

Western Washington University

From the Selected Works of Mark I. Greenberg

March, 1998

"Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-70

Mark I. Greenberg, *University of South Florida*



SELECTEDWORKS™

Available at: <http://works.bepress.com/markigreenberg/4/>

Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830-70

by Mark I. Greenberg

A growing interest in multiculturalism and diversity in American society has prompted an outpouring of scholarship during the last few decades on the history of immigrant and ethnic groups, but relatively few studies have focused upon immigrants to the South.¹ This dearth is particularly glaring in view of evidence that immigrants constituted a significant portion of the region's white urban residents. In a recent work on the South, and Savannah, Georgia, in particular, one historian has shown that prior to the Civil War, the foreign-born share of whites living in Northern and Southern urban places was almost identical. Tabulations for the 1860 census reveal that the adult white population was slightly over half foreign born, and only one-third were natives of the South.² Only after 1865 did Northern cities become disproportionately ethnic in composition.³

Savannah Jewry (as a religious, rather than strictly national, group) fell within the foreign- and native-born categories. In 1860 just under 55 percent of the city's adult Jews were born in the German states. They had immigrated to America beginning in the mid/late 1840s to escape occupational, residential, and marital restrictions in their homelands. An additional 35 percent were born in the South. Some, like the Minis family, had arrived just after James Oglethorpe in 1733. Other men and women, the Myers and Cohen clans, for example, settled in Charleston and Georgetown, South Carolina, prior to the American Revolution but moved to Savannah in the late 1830s and early 1840s in search of greater economic opportunities. Most of the remaining 10 percent hailed from the Northern states. In all, approximately 350 Jews made up 2.5 percent of Savannah whites at the start of the Civil War.

It is one thing to note the relative size of Jewish and foreign settlers but quite another to analyze the lives of those newcomers who settled here. Important questions about Southern immigration have remained largely unanswered. Specifically, is the South merely a geographic designation with little or no power to explain immigrant and ethnic life? Or did the South possess a distinctive culture which affected ethnic migration patterns, institutional development, economic choices, and intergroup relations?

In other fields of American history, careful attention already has been devoted to the meaning of "Southernness" and its impact. According to some historians, the section's economic dependence on cash-crop agriculture, relative lack of industry, subjugation of the African race through slave labor and segregation, and men's adherence to an honor ethic distinguished the South from other regions. Moreover, many Southerners fought tirelessly to preserve this way of life through secession and civil war, and they suffered the ultimate shocks of military defeat and slave emancipation.⁴

But what, if any, impact did life in the antebellum South have on Savannah Jewry? The answer is complicated. Far fewer Jews settled in the South than other regions of the country because they perceived less opportunity for themselves in a cash-crop economy and racially fractured society than in the growing industrial centers of the North and Midwest.⁵ Yet when Jews did choose to reside in the South their institutional activities and economic behavior differed little from coreligionists around the country. In Savannah, as in Portland, Oregon, Cleveland, Ohio, and elsewhere, Jews came together to organize and reorganize their synagogues, fraternal orders, and benevolent societies according to the internal needs and desires of their community. Although a handful of Savannah Jewish businessmen made their careers in the cotton trade, the vast majority of men followed nationwide patterns and concentrated in retail

or wholesale enterprises that supplied dry goods to both urban and rural clients. Jewish merchants throughout the United States depended on New York for merchandise and credit. Annual or semiannual buying trips to the city for a wide variety of goods at reasonable credit rates were as common among Savannah Jews as among men in St. Louis, for example.⁶

Distinctly Southern cultural forms were evident in Savannah Jews' behavior, however. On three critical points antebellum Savannah Jewry differed markedly from their counterparts elsewhere in the United States. The first difference was their commitment to the honor ethic, the second concerned their relationship to African Americans, and the third involved their active participation in the Confederate cause. These three behavioral patterns suggest that Savannah Jews "became Southern," or more precisely, they adopted elements of a Southern identity. Why they adopted a regional identity and the implications of this decision for their acceptance by Savannah Christians will also be examined.

The first distinctly Southern trait evident among Savannah Jews was the honor ethic. Throughout the antebellum South white men clung to a value system within which a man possessed only as much worth as the community conferred upon him. If offending words or actions challenged his stature and if no retraction and apology were forthcoming, the offended party had little choice but to prove himself and reaffirm his social worth through some act of courage. Among backwoodsmen and poor whites this test took the form of a physical confrontation where both combatants attempted to disfigure the other with their fingernails or teeth. For men of higher social standing a duel served as the most common method for reclaiming one's equality.⁷

Between 1830 and 1870 Jews participated in three documented duels. Numerous other episodes likely went unrecorded. One ended peacefully, the other two left a combatant mortally

wounded. Taken together the incidents suggest that Southern-born Jewish men incorporated the honor ethic into their world view and that Christians perceived Jews as social equals in Savannah society and therefore worthy as dueling partners. The first incident occurred on August 10, 1832, between Dr. Philip Minis and a state legislator from nearby Glynn County, James J. Stark. According to an account by Richard D. Arnold, the two men had been enemies for some time prior to their duel, though the cause of the conflict remains a mystery. Hostilities escalated on the evening of August 9 when, in Minis's absence, Stark made some derogatory remark about him at a local bar. Informed of the comments, Minis confronted his adversary and demanded an apology of "that satisfaction which one gentleman should afford another." Stark evidently refused, and the situation intensified further.

According to dueling custom, both men chose seconds and agreed to meet the following afternoon outside of Savannah. When Minis failed to appear at the appointed hour, Stark and his companion returned to town, publicly denouncing Minis as a coward. Rather than remain inside and give credence to Stark's accusations, Minis walked over to the City Hotel. Here in the barroom the two men came face to face. Observers dispute what happened next. One account asserts that Stark put his hand in his pocket as if to draw a pistol and advanced on his opponent. Minis immediately fired, fearing for his life. The bullet pierced Stark's chest, striking the spine and killing him instantly.

To many assembled in the bar that afternoon it appeared that Minis had fired on an unarmed man, and the community demanded action. A coroner's inquest a few days subsequent to the incident returned a verdict against Minis of deliberate murder, and for five months he remained in the Chatham County jail awaiting trial. Finally, in January 1833, Minis had his day in court. Some of Savannah's and Charleston's most prominent attorneys tried the case, including

seven for the defense. Following six days of testimony, the jury took less than two hours to acquit Minis of all charges. Although many citizens originally had believed him guilty, he received a fair trial. Whatever animosity existed immediately following Stark's death quickly abated and played no role in Minis's subsequent career. By 1837 his superior surgical skills and leadership had earned him the rank of major in the 31st Regiment of the U.S. Artillery.

Following his retirement from the Army a few years later, Minis returned to Savannah, where he ran a successful business, practiced medicine, and sat on the board of various charitable societies.⁸

In the second dueling incident, conflict erupted when Richardson F. Aiken--a rice planter from Darien, Georgia--challenged a much younger Ludlow Cohen to a yachting race on the Savannah River in August 1870. Following an exciting start to the contest and with Cohen well in the lead, the winds suddenly died down and the match could not be continued. Later that day at a local tavern someone suggested the men resume their race at another time, to which Cohen replied, "I will not race with Aiken again. . . . He is not a gentleman." Cohen further asserted that his opponent's son deliberately had moved the finishing line to give his father an advantage. The urging of friends and Aiken's greater experience with firearms could not convince Cohen to retract his comments, and a dueling challenge soon followed.

The exchange of gunfire occurred at daybreak on August 19 at a plantation about four miles north of Savannah. At a distance of 12 paces, the rising sun to Cohen's back, and with pistols the weapon of choice, the two combatants fired five shots each. Unlike most dueling encounters, the seconds made no effort at reconciliation between rounds. It was apparent from the mens' hatred for each other that compromise was futile. After the first four rounds both men stood unharmed and committed themselves to continuing until one man fell. Finally, on the fifth

round Aiken's bullet found its mark. The lead ball entered Cohen's right side, passed through his abdomen, and cut the intestines. His right arm dropped to his side, and he slipped to the ground. Surgeons on hand determined the wound was in all likelihood fatal. By 3:00 P.M. Cohen was dead, the last man known to have died in a duel in Savannah's history.⁹

Slave ownership constituted the second way Jews sought to become Southern. In 1850, 38 percent of Jewish adults held bondsmen.¹⁰ Ten years later the figure had dropped to 17 percent.¹¹ By way of comparison, in 1860 Chatham County 13 percent of adult whites kept slaves.¹² Notwithstanding the relative decline in Jewish (and non-Jewish) slave ownership, the decade before the Civil War revealed an important change in owners' national background. Between 1850 and 1860 German-Jewish slave holding (as a percent of total Jewish owners) rose 26 percent, thus suggesting Germans' desire to adopt this distinctly Southern custom.¹³ Evidence from other communities reveals that Savannah was not unique. Historian Jacob R. Marcus believed that between 1789 and 1865 an estimated one-quarter of all Southern Jewish adults kept slaves, and other scholars have found a significant minority of German Jews within these ranks.¹⁴

Why were Savannah Jews purchasing slaves? In part, Jewish law did not forbid the practice, and mid-nineteenth-century white society condoned the legal subjugation of groups it deemed inferior. To some degree Jews' financial situation permitted slaveholding, and they realized that ownership offered economic benefits. In 1860 Savannahians held an average of \$11,117 in real property, whereas Jews in the city owned \$13,761. Thus, relative to other whites, Jews were more able to buy slaves. Because bondsmen performed productive roles in the home and workplace, slaveholders could have servants work around the house or hire them out. In 1860 Solomon Gardner's female slave served as cook and maid for his family. Henry and Isaac

Meinhard utilized most of their 16 slaves in the wholesale dry goods business they operated. Attorney Solomon Cohen and "lady of leisure" Dinah Minis--Savannah's two largest Jewish slaveholders with 23 and 18 slaves, respectively--collected fees from blacks they rented out to nonslaveholders and local industries.¹⁵

Slave ownership brought more than merely economic benefits, however. It marked Jews as part of the dominant group in a region whose economy, political ideology, and social order rested upon the subjugation of the black race and whose leaders increasingly were consumed by fears of abolition, slave uprising, and nonslaveholders' opposition to the peculiar institution. The perennial outsider in European society, Jews in the South hoped to become insiders by positioning themselves relative to blacks. By possessing bondsmen Jews revealed their commitment to a mainstay of antebellum Southern life and thus were not perceived as a threat to established cultural patterns.¹⁶

For at least some Southern-born Jews, the racism inherent in black slavery became ingrained. In a letter to his sister-in-law in January 1866, Solomon Cohen echoed prevailing sentiments in the South: "I believe that the institution of slavery was refined and civilizing to whites--giving them an elevation of sentiment and ease and dignity of manners only attainable in societies under the restraining influence of a privileged class--and at the same time the only human institution that could elevate the Negro from barbarism and develop the small amounts of intellect with which he is endowed."¹⁷ German-Jewish immigrants likely held the ambivalent sentiments expressed by Oscar Solomon Straus of Talbotton, Georgia: "As a boy brought up in the South I never questioned the rights or wrongs of slavery. Its existence I regarded as matter of course, as most other customs or institutions."¹⁸

Finally, slave ownership helped solidify Jews' racial status. The South was not a region set in black and white, as some historians have suggested.¹⁹ Rather, men and women--especially Irish and Italian immigrants--had to create "whiteness" for themselves to prevent their association with the socially degraded status of blacks. In large measure these settlers experienced hostility and comparisons with slaves and free blacks because of the labor they performed. Southerners considered digging ditches, laying railroad track, hauling goods, domestic service, and other unskilled pursuits common among the Irish and Italians to be fit only for blacks.²⁰ Because Jews clustered in commercial ventures and purchased blacks rather than toiling as manual laborers, their "whiteness" was rarely questioned, and they faced relatively less social ostracism than other immigrant groups.

A commitment by Jews to states' rights and the Confederate war effort constituted a third element that facilitated their acceptance into Savannah society.²¹ Devotion to regional customs at a time when the South's way of life was under siege helped secure them the continued respect of their Christian neighbors.²² On May 15, 1861, Savannah Germans (Jewish and Christian) came together at Armory Hall to refute statements in the Northern press that questioned their allegiance to the Confederacy. The men wanted to "show by words and acts that the German inhabitants of the city were ready with heart and hand to defend the home of their choice." As leaders among their peers, Jewish immigrants played important roles in the day's proceedings. Joseph Lippman called the assembly to order, and Magnus Loewenthal moved that the chairman appoint a committee to prepare an agenda. While Loewenthal and a small group of men drew up the program, various speakers addressed the crowd in German, giving a history of the community and urging a "bond and decisive front" in the face of outside attacks.²³

At one point in the meeting, Loewenthal returned with a set of declarations which he read to his countrymen for their approval. The carefully worded document drew upon historical events that all Germans could understand. The first resolution likened the Confederate cause in America to "democratic" forces in Germany's 1848-49 revolution. Furthermore, it excoriated refugees from that struggle now living in the North for trying to force the Southern states back into a government they hated "as much as the Venetians hated Austrian rule." The second statement exclaimed that Savannahians deplored the "necessity forced upon us of perhaps imbruing our hands in the blood of brothers of our dear old Fatherland, yet the cause of the South being our cause, we accept the gage of hostility." Given these sentiments, the men rose to action, forming the Confederate States Volunteer Aid Association, for which two Jewish men served as officers: Joseph Lippman as president and Magnus Loewenthal as secretary/ treasurer.²⁴

Initially, German Jews gave their lives as well as their money to the Confederacy. Dozens of men volunteered for duty and saw action in Confederate regiments during the war's first year. Lewis Lippman received wounds at the first Battle of Manassas in July 1861, and Conrad Byck fell into Union hands during combat in April 1862. As the war dragged on, however, Jew and Christian increasingly sought to elude military service. A visiting Charleston newspaper correspondent wrote of a Chatham County enlistment rally in March 1862 at which men with excuses for not serving far outnumbered those willing to volunteer. Some German Jews hired substitutes rather than serve themselves, and others used their legal status as resident aliens to receive a military exemption.²⁵

Southern-born Jews, in contrast, demonstrated stronger ideological dedication to and leadership in the fight for Southern rights. These attitudes were evident decades before the Civil War. In an 1841 address to the Georgia Historical Society, Solomon Cohen outlined a

constitutional argument put to the test in neighboring South Carolina in the early 1830s and later used by Georgia politicians.²⁶ "A fair and candid examination of History," he explained, "must satisfy any unprejudiced mind that these States were, and are Sovereign, except perhaps as far as they have delegated a portion of their Sovereign power to be exercised by the General Government under the Constitution of the United States."²⁷ Nearly 10 years later, at a countywide meeting on September 24, 1850, Cohen publicly denounced the manner in which Congress had dealt with slavery's expansion into the western territories; however, he cautioned against rash actions. At his urging the gathering adopted a resolution "That the Constitutional Union bequeathed to us by our Fore Fathers must be preserved at every sacrifice, save that of our honor, property, and our liberties."²⁸

In the weeks following Abraham Lincoln's election to the presidency in November 1860, Savannah Jews abandoned any hopes for compromise with the North and became vocal in their support for secession. Solomon Cohen's 16-year-old son Gratz declared it the duty of every Southern state to leave the Union, which he believed existed only in name.²⁹ Jacob C. Levy, an aged South Carolinian native, echoed Cohen's sentiments in a letter to his grandson Clavius Phillips, an army private. He wrote that Southerners never could be subjugated. King George III had tried unsuccessfully to suppress American liberty during the Revolution, and Levy believed Federal troops would fail in their assault against the South during the Civil War.³⁰ Some months earlier Clavius had become so irate at his family's treatment by Federal troops that he penned the following statement to his mother: "If any one has occasion to entertain eternal enmity to the whole Yankee nation, it is our family, and I hope the time is not far distant when I have an opportunity to avenge the insults you have undergone."³¹

Anti-Federal attitudes extended to women as well. Jacob Levy's daughter (and Clavius Phillip's mother) Eugenia Levy Phillips held such an intense and vocal attachment to her region and the justice of its cause that Union officials viewed her as a threat to the Northern war effort and imprisoned her in Washington, D.C., for three weeks in August and September 1861.³² Following her release and expulsion from the capital, she came into conflict with Union General Benjamin Butler in New Orleans, 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." He 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. Phillips's diary, kept during her imprisonment in Washington, and a memoir she wrote shortly after war's end reveal a bitter hatred toward the North.³³ Savannah's fall to Sherman's troops in December 1864 exacerbated anti-Union feelings. Fanny Cohen, daughter of Octavus, could not accept defeat. "If we are conquered I see no reason why we should receive our enemies as our friends and I never shall do it as long as I live," she wrote in her diary.³⁴

Fanny Cohen's sentiments received ample expression in the military leadership shown by Jewish men. Jacob C. Levy's son Samuel Yates Levy was a major in the 1st Regiment of Georgia Volunteer Infantry and served Savannah's highest ranking Jewish soldier.³⁵ Samuel's first cousin Octavus S. Cohen, Jr., also became an officer--a second lieutenant in 1863 at age 17. For a time he served at Fort Pulaski. Later in the war Octavus moved to Fort Wagner, outside of Charleston, and in 1864 he became acting ordnance officer for a brigade stationed just above Buford, South Carolina.³⁶

Southern women dedicated their lives to the Confederacy as well, taking on roles heretofore unheard of in the nineteenth-century South. Even before fighting began in April 1861

they rolled bandages, made cartridges, and prepared sandbags for use in fortifications. Women's aid societies and sewing groups sprung up around the region. As early as May 1861 Savannah's Confederate States Volunteer Aid Association collected clothing for volunteer soldiers and solicited donations for the benefit of the families men had left behind. At least some Northern generals believed women's labor on behalf of the Confederacy was so significant that it actually prolonged the war.³⁷ 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. As the first female administrator appointed to Chimborazo, Pember offered warmth and femininity craved by the soldiers, but she also fought against repeated attempts to undermine her authority. Much of the time this meant blocking the staff's efforts to pilfer supplies, especially whiskey, placed under her control. On one occasion she threatened away a would-be thief with a gun. Her self-assurance and commitment to caring for the sick and wounded earned praise from Richmond socialites, who described her as "brisk and brilliant" with "a will of steel under suave refinement."³⁸

The above examples reveal that Savannah Jews adopted distinctly Southern customs in order to dispel perceptions that they were outsiders and to win and maintain acceptance by the local Christian elite. Were they successful in this endeavor? The answer is a resounding yes, but with a caveat. Southern-born Jews, and especially families that had been in the region for generations, generally held a stronger Southern identity than their foreign-born coreligionists. In turn, natives enjoyed greater acceptance by their Christian neighbors.³⁹ These levels can be discerned by looking at Jewish participation in citywide organizations and activities.

For many Jewish men, freemasonry offered their first entry point into middle-class Savannah society and provided brotherhood that sustained them throughout their adult lives. Unfortunately, records do not reveal the extent of Jewish membership in the order, though fragmentary evidence suggests significant involvement dating as far back as 1734.⁴⁰ In the 1860s the city's half-dozen chapters elected at least a dozen Jewish merchants to office, the majority of whom had settled in Savannah within the previous decade. Two lodges in particular--Zerubbabel Lodge, No. 15, chartered in 1840, and Clinton Lodge, No. 54, established in 1847--attracted Jews to their ranks. Based upon the number of elected officials in these chapters, actual membership likely was much higher.⁴¹

In addition to their affiliation in fraternal orders, Savannah Jews enjoyed access to the city's various philanthropic and social activities. Yet membership in local benevolent organizations was limited to a relatively small group of Georgia- and South Carolina-born Jewish families, suggesting the social exclusivity of these associations. Octavus Cohen and his wife Henrietta, his brother Solomon and wife Miriam, their cousins Abram and Lavinia Minis, and Abram's sisters Frances and Cecelia served as officers in nearly a half-dozen charitable organizations. In the 1860s Miriam and Henrietta Cohen and Lavinia and Frances Minis were board members in the Needle Woman's Friend Society, which provided seamstress work for destitute women. In the 1860s and 1870s Octavus Cohen served as president of the Savannah Benevolent Association, a group founded during the yellow fever epidemic of 1854 to offer support in times of community emergency. In the 1870s Octavus Cohen and Abram Minis sat on the Union Society's governing body, which administered the Bethesda Orphan House. Henrietta Cohen and the Minis sisters worked on the Savannah Widow's Society, and Lavinia Minis and Miriam Cohen served as officers of the Female Orphan Society.⁴²

Philanthropic work illuminates only part of Jewish-Christian interaction in nineteenth-century Savannah. Southern-born Jews joined some of the city's most prestigious clubs and literary societies, ran successfully for political office, and socialized with the South's elite families.⁴³ In 1839 Solomon Cohen and his brother-in-law Mordecai Myers helped establish the Georgia Historical Society, created to preserve the state's heritage and to instruct the community in American history and biography.⁴⁴ Cohen held the position of treasurer from 1841 to 1844 and vice president between 1864 and 1868, and the society featured him as a guest speaker when it began one of its first public lecture series in 1841. He also delivered eulogies on the deaths of two society presidents.⁴⁵ Other organizations welcomed Jews as well and elected them to board positions. The Savannah Jockey Club, which appealed to horse racing enthusiasts, included Philip Minis, Octavus Cohen, and Moses A. Cohen. The exclusive Oglethorpe Club, established in 1870 by some of the city's most prominent businessmen, invited Samuel Yates Levy and brothers Abram, Isaac, and Jacob F. Minis to join. Sailing devotees, Southern-born Jews among them, established the Savannah Yacht Club in the 1870s.⁴⁶

In comparison to those in other American cities, Savannah Jews enjoyed relatively greater access to predominantly Christian organizations than their coreligionists elsewhere. Lucien Wolf, a Jewish visitor to Georgia in the early 1870s, was impressed to receive an invitation to the Chatham Club during his stay. His reaction turned to astonishment when he learned the club's president and secretary were Jews. Jacob C. Levy moved with his family from Charleston to Savannah in 1850, "where they at once took social rank with the best people in that eminently refined society--a marked contrast, in its liberal tone, to the narrow-minded bigotry of Charleston people." By contrast, in Cleveland, the Jewish community's leading citizen could not gain entry into the exclusive Union Club even with the city's mayor and a future U.S. Supreme

Court justice as his sponsors. Joseph Seligman's exclusion from the Grand Union Hotel in Saratoga Springs, New York, in 1877 occurred despite the Jewish financier's friendships with Abraham Lincoln and Ulysses S. Grant. Throughout the country, historian Leonard Dinnerstein has argued, wealthy Christians put increasing distance between themselves and their Jewish neighbors.⁴⁷ Not so in Savannah.

Savannah Jews' high acceptance levels within Christian social circles translated into political success as well. Jewish men served in a variety of appointed positions, and they won election to local, state, and even national office. Mordecai Myers functioned as clerk of the city council from 1819 to 1841.⁴⁸ Council members appointed Isaac D'Lyon and Waring Russell to run the city/county jail (1850-53 and 1859-84, respectively), and other Jewish men acted as police and fire chiefs, port wardens, and keepers of the local powder magazine.⁴⁹ Savannah Jews also played an important role in administering the city's justice system. These included City Court judges Levi S. D'Lyon (1838-45 and 1861-63) and Mordecai Sheftall, Sr. (1847-51), five sheriffs, and five clerks.⁵⁰

In addition to political appointments, various popularly elected offices fell to Savannah's Jewish residents. For 67 years during the nineteenth century at least one or more Jews sat on the city council. In the antebellum era, almost all of these aldermen were born and raised in Georgia or South Carolina. Levi, Mordecai, and Moses Sheftall; Isaac and Abram Minis; and Levi S. and Isaac D'Lyon descended from families who arrived in Georgia in 1733. Solomon Cohen, Emanuel De la Motta, and Abraham A. and Moses J. Solomons traced their families to Charleston in the Revolutionary and early national periods. Only three German-Jewish immigrants were elected to council in the 1860s and 1870s--Joseph Lippman, Samuel H. Eckman, and Elias A. Weil. They averaged 16 years in Savannah before taking their seats.⁵¹

The evidence of office holding presented here suggests that Jews exerted influence beyond their numbers. In 1860, for example, the Irish outnumbered Jews nearly seven to one in Savannah, yet no Irishmen sat with Solomon Cohen on council that year. Although no law barred the Irish from holding civic office, only a handful of men rose to leadership positions between 1830 and 1860, far fewer than their Jewish neighbors.⁵² The difference resulted in part because Jews adopted Southern mores and also from low Irish occupational status and anti-Irish prejudices among the native population. In the 1850s well over half of all city officials were merchants or professional men, a proportion approximating the Jewish occupational structure but dramatically higher than the Irish. Most Irish workers performed manual labor, a job local elites associated with the degraded condition of slaves and freedmen.⁵³ City council also catered to the native born. During this decade only 10 immigrants were elected to seats despite an adult white population that was nearly 50 percent foreign born. Few Savannah Irishmen over age 20 could claim American birth in 1860, whereas 40 percent of Jews fell into this category.⁵⁴

Nativism directed primarily against Irish immigrants restricted their access to political office to a far greater degree than anti-Semitism affected Savannah Jews. As the city's largest immigrant group at 23 percent of the white population in 1860 (compared to Jews' 2.5 percent share), Irish Catholics posed an economic, religious, and political challenge to the Protestant elite and native white laborers. The small number of local Jews did not.⁵⁵ Although the American Party (Know Nothings) never amounted to much in Savannah--electing only three men between 1854 and 1857--its anti-Catholic, antiforeign message did help keep Irishmen out of political office. In local elections Know Nothings ran on a law-and-order platform, decrying the alleged lawlessness and violence of Irish immigrants and insisting that "Americans" frame and administer their government. A torchlight procession in November 1856 carried the party's

message to the people: "Freedom for Foreigners, But, Supremacy for Ourselves. Foreigners may Ride, But [Uncle] Sam must Drive," Know Nothing banners read.⁵⁶

And "drive" Southern-born Jews did, taking roads to state and national office. Mordecai Myers served in the Georgia House of Representatives for seven one-year terms between 1824 and 1837, and Philip M. Russell held the post five times immediately following the Civil War. Solomon Cohen sat in the legislature in 1842, and in December 1865 voters in Georgia's First Congressional District elected him to Congress, though Republicans refused him and the rest of the Southern delegation their seats.⁵⁷

Savannah Jews also derived personal satisfaction from and associated with influential politicians and leading Southern figures. While studying at Washington College in the early 1870s (later Washington and Lee University), Abram Minis's eldest son Jacob visited at the home of Robert E. Lee. Lee's daughter Eleanor Agnes called upon the Minis family during her visits to Savannah.⁵⁸ Henrietta Cohen's sister Phoebe Yates Pember befriended Mary Randolph, whose husband George served as Confederate Secretary of War in 1862, and Henrietta enjoyed a close friendship with Confederate President Jefferson Davis's wife Varina. "I feel the death of your dear Husband [Octavus] very deeply as there are few left like him," Mrs. Davis wrote in sympathy to her friend. Some years later Henrietta visited the recently widowed Mrs. Davis at her home in New York City to offer support and companionship.⁵⁹

In their friendships, activities, and the high praise they received for their commitment to the Confederate cause, the lives of sisters Eugenia Levy Phillips and Phoebe Yates Pember represent the pinnacle of Jewish acceptance into Christian society. These two women willingly risked life and limb to preserve the Southern way of life and in so doing won the admiration of their Christian neighbors. The sisters were not alone among Savannah Jews. Numerous other

Jewish men and women demonstrated distinctly regional customs in an effort to achieve at least some level of acceptance and thereby to enjoy a range of associations in local society. Slave ownership combined with a deeply ingrained honor ethic and Confederate nationalism constituted the most common claims for full acceptance. Thus to varying degrees and in particular aspects of their lives, Savannah Jews did become Southern, and they reaped the rewards.

Notes

Mark I. Greenberg received his doctorate in American history from the University of Florida. His dissertation examines ethnic, class, and southern identity among nineteenth-century Savannah Jews.

¹ For recent literature on immigrants to the South, see, for example, Kathleen C. Berkeley, "Like a Plague of Locust': Immigration and Social Change in Memphis, Tennessee, 1850-1880" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1980); Edward Matthew Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens: The Irish Immigrant Community of Savannah, 1837-1861" (Ph.D. diss., Emory University, 1990); Fredrick M. Spletstoser, "Back Door to the Land of Plenty: New Orleans as an Immigrant Port, 1820-1860," 2 vols. (Ph.D. diss., Louisiana State University, 1978); Steven Hertzberg, Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915 (Philadelphia, 1978); Ronald H. Bayor, "Ethnic Residential Pattern in Atlanta, 1880-1940" Georgia Historical Quarterly 63 (Winter 1979): 435-46; Randall M. Miller, "The Enemy Within: Some Effects of Foreign Immigrants on Antebellum Southern Cities," Southern Studies 24 (Spring 1985): 30-53; and Christopher Silver, "A New Look at Old South Urbanization: The Irish Worker in Charleston, South Carolina, 1840-1860," in South Atlantic Urban Studies, ed. Jack R. Censer and N. Steven Steinert, vol. 3 (Charleston, 1979).

² In 1860 just over 1,600 Irish-born adults (age 18 years and older) accounted for 62 percent of all foreigners in Savannah. Germans comprised the next largest group at 19 percent. See 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): 311-3; Shoemaker, "Strangers and

Citizens," 43; and Herbert Weaver, "Foreigners in Ante-Bellum Savannah," Georgia Historical Quarterly 37 (March 1953): 2-3.

³ According to Rousey foreigners comprised 39.2 percent of whites in Southern cities and 39.9 percent of whites in Northern cities in 1860. In 1900, ratios were 15.5 percent in the South and 32.07 percent in the North. See Dennis C. Rousey, "Aliens in the WASP Nest: Ethnocultural Diversity in the Antebellum Urban South," Journal of American History 79 (June 1992): 156.

⁴ For an overview of this vast literature see Carl L. Degler, Place Over Time: The Continuity of Southern Distinctiveness (Baton Rouge, 1977); Drew Gilpin Faust, "The Peculiar South Revisited: White Society, Culture, and Politics in the Antebellum Period, 1800-1860," in Interpreting Southern History: Historiographical Essays in Honor of Sanford W. Higginbotham, ed. John B. Boles and Evelyn Thomas Nolen (Baton Rouge, 1987), 78-119; James M. McPherson, "Antebellum Southern Exceptionalism: A New Look at an Old Question," Civil War History 29 (September 1983): 230-44; Mitchell Snay, Gospel of Disunion: Religion and Separatism in the Antebellum South (Cambridge, 1993); and C. Vann Woodward, The Burden of Southern History, 3rd ed. (Baton Rouge, 1993), 1-25, 187-233. Edward Pessen, "How Different from Each Other Were the Antebellum North and South," American Historical Review 85 (December 1980): 1119-49, provides one of the most cogent dissenting voices for Southern distinctiveness.

⁵ See Immigration into the United States, Showing Number, Nationality, Sex, Age, Occupation, Destination, Etc., from 1820-1903, in 57th Cong., 2nd sess., House Doc. 15, pt. 2 (Washington, 1903), 4342; James A. Dunlevy, "Regional Preferences and Migrant Settlement: On the Avoidance of the South by Nineteenth-Century Immigrants," in Research in Economic History: A Research Annual, ed. Paul Uselding (Greenwich, Conn., 1983), 8: 218. Henry Marshall

Booker, "Efforts of the South to Attract Immigrants, 1860-1900" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1965).

⁶ See Jeffrey S. Adler, Yankee Merchants and the Making of the Urban West: The Rise and Fall of Antebellum St. Louis (Cambridge, 1991). On economic and institutional similarities between Savannah Jews and their coreligionists elsewhere in America, 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), ch. 3 and 5. Although Rabbi Saul Jacob Rubin's book Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry, 1733-1983 (Savannah, 1983) examines important issues, Southern distinctiveness and acceptance are not addressed. Rubin offers little information and no analysis of Jewish slave ownership, the honor ethic, or Confederate nationalism.

⁷ A vast literature exists on the honor ethic and its centrality to Southern culture. See Edward L. Ayers, Vengeance and Justice: Crime and Punishment in the 19th-Century American South (New York, 1984), 9-33; Kenneth S. Greenberg, "The Nose, the Lie, and the Duel in the Antebellum South," American Historical Review 95 (February 1990): 57-74; Elliot J. Gorn, "'Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch': The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," American Historical Review 90 (February 1985): 18-43; Bertram Wyatt-Brown, Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South (New York, 1982); Steven M. Stowe, Intimacy and Power in the Old South: Ritual in the Lives of Planters (Baltimore, 1987), 5-49.

⁸ Thomas Gamble, Savannah Duels and Duelists, 1733-1877 (Savannah, 1923), 192-5; excerpts from diary of Richard D. Arnold, August 9-16, 1832, fol. 19, box 2, subser. 19, ser. I, Minis Family Papers, collection 1505, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah; Kaye Kole, The Minis

Family of Georgia, 1733-1992 (Savannah, 1992), 78-80; Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz, September 2, 1832, in Letters of Rebecca Gratz, ed. David Philipson (Philadelphia, 1929), 157-8.

⁹ Gamble, Savannah Duels and Duelists, 260-9; Savannah Morning News, August 22, 24, 1870; Martha Gallaudet Waring, "The Striving 'Seventies in Savannah," Georgia Historical Quarterly 20 (June 1936): 155.

¹⁰ The decision to survey slaveholding among adults only (persons age 20 or older) stems from evidence that only 0.4 percent of whites under that age held slaves. See James Oakes, The Ruling Race: A History of American Slaveholders (New York, 1982), 249.

¹¹ In Savannah the number of slaves increased from 6,231 to 7,712 in the 1850s but decreased from 41 to 35 percent of the total population. Scholars have noted a relative decline in other urban centers prior to the Civil War, though they disagree as to the reasons. Richard C. Wade, Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820-1860 (New York, 1964), 243-81, believes that growing fears of slave unrest led owners to send their bondsmen to the countryside. Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman, Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery (New York, 1974), 101-2, assert that high slave prices in the 1850s precipitated a shift in the slave population from cities to plantations and their replacement by cheaper immigrant labor. For a synthesis of Wade's racial control argument and Fogel's and Engerman's economic reasoning, see Peter Kolchin, American Slavery, 1619-1877 (New York, 1993), 177-8, 245.

¹² The percentage of adult slave owners in Chatham County in 1860 was calculated from Bureau of the Census, Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census (Washington, 1864), 58-9; and Bureau of the Census, Agriculture of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census (Washington, 1864), 226.

¹³ Data on Jewish slave ownership were derived by locating Jews in the Chatham County slave population schedules of the seventh federal census.

¹⁴ Bertram Wallace Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865," in Jews in the South, ed. Leonard Dinnerstein and Mary Dale Palsson (Baton Rouge, 1973), 96, 127; James William Hagy, This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston (Tuscaloosa, 1993), 91-3; Eli Faber, Slavery and the Jews: A Historical Inquiry (New York, 1995), 4-7.

Figures indicate that approximately one-quarter of all white Southern households owned one or more slaves. See J. William Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry in a Slave Society: White Liberty and Black Slavery in Augusta's Hinterlands (Middletown, Conn., 1985), 1; Kolchin, American Slavery, 180.

¹⁵ Haunton, "Savannah in the 1850s," 36; Wade, Slavery in the Cities, 38-54; William A. Byrne, "The Burden and Heat of the Day: Slavery and Servitude in Savannah, 1733-1865" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 1979), 133, 198-200; Abram Minis to Lavinia Florance, September 9, 1851, fol. 77, box 10; May 14, 1855, fol. 81, box 11; June 8, 15, 1855, fol. 82, box 12, ser. II, Minis Family Papers; Savannah Daily Morning News, September 21, 28, 29, 1859.

¹⁶ Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South," 132; Harris, Plain Folk and Gentry, 15-93; Kolchin, American Slavery, 181-4; Charles L. Flynn, Jr., White Land, Black Labor: Caste and Class in Late Nineteenth-Century Georgia (Baton Rouge, 1983), 1-2; William J. Cooper, Jr., Liberty and Slavery: Southern Politics to 1860 (New York, 1983), 184-7; Edmund S. Morgan, American Slavery American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia (New York, 1975), 363-87; Eugene D. Genovese, The Political Economy of Slavery: Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South (New York, 1965); Byrne, "Burden and Heat of the Day," 270-97; Steven A. Channing, Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina (New York, 1970); William L.

Barney, The Secessionist Impulse: Alabama and Mississippi in 1860 (Princeton, 1974); Michael P. Johnson, Toward a Patriarchal Republic: The Secession of Georgia (Baton Rouge, 1977).

¹⁷ Quoted in Korn, "Jews and Negro Slavery," 127.

¹⁸ "Oscar Solomon Straus: A German Immigrant in Georgia," in Memoirs of American Jews, 1775-1865, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1955), 2:295.

¹⁹ Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," American Historical Review 34 (1928): 30-43; Frank Owsley, Plain Folk and the Old South (Baton Rouge, 1949); George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (New York, 1971); Joel Williamson, The Crucible of Race: Black-White Relations in the American South Since Emancipation (New York, 1984); W. J. Cash, The Mind of the South, intro. Bertram Wyatt-Brown (New York, 1991).

²⁰ Ira Berlin and Herbert G. Gutman, "Natives and Immigrants, Free Men and Slaves: Urban Workingmen in the Antebellum American South," American Historical Review 88 (December 1983): 1187-8; Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 278-9; Berkeley, "Like a Plague of Locust," 19; Jean Ann Scarpaci, "Immigrants in the New South: Italians in Louisiana's Sugar Parishes, 1880-1910," Labor History 16 (Spring 1975): 177-82; Miller, "Enemy Within," 39; Roger W. Shugg, Origins of Class Struggle in Louisiana: A Social History of White Farmers and Laborers During Slavery and After, 1840-1875 (Baton Rouge, 1939), 93-4; Dale T. Knobel, Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America (Middletown, Conn., 1986), 122; David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class (London, 1991), 145.

²¹ This sentiment was fully in keeping with popular views in Savannah at the time. Election results in 1860 revealed that two-thirds of Chatham County voters supported Southern Democrat

John C. Breckenridge. A day after Lincoln's victory, the Savannah city council agreed to purchase additional ammunition for local volunteer companies and selected a site for a city magazine. The next evening council called a public rally and passed resolutions demanding resistance to the Lincoln presidency. During elections for delegates to Georgia's state convention on January 2, 1861, those for immediate secession ran unopposed in Chatham County, further indicating the strength of Savannah's secessionist impulse. See James David Griffin, "Savannah, Georgia, During the Civil War" (Ph.D. diss., University of Georgia, 1963), 52-59; Michael P. Johnson, "A New Look at the Popular Vote for Delegates to the Georgia Secession Convention," Georgia Historical Quarterly 56 (Summer 1972): 261; Ralph A. Wooster, The Secession Conventions of the South (Princeton, 1962), 81, 92, 95; Johnson, Toward a Patriarchal Republic, 19, 21, 39.

²² Drew Gilpin Faust, The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South (Baton Rouge, 1988); Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York, 1979), 37-119; Harry Simonhoff, Jewish Participants in the Civil War (New York, 1963), 310-21; Barnett A. Elzas, The Jews of South Carolina: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (Philadelphia, 1905), 220-40; Myron Berman, Richmond's Jewry, 1769-1976: Shabbat in Shockoe (Charlottesville, 1979), 177-83; Eli N. Evans, Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate (New York, 1988), xi-xxi.

²³ Savannah Republican, May 16, 1861.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Due to incomplete records it was impossible to determine the exact number of Savannah Jews who fought in the Civil War. The following sources provided at least a partial account. Lillian Henderson, comp., Roster of the Confederate Soldiers of Georgia, 1861-1865, 6 vols.

(Hapeville, G.A., 1955-1964), 1:141, 176, 207, 920; 5:9, 6:482; F. D. Lee and J. L. Agnew, Historical Record of the City of Savannah (Savannah, 1869), 119-28; Griffin, "Savannah, Georgia, During the Civil War," 212, 214; Rufus Lears, The Jews in America: A History (Cleveland, 1954), 91; Savannah Republican, August 15, 1861; Confederate Pension Applications for Morris M. Cohen and Lewis Lippman, Court of Ordinary, Chatham County, on microfilm, Georgia Department of Archives and History (GDAH), Atlanta; Morres Levy, Isaac Cohen, Meyer Rosenberg, Abraham D. Levy, in Aliens Not Subject to Military Duty, 1862-1864, Superior Court, Chatham County, on microfilm, GDAH.

²⁶ See Charles S. Sydnor, The Development of Southern Sectionalism, 1819-1848 (Baton Rouge, 1948), 135-46, 177-202; William W. Freehling, The Road to Disunion, Volume I: Secessionists at Bay, 1776-1854 (New York, 1990), 253-70; William W. Freehling, ed., The Nullification Era: A Documentary Record (New York, 1967), 150-2; and William W. Freehling and Craig M. Simpson, eds., Secession Debated: Georgia's Showdown in 1860 (New York, 1992).

²⁷ Solomon Cohen, "A Discourse on the Formation of the Constitution of the United States," Solomon Cohen Papers, collection 159, Georgia Historical Society.

²⁸ Savannah Daily Morning News, October 26, 1850. On the territorial question and the Compromise of 1850, see Freehling, Road to Disunion, 487-510; David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861 (New York, 1976), 90-120.

²⁹ Gratz Cohen to Miriam Cohen, November 13, 1860, fol. 9, box 1, Miriam Gratz Cohen Papers, collection 2639, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Similar sentiments can be found in a letter dated December 7, 1860.

³⁰ Jacob Clavius Levy to Clavius Phillips, March 29, 1863, Levy/Cohen/Phillips Families, fol. B, box 22, collection 1505, Georgia Historical Society.

³¹ Clavius Phillips to Eugenia Levy Phillips, November 11, 1862, fol. 2, box 1, Phillips-Myers Family Papers, collection 596, Southern Historical Collection.

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; Simonhoff, Jewish Participants in the Civil War, 177-82; and "Philip Phillips," in Memoirs of American Jews, ed. Jacob Rader Marcus, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1956), 3:133-60.

³³ 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, 3:161-96.

³⁴ Spencer B. King, Jr., "Fanny Cohen's Journal of Sherman's Occupation of Savannah," Georgia Historical Quarterly 41 (December 1957): 414.

³⁵ Union troops captured Levy near Marietta, Georgia, in June 1864, and he spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner at Johnson's Island, Ohio. Samuel Yates Levy to Jacob C. Levy, September 29, 1862, October 5, 1864, March 16, 1865, fols. 2 & 3, box 1, Phillips-Myers Family Papers; Henderson, comp., Roster of Confederate Soldiers, 1:113, 150; Savannah Republican, August 16, 1861.

³⁶ Octavus Cohen, Jr., to Henrietta Yates Levy Cohen, August 28, 1862, February 25, November 11, December 21-31, 1864, fols. 2 & 3, box 1, Phillips-Myers Family Papers; Gratz Cohen to Miriam Cohen, June 1, 1861, fol. 9, box 1, Miriam Gratz Cohen Papers; Henderson, comp., Roster of Confederate Soldiers, 3:721.

³⁷ Savannah Republican, May 20, 21, 27, 1861; Ann Firor Scott, Natural Allies: Women's Associations in American History. (Urbana, Ill., 1991), 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.

³⁸ Pember was so described in Thomas C. DeLeon, Belles, Beaux and Brains of the 60's (1907; reprint, New York, 1974), 385. For additional information on Pember, see Edward T. James, ed., Notable American Women, 1607-1950: A Biographical Dictionary, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1971), 3:44-45; Jacob R. Marcus, American Jewish Woman: A Documentary History (New York, 1981), 248-54; Jacob R. Marcus, The American Jewish Woman, 1654-1980 (New York, 1981), 32; Phoebe Yates Pember, A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond, ed. Bell Irvin Wiley (1879; reprint, Jackson, Tenn., 1959).

³⁹ Acculturation to Southern mores served as a greater determinant of acceptance than socioeconomic status. In 1860 local assessors calculated an average \$1,542 in taxable property for immigrant Jews and \$4,419 for native-born Jews, but 20 years later the ratio had narrowed to \$1,697 and \$2,209, respectively. Significantly, some wealthy German-Jewish immigrants enjoyed less acceptance into Savannah society than their poorer Southern-born coreligionists. For example, in 1860 Joseph Lippman owned \$80,000 in personal property to Octavus Cohen's \$65,000 (the 1860 average for all Jewish property owners was \$9,888). Cohen was a leading socialite; Lippman enjoyed few social opportunities outside the city's German and Jewish ethnic communities. A similar exclusion existed for wealthy German immigrants Abraham Einstein (\$30,000 in personal property), Samuel Eckman (\$30,000), Henry Meinhard (\$26,500), Levi Lilenthal (\$25,000), Jacob Rosenband (\$25,000), and Isaac Meinhard (\$24,500).

⁴⁰ Despite my efforts, officials could not make available extant records from Savannah's Masonic lodge. Instead, announcements in local newspapers, street directories, and contemporary histories were used to assess Jewish involvement in the order. It is known that Moses and Daniel Nunes, two of Georgia's first settlers, helped found a local chapter with James Oglethorpe in 1734 and subsequently held elected office. Charleston native and one-time Savannah resident Emanuel De la Motta was a founder of the Supreme Council of the Scottish Rite. See Rubin, Third to None, 13, 64.

⁴¹ A list of officers published in Lee and Agnew, Historical Record of the City of Savannah, 182-3, and in city directories for 1860, 1866, 1874, and 1880 reveals the following names: Samuel P. Hamilton, Rabbi Raphael D'Castro Lewin, Simon Hexter, Jacob Belsinger, Jacob Vetsberg, Levy E. Byck, Lewis Kayton, Magnus Loewenthal, Samuel Yates Levy, Simon E. Byck, Ludlow Cohen, Conrad E. Byck, and Simon Gazan.

⁴² On Jewish participation in these charitable organizations, see Savannah city directories for 1850, 1866, 1870, 1874-5, 1879, and 1880; Savannah Daily Republican, December 29, 1840; Savannah Daily Morning News, March 9, 1850, March 15, 1860, March 10, 1876; John Screven, The Savannah Benevolent Association (Savannah, 1896), 34, 40, 60, 64-5, 71; Charles C. Jones, Jr., O. F. Vedder, and Frank Weldon, History of Savannah, GA. (Syracuse, 1890), 547-51; Kole, Minis Family of Georgia, 85, 94-5.

⁴³ The Savannah Jewish experience contrasts with that in New York, where Rudolf Glanz found the "almost complete exclusion of Jews from Gentile clubs . . . through the end of the 19th century." See Glanz, "The Rise of the Jewish Club in America," in his Studies in Judaica Americana (New York, 1970), 171.

⁴⁴ Mordecai Myers was born to Dr. Levi Myers and Frances Minis in Georgetown, South Carolina, on November 9, 1794. Following his legal training Mordecai moved to Savannah and married Sarah Henrietta Cohen, the sister of Solomon and Octavus, in July 1828. Here he served as Official Assignee in Bankruptcy for the District of Georgia. He was elected alderman in 1818, became clerk of the Savannah City Council in 1819, and served in the Georgia legislature between 1824 and 1837. See Deborah Nelson Willis, "Mordecai Myers," in Savannah Biographies, 17:1989, Regional Room, Armstrong State College Library, Savannah; and Kole, Minis Family of Georgia, 42-9.

⁴⁵ William Harden, "The Georgia Historical Society," Georgia Historical Quarterly 1 (March 1917): 6-7; William Harden, A History of Savannah and South Georgia, 2 vols. (1913; reprint, Atlanta, 1969), 1:324; Jones, et al., History of Savannah, 531-2; Savannah Daily Morning News, February 15, 1850; Minutes of a Meeting of the Georgia Historical Society, January 7, 1855, and

"Eulogy on the Life and Character of the Rt. Rev. Stephen Elliot D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Georgia and President of the Georgia Historical Society," in Solomon Cohen Papers.

⁴⁶ Constitution, By-Laws, Officers and Members of the Oglethorpe Club, Savannah, GA, 1889 (Savannah, 1889) at Georgia Historical Society; Kole, Minis Family of Georgia, 78, 115, 125, 128, 132; Estill's Savannah Directory for 1874-'75, 278; Savannah Republican, January 1, September 3, 1861.

⁴⁷ Lucien Wolf, "The History and Genealogy of the Jewish Families of Yates & Samuel of Liverpool," vital statistics file, American Jewish Archives, Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati. See also Hagy, This Happy Land, 54; Lloyd P. Gartner, History of the Jews of Cleveland (Cleveland, 1978), 85; Leonard Dinnerstein, Antisemitism in America (New York, 1994), 39-42. Evidence presented by Bertram W. Korn indicates that New Orleans demonstrated levels of Jewish acceptance comparable to Savannah. Korn was incorrect, however, in his assertion that the Jewish experience in New Orleans was typical. See Bertram Wallace Korn, The Early Jews of New Orleans (Waltham, Mass., 1969), 225-9.

⁴⁸ Thomas Gamble, Jr., A History of the City Government of Savannah, Ga., from 1790 to 1901 (Savannah, 1900), 492; Edward G. Wilson, comp., A Digest of all the Ordinances of the City of Savannah (Savannah, 1858), 525-6.

⁴⁹ Mordecai Sheftall, Jr., served as police chief between 1849 and 1851. Philip M. Russell was fire chief in 1874 and 1875. Joseph Lippman oversaw the city's powder magazine in 1852. Among the port wardens at Savannah were Levi Hart (1835-41, 1843, 1845), Levi S. Russell (1859, 1861, 1865), and Alexander Abrams (1870-72, 1882-84). See Gamble, History of the City Government of Savannah, 488-90, 491, 498, 500-4; and Wilson, comp., Digest of all the Ordinances of the City of Savannah, 218.

⁵⁰ Gamble, History of the City Government of Savannah, 449-55; Lorraine Netrick Abraham, "Levi Sheftall D'Lyons: A Preliminary Biography," in *Savannah Biographies*, 21:1992, Regional Room, Armstrong State College Library.

⁵¹ Tabulated from Harden, History of Savannah and South Georgia, 1:269, 292-4, 310-1, 323-4, 396-7, 450-2, 482-5. Although Joseph Lippman and Samuel Eckman enjoyed economic success as well as longevity in the region, Elias Weil was not a wealthy man. In 1880 his property assessment was only \$2,984 to Eckman's \$8,400 and Lippman's 1870 assessment of \$59,600 (Lippman died in January 1876).

⁵² Harden, History of Savannah and South Georgia, 451; Genealogical Society of the Georgia Historical Society, comp., The 1860 Census of Chatham County, Georgia (Savannah, 1980); Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 341-3.

⁵³ In 1860 just under 50 percent of Savannah Jews were petty proprietors, merchants, professionals, or government employees, whereas 12 percent of Irish fell into these categories. Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 319. On the degraded status of Irish laborers, see *Ibid.*, 277-86; Knobel, Paddy and the Republic; Clement Eaton, Freedom of Thought in the Old South (Durham, 1940), 40; Kenneth M. Stampp, The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South (New York, 1956), 397-8; Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York, 1970), 46-51.

⁵⁴ Haunton, "Savannah in the 1850s," 201; Herbert Weaver, "Foreigners in Ante-Bellum Savannah," Georgia Historical Quarterly 37 (March 1953): 1. Weaver calculated the adult population as those people over age 20.

⁵⁵ A number of historians have suggested that the limited number of Jews in the South worked against the rise of anti-Semitism. See Howard N. Rabinowitz, "Nativism, Bigotry, and Anti-

Semitism in the South," American Jewish History 77 (March 1988): 447; Stephen J. Whitfield, "The Braided Identity of Southern Jewry," American Jewish History 77 (March 1988): 363; Louis Schmier, "Jews and Gentiles in a South Georgia Town," in Jews of the South, 6.

⁵⁶ Savannah Republican, November 4, 1856; Haunton, "Savannah in the 1850s," 225-28; W. Darrell Overdyke, The Know Nothing Party in the South (Baton Rouge, 1950), pp. 2-3, 16, 31, 62, 77, 85, 263; Shoemaker, "Strangers and Citizens," 343-5; Weaver, "Foreigners in Antebellum Savannah," 8-12; Richard H. Haunton, "Law and Order in Savannah, 1850-1860," Georgia Historical Quarterly 56 (Spring 1972): 1-24; Ayers, Vengeance and Justice, 100-1; Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, Natives and Strangers: Ethnic Groups and the Building of America (New York, 1979), 110-8; John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick, N.J., 1988), 3-11.

⁵⁷ Moses Sheftall (1808, 1818-19), Isaac Minis (1815), Levi S. D'Lyon (1820), and Mordecai Sheftall (1821-22) preceded Myers, Cohen, and Russell as Georgia representatives. See State of Georgia: Georgia Official and Statistical Register, 1973-1974 (Atlanta, 1973), 1440-2. On Cohen's election to Congress see Savannah Morning News, August 16, 1875; Allen D. Candler, comp., The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia, 6 vols. (Atlanta, 1910), 4:107; Resolution of the U.S. House of Representatives, February 21, 1866, misc. doc. no. 62, 39th Cong, 1st sess.; I. W. Avery, The History of the State of Georgia from 1850 to 1881 (New York, 1881), 346-57; James M. McPherson, Ordeal by Fire: The Civil War and Reconstruction (New York, 1983), 513; Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York, 1988), 239.

⁵⁸ Jacob F. Minis to Lavinia Florance Minis, December 5, 1869, March 16, 1870, fol. 39, box 4, subser. 29, ser. I, Minis Family Papers.

⁵⁹ Varina Davis to Henrietta Cohen, May 18, 1886, January 17, 1894, fol. 2, Cohen-Phillips Papers, collection 162, Georgia Historical Society; Pember, Southern Woman's Story, 4.