16 Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 155; John Modell and Tamara K. Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household: An Examination of Boarding and Lodging in American Families," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35 (1973): 467-79; Stuart Blumin, "Rip Van Winkle's Grandchildren: Family and Household in the Hudson Valley, 1800-1860," in *Family and Kin in Urban Communities, 1700-1930* ed. Tamara K. Hareven (New York, 1977), 113-19.

17 These averages were calculated by locating Savannah Jews age thirty and older in the 1860 Chatham County census returns, adding the value of their real and personal property, and determining their place of birth. This information existed for a total of 101 persons, 50 native born and 51 immigrants.

18 Modell and Hareven, "Urbanization and the Malleable Household," 470. Among Savannah's Irish population, Edward Shoemaker also found the desire to board within familiar surroundings. By his count, only a "very small number" (less than 3 percent) of Irish-born persons lived outside Irish family settings in 1860. See Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 133. In 1880 Detroit, Olivier Zunz also found a strong correlation between the ethnic backgrounds of the boarder and receiving family. Among Germans and Irish, the figure was 70 and 74 percent, respectively. See Olivier Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880-1920* (Chicago, 1982), 70.

19 Study Data. In comparison, among Savannah's predominantly working-class Irish population, the use of servants in 1860 did not reach 7 percent. In Philadelphia, a cross-class sample of ethnic and native-born households in 1880 revealed that only 3.2 percent of families hired outside help, and in Detroit the figure stood at 12 percent. See Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 133; Michael R. Haines, "Poverty, Economic Stress, and the Family in a Late Nineteenth-Century American City: Whites in Philadelphia, 1880," in *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family, and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century: Essays Toward an Interdisciplinary History of the City,* ed. Theodore Hershberg (New York, 1981), 257; Zunz, *Changing Face of Inequality*, 70.

20 According to Stanley Nadel, "more successful" families generally employed servants to assist in caring for boarders. See Stanley Nadel, *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80* (Urbana, 1990), 59.

21 On women's responsibility in this regard, see Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York, 1990), 106-07; Toll, *Making of an Ethnic Middle Class*, 115; Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German-Jewish Immigration to the Unites States, 1820-1914* (New York, 1994), 142; Kaplan, *Making of the Jewish Middle Class*, 69-71.

22 Recipe Book, fol. 13, box 2, Miriam Moses Cohen Papers, collection #2639, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Hannah Florance to Lavinia Florance Minis, February 24, 1860, fol. 3, box 35, Jacob F. Minis to Lavinia Florance Minis, March 21, 1870, fol. 39, box 4, Lavinia Florance Minis to Abram Minis, September 26, 1876, fol. 103, box 6, subser. 29, ser. I, Minis Family Papers. Unleavened bread was produced locally during the Jewish holiday of Passover. As early as 1858 Anthony Borchert, a German-born bread and cake maker, advertised to his Jewish clients in the local press. See Savannah *Daily Morning News*, March 13, 1858, March 16, 1860; Savannah *Daily Herald*, March 6, 1866.

23 Correspondence between Lavinia and her mother Hannah and father Jacob reveals the devout nature of Lavinia's upbringing. See J. Florance to Lavinia and Rosina Florance, November 20, 1842, fol. 34, box 3, Hannah Florance to Lavinia Florance Minis, April 15, May 29, 1860, fol. 36, box 3, subser. 29, ser. I, Minis Family Papers.

24 Lavinia Florance to Abram Minis, January 26, 1851, fol. 71, box 9, ser. II, Minis Family Papers.

25 Lavinia Florance Minis to Abram Minis, September 15, 1852, fol. 79, box 11, ser. II, Minis Family Papers.

26 Jacob F. Minis to Lavinia Florance Minis, December 24, 1869, fol. 39, box 4, subser. 29, ser. I, Minis Family Papers. For expressions of devotion to Judaism in Octavus and Henrietta Cohen's family, see Belle Moses Cohen to Henrietta Yates Levy, September 23, 1836, Belle Moses Cohen to Octavus Cohen, June 5, 1844, fol. C, box 22, Samuel Yates Levy to Henrietta Levy, May 8, 1836, fol. F, box 22, S. H. Samuel to Henrietta Yates Levy Cohen, January 3, 1845, fol. I, box 22, Levy/Cohen/Phillips Families Papers, collection #1505, Georgia Historical Society Manuscript Collection.

27 Congregation Mickve Israel Minutes, March 17, August 21, 1843, K. K. Mickve Israel Archives, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

28 Isaac Leeser quoted in Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 62; Baum, et al., *Jewish Woman in America*, 12, 30, 38; Diner, *Time for Gathering*, 120-21; Marcus, *American Jewish Woman,* 51-53.

29 American-born Jews controlled Mickve Israel prior to the Civil War, thus the exclusion of German women from Sunday school leadership was not extraordinary. On Savannah's first Sunday school, see *Occident* 14 (July 1856), 137-39.

30 *Occident* 15 (April 1857), 44; Petition of the Ladies German Benevolent Society of Savannah, Georgia, Superior Court of Chatham County, April 23, 1895, miscellaneous files, Mickve Israel Archives. This petition asked that the court permit the group to change its name to the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society. Ladies Hebrew benevolent societies were common in many American Jewish communities. See Virginia Katz, "The

Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society of Los Angeles in 1892," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 10 (January 1978):157-58; Marjorie Hornbein, "Frances Jacobs: Denver's Mother of Charities," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 15 (January 1983): 123; Jacob, R. Marcus, ed., *The American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History* (New York, 1981), 204-07.

31 A number of scholars view the Civil War as a turning point in women's lives and their efforts for greater independence. See Anne Firor Scott, *Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History* (Urbana, 1991), 94-98; and Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 3-8, 248-54.

32 Born in Charleston on October 24, 1820, Eugenia Levy married South Carolina native Philip Phillips in September 1836. The couple soon moved to Mobile, Alabama, where Phillips practiced law and served as a representative to the Alabama legislature in the mid-1840s and to the United States House of Representatives between 1853 and 1855. They remained in Washington until 1861, where Philip enjoyed a highly respected career trying cases before the Supreme Court. Unlike his wife, Philip was not sympathetic to the Confederate cause and used his close relationship with Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to secure Eugenia's release in 1861. See Philip Phillips, "A Summary of the Principal Events of My Life [1876]," typescript, fol. 48, box 4, Phillips-Myers Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, collection #596; Harry Simonhoff, *Jewish Participants in the Civil War* (New York, 1963), 177-82; and "Philip Phillips," in *Memoirs of American Jews*, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1956), III, 133-60.

33 Phillips claims that Union soldiers spotted her in her home "enjoying herself with her young children" and assumed that this laughter was directed a soldier's funeral procession on the street below. A typescript of Eugenia Levy Phillips's diary during her Washington imprisonment can be found in fol. 44, box 4, Phillips-Myers Family Papers. The original is located in the Phillips Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. For a published account of her entire Civil War experience, see "Eugenia Levy Phillips: Defiant Rebel," in *Memoirs of American Jews*, III, 161-96. For further evidence of female Confederate spies, see Catherine Clinton, *Tara Revisited: Women, War, & the Plantation Legend* (New York, 1995), 89-97.

34 "Eugenia Levy Phillips: Defiant Rebel," 171, 172, 188, 194.

35 Savannah *Republican*, May 20, 21, 27, 1861; Scott, *Natural Allies*, 68-72; J. L. Underwood, *The Women of the Confederacy* (New York, 1906), 62-108; C. Vann Woodward, ed., *Mary Chesnut's Civil War* (New Haven, 1981), 194; Kenneth Coleman, ed., "Ladies Volunteer Aid Association of Sandersville, Washington County, Ga., 1861-62," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 52 (March 1968): 78-95; Clinton, *Tara Revisited*, 80-83.

36 Phoebe Yates Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond*, ed. Bell Irvin Wiley (1879; reprint, Marietta, GA, 1994), 39.

37 Ibid., 16, 17.

38 Phoebe Yates Pember to Eugenia Levy Phillips, September 13, 1863, quoted in Pember, *Southern Woman's Story*, 123.

39 Pember was so described in Thomas C. DeLeon, *Belles, Beaux and Brains of the 60's* (1907; reprint, 1974), 385. For additional information on Pember, see Edward T. James, ed., *Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1971), III, 44-45; Marcus, *American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History*, 248-54; Marcus, *American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980*, 32; Phoebe Yates Pember, *A Southern Woman's Story*, 1-13; Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 98-102.

40 Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 2-3; Karen J. Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York, 1980), 2; Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York, 1996), 184-89; Deborah Dash Moore, *At Home in America: Second Generation New York Jews* (New York, 1981), 4; Green, *Southern Strategies*, 2.

41 Blair, *Clubwoman as Feminist*, 1-5;Scott, *Natural Allies*, 58-77, 79-81; Ann Braude, "The Jewish Woman's Encounter with American Culture," in *Women and Religion in America, Volume 1: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco, 1981), 158-59; Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 1-4; Beth S. Wenger, "Jewish Women of the Club: The Changing Public Role of Atlanta's Jewish Women (1870-1930)," *American Jewish History* 76 (March 1987): 311-15; June Sochen, "Some Observations on the Role of American Jewish Women as Communal Volunteers," *American Jewish History* 70 (September 1980): 23; June Sochen, *Consecrate Every Day: The Public Lives of American Jewish Women, 1880-1980* (Albany, 1981); Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago, 1970), 81, 100, 135-36.

42 Quoted in Deborah Grand Golomb, "The 1893 Congress of Jewish Women: Evolution or Revolution in American Jewish Women's History?" *American Jewish History* 70 (September 1980): 65; Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 9-25.

43 Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 23-26; Timothy L. Smith, "Biblical Ideals in American Christian and Jewish Philanthropy, 1880-1920," *American Jewish History* 74 (September 1984): 20; Edward L. Ayers, *The Promise of the New South* (New York, 1992), 77-79.

44 Comparing a list of Council members for 1900-1901 against the 1900 census returns for Chatham Country, Georgia, permits the identification of sixty women. Of these, fifty-three were born in the United States. The seven immigrants born elsewhere came from Hungary, Germany, St. Croix, and Russia. See list of members in Council Minutes of the Savannah Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, undated, pp. 290-93, book 2: 1899-1905, Mickve Israel Archives (hereinafter, NCJW Council Minutes).

45 NCJW Council Minutes, May 3, 1896, pp. 33-35, 41-47, book 1: 1895-1899.

46 Ibid., June 19, October 18, November 2, 1896, January 4, 1897, January 4, May 2, 1898, pp. 7, 53, 59, 67, 127, 149.

47 See *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem, 1971), X, 451-52.

48 NCJW Council Minutes, April 26, 1896, pp. 25-27, book 1; *The [Savannah] Morning News*, April 27, 1896.

49 "Remember with the Jewish Woman rests the honor and pride of the Home, and the future welfare and happiness of her children," Mrs. Mendes reminded her sisters during the May 1896 annual meeting. Ibid., May 3, 1896, p. 35.

50 Dora B. Simon, "The History of the Mission School," in unnamed, undated scrapbook, Mickve Israel Archives.

51 Board Minutes of the Savannah Section of the National Council of Jewish Women, March 2, April 6, 1896, pp. 17-19, book 1: 1895-1901, Mickve Israel Archives, Georgia Historical Society (hereinafter, NCJW Board Minutes). Around the country local chapters of the NCJW created Mission Schools to offer young immigrant children a Jewish educational environment. See Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 43; Rebecca J. Gradwohl, "The Jewess in San Francisco," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 6 (July 1974): 273-76; Blanche Blumauer, "Council of Jewish Women in Portland--1905," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 9 (October 1976): 19-20.

52 Gerald Sorin, *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* (Baltimore, 1992), 68; Michael A. Meyer, "German-Jewish Identity in Nineteenth-Century America," in *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Mode*, ed. Jacob Katz (New Brunswick, NJ, 1987), 263.

53 An enormous literature exists on the reactions of German Jews to the influx of their Eastern European coreligionists. See for example Ibid., 44-68, 86-88; Samuel Joseph, *The Baron de Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant* (Philadelphia, 1935), 104-29; Bernard Marinbach, *Galveston: Ellis Island of the West* (New York, 1983), 1-3; Barkai, *Branching Out* 196-206; Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter*

with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914 (Philadelphia, 1984), 301-44.

54 NCJW Council Minutes, November 2, 1896, p. 59; Simon, "The History of the Mission School." Savannah section's desire to establish and run a kindergarten for immigrant children was not unique. Numerous Council chapters responded in similar fashion to their city's growing Eastern European population at the turn of the century. See Rogow, *Gone to Another Meeting*, 43; Toll, *Making of an Ethnic Middle-Class*, 58-61; Myron Berman, *Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe* (Richmond, 1979), 262-63, 286-88; Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, 1978), 119, 128; Marcus, *American Jewish Woman*, 434-40.

55 NCJW Board Meeting, November 2, December 7, 1896, January 4, March 16, 1897, November 7, December 5, 1898, April 2, 1899, pp. 29, 33, 39, 49, 89, 97, 113. In communities across the United States, Eastern European Jews balked at what they perceived as the sometimes insincere and interfering nature of German philanthropic efforts. See Gorin, *Time for Building*, 68, 141, 163; Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation*, 326-28.

56 Ibid., October 12, 16, 27, 1899, pp. 119-25.