

THE JEWISH SOUTH: A COMPARISON OF JEWISH INTEGRATION INTO SOUTHERN  
SOCIETY

by

AUSTIN COKE

(Under the Direction of Scott Nelson)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the experiences of Jewish people who settled in the towns of Lexington, Kentucky and Athens, Georgia after the end of the American Civil War. In doing so, it investigates both the development of Jewish communities in these towns and how the larger Christian white population viewed their new Jewish neighbors. This project compares the ways in which Jews in Athens and Lexington interacted with the local white population, involved themselves in city affairs, and how local newspapers portrayed Jewish citizens over time. Overall, this thesis found that Jews in both communities were heavily involved in each city's commercial, social, and civic affairs. Many Jewish citizens worked hard to integrate themselves into their new communities and became prominent members in the business community, fraternal organizations, and in local government. It also found that local newspapers became increasingly friendly towards local Jews, often praising them as good citizens.

INDEX WORDS: Judaism, United States, Immigration, Assimilation, Race, Antisemitism

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B.A., University of Kentucky, 2022

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2024

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## INTRODUCTION

### JEWISH ARRIVALS IN THE SOUTH

Leaving behind his friends and family in the Bavarian countryside, in 1858 a young Moses Kaufman sailed to the United States. In a series of pamphlets recalling his childhood and voyage, Kaufman wrote that he had dreamed of reaching “the land where all men are held to be equal and opportunities are greater and where restrictions and oppression are unknown.”<sup>1</sup> Like many other Jews who decided to immigrate to the United States in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kaufman saw America as an opportunity for equal treatment and economic prosperity. After initially settling with his uncles in Cincinnati, Ohio, Kaufman moved south to the town of Lexington, Kentucky in his search for economic success. His dream of America was realized through the nearly fifty years that Kaufman lived in Lexington. Not only did his business endeavors have great success, but he became very involved in the city’s political affairs. After serving as a city councilman and state legislator, Kaufman was appointed to the prominent position of postmaster by President Woodrow Wilson.<sup>2</sup> Kaufman’s experiences in Lexington reflected an era of toleration and acceptance towards Jews by Christian neighbors that existed in towns across the South.

Jewish immigration in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has typically been split into two distinct eras primarily due to a shift in where Jews were emigrating from. The first of these two periods was associated with Central European Jews. As the era of Jewish peddling in Central Europe declined through the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to transportation improvements and early factory production, Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> *Reminiscences: Part One* by Moses Kaufman, May 1921, 2017ms001, Box 11, Folder 9, Temple Adath Israel records, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center, Lexington, KY.

<sup>2</sup> “Active, Useful Life of Moses Kaufman Ends,” *Lexington Herald* (Lexington, KY), October 11, 1924.

families who could not afford to move from the countryside to larger cities looked for opportunity across the Atlantic. Between 1820 and 1880, the majority of the 250,000 Jews who moved to the United States came from places such as Austria, Hungary, and the German states. Beyond economic potential in America, another major factor that pushed Jews to emigrate from Central Europe was increasing state interference into their lives. In some areas, such as Bavaria in 1813, restrictions were placed on the size of the region's Jewish population and limited marriage rights to eldest sons.<sup>3</sup> The second period of Jewish immigration regarded Jews who typically came from Eastern Europe, predominately from the Russian Empire. From 1881 until 1924, over 2.5 million Jews from this region emigrated to the United States, a total of 90% of all Eastern European Jews who left their homelands. While Eastern European Jews shared many similarities in economic and social limitations as the Central European Jews, the massive influx of emigrants from Eastern Europe reflected the rise of pogroms in the region. The sheer amount of violence experienced by Jews in the region prompted many to flee to Jewish colonies throughout Western Europe, Palestine, the United States, or elsewhere for safety.<sup>4</sup>

The majority of Jewish immigrants throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century ultimately made America's major cities their permanent homes. By 1840, a fourth of American Jews lived in the three cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Through the decades, large Jewish communities formed in other developing cities such as Cincinnati, Chicago, and San Francisco. Despite the significant presence of Jews in American cities, a large number of young Jews set out on the road as peddlers. Initially working for bigger Jewish retailers in the cities, peddlers spread across the American countryside in search of untapped markets. This brought Jewish peddlers across the United States, spreading from the cities of the Northeast to the Deep South

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<sup>3</sup> Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654-2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 79 & 82-83.

<sup>4</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 88-90.

and the western frontier. After saving enough money from the road, often with the help of relatives, peddlers were able to establish their own shops in towns across the country and begin their own families as they retired from the road.<sup>5</sup>

It was in this context of Jewish peddlers settling in towns across the country that the initial Jewish communities of Lexington, Kentucky and Athens, Georgia were formed among many others. Both towns witnessed the growth of Jewish populations that had numbered from just a few individuals at the time of the Civil War to over one hundred people who formed their own religious congregations by the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This thesis focuses on these two towns due to both the temporal similarities of the development of their Jewish populations, but also the difference in their locations in the Upper and Lower South. It begins with the end of the Civil War and ends in the early 1920s due to the association of increased antisemitic sentiments with both the Civil War and parts of the Progressive era, particularly after the Leo Frank lynching in 1915. During the Civil War, Jews were often treated with heavy suspicion and were frequently accused of not fighting in the war but instead making money from it. These attitudes were exhibited by both Northern and Southern newspapers and persisted through the years immediately following.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, by the 1910s, antisemitism had regained its prevalence in American society due to the massive influx of Eastern-European Jewish immigrants entering the United States, and it incorporated racism as a core component.<sup>7</sup> Antisemitism during this time was exhibited by Leo Frank's murder, the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, and the frequent publishing of articles attacking Jews in newspapers such as the *Dearborn Independent* under Henry Ford.

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<sup>5</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 99-102.

<sup>6</sup> Eli N. Evans, "The War between Jewish Brothers in America," in *Jews and the Civil War: A Reader*, ed. Jonathan Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 28.

<sup>7</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 58.

Between these two periods of heightened antisemitism in the United States, negative attitudes towards Jews lessened before being revived near the end of the century. Leonard Dinnerstein argues that growing discomfort with Jewish immigrants throughout these decades contributed to the “emergence of a full-fledged antisemitic society” in the United States.<sup>8</sup> Steven Herzberg explains that Georgians, like the rest of the nation, preferred earlier immigrant groups including Germans and Celts rather than “lesser breeds” such as Eastern European Jews who arrived in the final decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> However, the experience of Jews living in Athens and Lexington illustrated growing toleration of Jews by their Christian neighbors throughout the decades. Jews were very involved in local business, politics, fraternal organizations, philanthropy, and built relationships with local universities. They not only lived beside white, Christian neighbors and conducted frequent business together, but also performed burials in desirable plots in the cities’ major cemeteries. The experiences of southern Jews in towns such as Athens and Lexington differed significantly from depictions of Jewish communities (primarily in the North) that Dinnerstein discussed to illustrate growing antisemitism in America at the time.<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that southern Jews were fully accepted and treated as completely equal to Southern whites, but instead that Jews in Southern towns enjoyed a good relationship with Christian neighbors. This thesis will illustrate how southern Jews built this strong relationship through their heavy involvement in Southern towns as well as show how they were viewed by Christians.

Chapter one of this thesis traces the development of southern Jewish history, scholarship on antisemitism, and studies on Jewish identity in the United States. It illustrates how studies on

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<sup>8</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta, 1845-1915* (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978), 85.

<sup>10</sup> Dinnerstein, *Antisemitism in America*, 37-42.

Jewish communities in smaller southern towns are a relatively new development and explains how scholars have investigated Jewish-Christian relationships, primarily in the American South. Chapter two follows the development of Jewish communities in Athens and Lexington as they established their own congregations. It offers context to the arrival of Jews into these communities, presenting an image of the two towns during the late 1800s. Chapter three argues that Jewish residents were warmly regarded by the citizenry and generally were successful at integrating into their communities. The chapter illustrates how Jewish involvement in businesses, fraternal organizations, and local politics contributed to this positive reception. Additionally, it demonstrates how geography can show how Jews were integrated into white, Christian society.

## CHAPTER 1

### REVIEWING SOUTHERN JEWISH HISTORY

Scholarship investigating the lives of Jews in the South between the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries responded to Leonard Dinnerstein's *The Leo Frank Case*, originally published in 1966. Dinnerstein's work illustrates connections between growing antisemitism in the United States and the Leo Frank case. The impact of the Frank trial, Dinnerstein argues, was the development of both the second Ku Klux Klan and also collective Jewish defense efforts to resist antisemitism in America.<sup>11</sup> In the decades since *The Leo Frank Case* was published, other historians have endeavored to uncover the stories of southern Jews. Steven Hertzberg's *Strangers within the Gate City* followed Atlanta's Jewish community from its first Jewish arrivals in the late 1840s through the aftermath of the Leo Frank Case. While Hertzberg's focus is the development of the Jewish community over the decades, he also studies the ways in which Christians and Jews in the city interacted. Hertzberg states that there were varying periods in Atlanta's history when Jews were received better or worse than others. The years immediately following the Civil War provided a period of social equality among whites in the city, granting Jewish residents years of peaceful interactions with Christians. This did not last, he argues, as by the 1880s Jews began again to face discrimination though they "fared better than their northern and midwestern brethren."<sup>12</sup> *Strangers within the Gate City* ultimately offers a comprehensive history of Georgia's largest Jewish community, inspiring a number of other projects on Jewish life in the South.

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<sup>11</sup> Leonard Dinnerstein, *The Leo Frank Case: Revised Edition* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 162.

<sup>12</sup> Hertzberg, *Strangers within the Gate City*, 170-171.

Geographically, several significant Jewish communities throughout the state of Georgia have received attention from scholars concerning the decades following the Civil War. Louis Schmier's 2013 *Chant of Ages; Cry of Cotton* works to recover the history of Valdosta's Jewish past. His work explores Valdosta Christians' preconceived notions about who Jews were, especially in the early years of Jewish settlement in the town. These views largely relied on stereotypes that portrayed Jews as keeping to themselves and being untrustworthy in business agreements.<sup>13</sup> Other works on small-town Jews in the region, such as Anton Hieke's "The Transregional Mobility of Jews from Macon, Ga., 1860-1880" analyzes the frequent movement of Jewish families across the South. He argues that "Regional identity apparently posed little obstacle to Jews who wished to relocate from one region to the other. Economic opportunity pulled these transregional migrants... to new locations."<sup>14</sup> Hieke's research illustrates the frequent movement of Jews between different towns in the South, attributing much of this movement to Jewish families who sought to achieve their economic goals.<sup>15</sup> Athens' Jewish history is the subject of an article by Steven S. Bush titled, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia: The First Hundred Years." Bush's article follows the growth of Athens' Jewish community from two Jewish men who had arrived in the years before the Civil War, Moses Myers and Gabriel Jacobs, to 140 families in 2002.<sup>16</sup> Bush's research presents the first attempt at presenting the community's holistic history and his article concerns the arrival of new Jewish families over the years, the growth of Jewish businesses in downtown, and developments regarding Congregation Children of Israel such as a temporary split between local Jews over

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<sup>13</sup> Louis Schmier, *Chant of Ages; Cry of Cotton* (Valdosta, GA: Snake Nation Press, 2013), 108.

<sup>14</sup> Anton Hieke, "The Transregional Mobility of Jews from Macon, GA., 1860-1880," *American Jewish History* 97, no. 1 (2013): 22.

<sup>15</sup> Hieke, "The Transregional Mobility of Jews," 25-26.

<sup>16</sup> Steven S. Bush, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia: The First Hundred Years," *Athens Historian* 7 (2002): 1 & 8.

worship procedures in the 1910s.<sup>17</sup> Overall, research into the development of Jewish communities in small towns throughout Georgia has been a small but developing area of focus for researchers in the past twenty years, reflecting a growing interest in study into the lives of Jews in the South.

Scholarship on Kentucky's Jewish history is dominated by Lee Shai Weissbach's work on the subject. In 1995, Weissbach published *The Synagogues of Kentucky: Architecture and History*, which investigates the architectural history of synagogues over the past 150 years. Weissbach accumulated data on every synagogue in the state's history, their years of existence, and association with different branches of Judaism.<sup>18</sup> He further explored Kentucky's Jewish history in *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* in which he critiques the general lack of research into small-town Jewish communities, noting that scholars have often studied mid-sized communities such as Cincinnati, Richmond, and New Orleans when looking at Jewish life outside of the Northeast.<sup>19</sup> Through a study of numerous small Jewish settlements across the U.S., including many communities in Kentucky's cities such as Lexington, Louisville, Paducah, and Covington, Weissbach's research establishes a list of characteristics that generalize the experience of those small-town communities.<sup>20</sup> Overall, Weissbach establishes patterns which explain where Jews settled, their livelihoods, congregational organization, religious leadership, and culture between German Jews and Eastern European Jews. Importantly, Weissbach notices a significant difference in how Jews experienced antisemitism between small towns and larger cities. He explains that small-town Jews were less likely to experience intense prejudice than

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<sup>17</sup> Bush, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia," 3-4.

<sup>18</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, *The Synagogues of Kentucky: Architecture and History* (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 1995), Table 2.

<sup>19</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 4.

<sup>20</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 9 & 33-37.

their city brethren and rarely felt threatened directly. Weissbach notes that while Jews were “certainly alert to Klan activities, they were seldom alarmed.” He attributes this feeling to the Klan’s focus on black and Catholic individuals across the nation.<sup>21</sup> Notably, Weissbach’s discussion of the role of prejudice in the lives of small-town Jews focuses exclusively on their experiences in the 1920s and later, temporally overlooking the decades of intense Jewish immigration into the United States that this thesis focuses on. This thesis argues that Weissbach’s depiction of small-town Jewish life is true in earlier decades than those he discusses in his research.

Jewish identity was a major component of the Jewish experience in small towns across the South. Jews and Christian whites both tried to determine how Jews fit into the region’s social hierarchy. White Southerners at the time struggled to determine exactly where Jews should fall in the South’s racial hierarchy, prompting much confusion as to how they should be treated. Eric Goldstein’s “‘Now is the Time to Show Your True Colors:’ southern Jews, Whiteness, and the Rise of Jim Crow,” investigates the racial position of Jews between the 1890s and the Leo Frank Case. Goldstein’s article explains that the growing focus on race and whiteness during this period, prompted by Jim Crow laws, forced southern Jews to assert their status as white.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Jews often fought against any comparisons likening themselves to African Americans. While many Jews were at least somewhat sympathetic towards the black population in the South, he argues, they “never challenged the basic structure of race relations in the South or advocated meaningful social equality for blacks.”<sup>23</sup> However, not all Jews in the South were preoccupied with their racial position as whites. Eastern European Jews who arrived in the South near the end

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<sup>21</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 272-273.

<sup>22</sup> Eric L. Goldstein, “‘Now is the Time to Show Your True Colors:’ Southern Jews, Whiteness, and the Rise of Jim Crow,” in *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil: A New History*, ed. Marcie Ferris & Mark Greenberg (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2006), 136.

<sup>23</sup> Goldstein, “‘Now is the Time to Show Your True Colors,’” 146.

of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were primarily focused on making a living in whichever way they could, meaning many “relied extensively on black trade as they sought to gain an economic foothold.” This meant that Jewish immigrants frequently ran groceries and other stores primarily with African American customers in mind. These newly arrived Jews, according to Goldstein, viewed themselves simply as Jews, not as whites, and did not initially seek to assert their whiteness - though many eventually would years later.<sup>24</sup>

Goldstein’s perspective on the identity of southern Jews was further echoed by Weissbach’s “East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South.” Weissbach elaborates on the culture of Eastern European Jews who moved to the South, illustrating how they were much slower to assimilate than older groups of Jewish immigrants from Central Europe. In many towns with preexisting Reform congregations, Reform Jews tried to accommodate the newly arrived immigrants and their more traditional religious beliefs. This meant the end of many short-lived Orthodox congregations and often prevented the establishment of new ones, though Weissbach attributes these efforts as mostly prompted by Reform congregations needing to expand membership to survive.<sup>25</sup> Other Orthodox congregations faded away slowly as they adopted Conservative practices, or in some instances directly made the switch from Orthodox to Reform worship.<sup>26</sup> Weissbach concludes that the arrival of Eastern European Jews in small towns did not largely affect the depiction of small-town Jewish communities due to both their flexible religious practices and the fact that new immigrants resembled the older German-Jews in terms of their presence as peddlers, clerks, and

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<sup>24</sup> Goldstein, “Now is the Time to Show Your True Colors,” 146-148.

<sup>25</sup> Lee Shai Weissbach, “East European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South,” in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark Bauman (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 127-128.

<sup>26</sup> Weissbach, “Eastern European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South,” 129.

merchants.<sup>27</sup> Overall, the experience of the relatively few Eastern European Jews in small towns throughout the South reflected their initial disinterest in assimilating as many German-Jews had. Eventually, however, they often integrated into the larger preexisting Jewish communities in town.

The racial position of Jews in the South, as referenced earlier in Goldstein's article, changed much throughout the decades after the Civil War. Leonard Rogoff's research into the role of race in the lives of southern Jews argues that "Jewish racial identity has never been fixed" and counters arguments from previous historians who minimized the role of race in southern Jewish life. Instead, he argues that Southern views on race significantly impacted how whites thought of Jews.<sup>28</sup> Throughout much of the Reconstruction era, white Southerners romanticized the race of Jews, portraying them as "members of a pure, fixed, uniform white race which had preserved its lineage since antiquity." Many southern Jews also adopted this view concerning their race which reaffirmed their whiteness in Southern society.<sup>29</sup> Rogoff further explains that a key component towards Jewish acceptance in Southern life was their relatively small numbers in the region which posed little threat to Southern whites unlike the conflict between Jews and white Christians in the North. While antisemitism was certainly present in the minds of Southern whites, Rogoff argues that "their positive experiences with local Jews created cognitive confusion, and they sought to make racial sense of their discomfiture." White Southerners thus separated the identity of Jews in the South from Jews in the North. The two groups were regarded as completely different as they hailed from different lands and only had their religion in

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<sup>27</sup> Weissbach, "Eastern European Immigrants and the Image of Jews in the Small-Town South," 126.

<sup>28</sup> Leonard Rogoff, "Is the Jew White? The Racial Place of the Southern Jew," in *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, ed. Mark Bauman (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 419-420.

<sup>29</sup> Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 398.

common.<sup>30</sup> Ultimately, Rogoff explains how white Southerners reconciled growing national antisemitism in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with their generally positive encounters with the small number of Jews that lived alongside them.

Research into the experience of southern Jews has generally focused on larger Jewish communities, typically within the South's cities. Scholars such as Weissbach and Schmier have worked to promote the inclusion of narratives from communities in smaller Southern towns which was argued to have been notably different than the experiences of Jews in larger cities. This paper's research into the development of Jewish communities in Lexington and Athens contributes to this growth in literature on the histories of small-town Jews in the South as both communities have been notably understudied. The role of race and identity is central to understanding the experiences of southern Jews in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This paper contributes to scholarship on race by examining its role in the discussion of Jews through the Southern press. It argues that Southern newspapers illustrated a growing interest in understanding Jewish culture and religion. Local papers also became a frequent medium where contributors defended Jews from predatory attacks whenever they occurred, reflecting growing respect for the Jewish community.

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<sup>30</sup> Rogoff, "Is the Jew White?" 403 & 416-417.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE RISE OF TWO JEWISH COMMUNITIES

The first Jews to call Athens their home arrived in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. Moses Myers and his wife, Bertha Myers, arrived some time before March of 1859 and established a millinery establishment on College Avenue in downtown Athens.<sup>31</sup> Myers did not serve in the Confederate military due to a sore he developed on his leg, which led him to walk around town with crutches. Some local boys such as Luche McCleskey and Tinny Rucker believed that Myers purposefully avoided service, claiming “he rubbed his leg with a brick to keep it sore.” They frequently “yelled ‘Bricks’ at him whenever he appeared on the street.”<sup>32</sup> Augustus Longstreet Hull, in his *Annals of Athens, Georgia*, seemed sympathetic to Myers’s position and did not blame him for avoiding the war, believing it was not his fight likely due to his very recent arrival to the United States. Hull commented that while Biblical Jews were “a warlike people their modern descendants are not inclined to war.” After the war ended and Myers’s leg healed, Hull commented on his good character and said that “...he became one of our best citizens. He was an honest man, reliable in his dealings, [and] faithful to his contracts...”<sup>33</sup> Seemingly Myers’s legacy extended well beyond his injury as he was remembered for being a respectable businessman.

The only other Jew living in Athens by the beginning of the war was Gabriel Jacobs. Hull’s account of Jacobs only recalled that he made hats for the Confederate army, including one

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<sup>31</sup> Moses Kaufman, “New Millinery Establishment,” *Southern Watchman*, March 31, 1859.

<sup>32</sup> Augustus Longstreet Hull, *Annals of Athens Georgia, 1801-1901* (Athens, GA: Banner Job Office, 1906), 385-386, accessed March 10, 2024, [https://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/id:dlg\\_zlgb\\_gb0145](https://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/id:dlg_zlgb_gb0145).

<sup>33</sup> Hull, *Annals of Athens Georgia*, 386.

for Hull himself which he praised as the “nattiest, jauntiest cap a soldier ever wore.”<sup>34</sup> One of his obituaries in 1896 remarked that he had “served in the ranks of the confederate army and participated in many bloody engagements” and “His comrades all speak of his war record in terms of high praise.”<sup>35</sup> However, this seemed to be the sole mention of his military service during the war years, and he did not appear in any of the rosters of companies from Athens, calling into question whether he actually fought in the war or if this was a reporting error.<sup>36</sup> Caspar Morris, a Jewish man who moved to Athens shortly after the war, was likely the only one of Athens’ Jews to physically fight in the war. He enlisted in the 16th Georgia Infantry Regiment and fought for most of the war.<sup>37</sup>

After the Civil War concluded, Athens’ Jewish community began to grow slowly as new Jewish families began settling in the town. Several members of the Stern family arrived just after the war. Hull recalled an early memory of Myer Stern shortly after his arrival in Athens when he was met by the Ku Klux Klan while he was peddling on the road. The Klansmen “ordered him to lay down his stock in trade and bring water from a spring while they sat on their horses and told him to hurry up.” Myer adhered to their demands and, whenever he recounted that story to friends and neighbors, he claimed that each rider “drank a full bucket of water.”<sup>38</sup> Around this time Charles Stern got involved in the Athens business sector. He formed a partnership with Moses Myers under the name of Myers & Stern, though it dissolved by 1869.<sup>39</sup>

The growth of the Jewish community in Athens was signaled by the beginnings of community worship in the 1870s. In May of 1871, several Jewish families in town rented out a

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<sup>34</sup> Hull, *Annals of Athens Georgia*, 386.

<sup>35</sup> “Mr. Jacob’s Funeral,” *Atlanta Constitution*, January 2, 1896.

<sup>36</sup> Albert L. Mitchell, *Roster of companies furnished by Clarke County, Georgia, to the Confederate Army*, ms1351, Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, The University of Georgia Libraries.

<sup>37</sup> Hull, *Annals of Athens Georgia*, 386-387.

<sup>38</sup> Hull, *Annals of Athens Georgia*, 324-325.

<sup>39</sup> “Notice,” *Southern Watchman*, January 13, 1869.

room above the post office on College Avenue as a place of worship.<sup>40</sup> Just over a year later, the heads of several local Jewish families came together and petitioned for a charter of incorporation to create an official Jewish congregation in Athens. The new organization was named Congregation Children of Israel. Moses Myers, Moses Morris, Gabriel Jacobs, Samuel Kalvarinsky, David Michael, Simon Marks, and Caspar Morris served as its original officers and trustees.<sup>41</sup> The newly established congregation quickly worked towards securing burial grounds for the Jewish dead. In 1873, the congregation purchased land connecting to the Oconee Hill Cemetery where the Jewish community could lay their dead to rest.<sup>42</sup> For some time after its incorporation, the congregation worshipped on Clayton Street.<sup>43</sup> However, by the end of the decade the congregation began efforts to construct its own synagogue building. After purchasing land from Captain Brumby, a committee began gathering contributions to help fund the project.<sup>44</sup> The new synagogue was to be built along Jackson Street with a parsonage for the congregation's rabbi, Dr. Gluck. Clearly by 1880 the congregation had outgrown its temporary synagogue location as the Jewish population of Athens reached around 125 citizens.<sup>45</sup>

The new synagogue was finished in December of 1883 when the building was dedicated by both the new rabbi of Athens, Dr. Levy, and Dr. Levy of Augusta.<sup>46</sup> The Jackson Street synagogue served the Congregation Children of Israel for the next eighty years.<sup>47</sup> The Jewish community continued to grow in the following decades, numbering several hundred members by 1901.<sup>48</sup> Athens became home to a number of Jews from Eastern Europe around this time. For

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<sup>40</sup> "Jewish Worship," *Southern Watchman*, May 31, 1871.

<sup>41</sup> Untitled article concerning Congregation Children of Israel Incorporation, *Southern Watchman*, July 3, 1872.

<sup>42</sup> Bush, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia," 2.

<sup>43</sup> "Church Directory," *Northeast Georgian*, August 11, 1875.

<sup>44</sup> "Jewish Synagogue," *Southern Watchman*, October 21, 1879.

<sup>45</sup> "The New Synagogue," *Athens Banner*, June 15, 1880.

<sup>46</sup> "The Synagogue," *Banner-Watchman*, January 1, 1884.

<sup>47</sup> Bush, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia," 8.

<sup>48</sup> "The Churches of this City," *Athens Daily Banner*, February 10, 1901.

instance, three Russian Jews, Moses Buchwald, Abram Brooks, and Sam Cutler, were granted citizenship in the United States in 1914.<sup>49</sup> That same year, the Jewish congregation in Athens split into two congregations. While Congregation Children of Israel continued to practice in the Reform style, the newly formed congregation under M. G. Michael practiced more conservatively under the name Adath Moshe.<sup>50</sup> However, as Steven Bush noted in his research on Athens' Jewry, records of Adath Moshe end in 1916. M. G. Michael was named the president of Children of Israel in 1920.<sup>51</sup> Thus, by 1920 Athens' Jewish citizens had once again reunited under one congregation and worshipped together.

The early history of Lexington, Kentucky's Jewish community began with the arrival of Benjamin Gratz, brother of the famed philanthropist Rebecca Gratz, in 1819. Gratz was regarded as a veteran of the War of 1812, a close friend of Henry Clay, and was ultimately a highly renowned citizen of Lexington.<sup>52</sup> Despite being Jewish, however, Gratz did not regularly practice his faith. Both of his marriages were with Christian women and when Lexington's Jews formed a burial society in the 1870s, Gratz did not join as a member.<sup>53</sup> It was not until after the Civil War when Jews began to move to Lexington in larger numbers that families such as the Loevenharts, Speyers, Davids, Millers, and Strauses arrived.<sup>54</sup> By 1867, several of these families were already operating successful businesses in downtown Lexington. Benjamin Loevenhart opened his own clothing store and Louis Straus dealt in clothing and furnishing goods.<sup>55</sup> Moses Kaufman joined

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<sup>49</sup> "Naturalized," *Athens Banner*, April 14, 1914.

<sup>50</sup> "Adath Moshe Synagogue Celebrates First Anniversary Most Fittingly," *Weekly Banner*, April 2, 1915.

<sup>51</sup> Bush, "The Jewish Community in Athens, Georgia," 4.

<sup>52</sup> "Jewish Citizens Play Prominent Part in All Affairs of City," *Lexington Herald*, April 15, 1917.

<sup>53</sup> "Lexington, Kentucky's Jewish History: Why It Matters," pamphlet by Lee Shai Weissbach, Box 10, Folder 4, Temple Adath Israel records.

<sup>54</sup> "Jewish Citizens Play Prominent Part in All Affairs of City," *Lexington Herald*, April 15, 1917.

<sup>55</sup> Alexander Maydwell Jr., *Maydwell's Lexington City Directory for 1867* (Cincinnati, OH: Miami Printing and Publishing Co., 1867), 101 & 132.

this wave of Jewish families with his arrival in 1867 from Cincinnati, setting up his first business shortly thereafter.<sup>56</sup>

The first communal action undertaken by Jews in Lexington was to create a burial organization in 1872. This decision was prompted by the significant growth of the Jewish community over the prior decade, numbering twenty families by 1872. Under the Spinoza Society, named after the famed 17<sup>th</sup> century philosopher Baruch Spinoza, Jewish burials could finally occur within Lexington. Up until this point, Jews who died had to be transported to either Louisville or Cincinnati to have a proper Jewish burial performed.<sup>57</sup> The society initially purchased an acre of land in the countryside on August 11, 1872, about three and a half miles from the city itself. This decision proved to be a mistake in the years following due to the significant distance between Lexington and the burial grounds. Winter conditions made the road impassable at times, and hard to care for and supervise the grounds. It took twelve years for the Spinoza Society to find and purchase a new burial ground. In 1884, the organization purchased an acre from the Lexington Cemetery Company and thereafter relocated the remains of Jews from the old grounds to the new. Over the previous twelve-year span, thirty bodies had been buried in the old Jewish cemetery.<sup>58</sup>

The formation of an official Jewish congregation did not come about until 1904. Throughout the previous decades, Lexington's Jews gathered only for special occasions such as Jewish holidays and did so in temporary meeting rooms. In 1903, Jewish families throughout town came together at the Phoenix Union Lodge where they began the process of organizing a congregation under the name Adath Israel. The earliest religious services of the congregation

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<sup>56</sup> *Reminiscences: Part Two* by Moses Kaufman, September 1922, Box 11, Folder 9, Temple Adath Israel records.

<sup>57</sup> "Beautiful City of the Jewish Dead" - *Lexington Herald* newspaper clipping, Moses Kaufman papers, 1874-1924, 87m49, University of Kentucky Special Collections Research Center.

<sup>58</sup> Untitled article concerning establishment of Spinoza Society - newspaper clipping, Moses Kaufman papers.

were conducted by Rabbi Zepin from Cincinnati. The congregation then began to meet at the Odd Fellows Hall under the leadership of Rabbi Mannheimer of Nashville usually every other Sunday. By January of 1904, the congregation decided to hire Rabbi Goldenson who had been studying at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and continued the biweekly visits. He was shortly afterwards hired permanently as a resident minister. On January 24, the congregation's by-laws were adopted, signaling the formal establishment of Lexington's first Jewish congregation.<sup>59</sup>

Adath Israel continued to meet at the Odd Fellows Hall for six more months until an opportunity to rent out a church on Maryland Avenue appeared in the summer of 1904. In 1905, the congregation fully purchased the building after successful fundraising.<sup>60</sup> The congregation reached 52 members by 1908 with some coming in from neighboring towns to worship. Due to continued growth over the following decade, Adath Israel outgrew the Maryland Avenue Temple. The construction of a new synagogue on Ashland Avenue began which opened in 1926.<sup>61</sup> The growth of the Jewish community in Lexington was partially due to the arrival of Eastern European Jews to the city which eventually demanded the creation of an Orthodox congregation. By 1911, Orthodox Jews in Lexington had taken to renting out the Odd Fellows Hall and meeting regularly before formally establishing the Ohavay Zion congregation in 1912. Similarly to Adath Israel, Ohavay Zion's first permanent synagogue building was a church on Maxwell Street which began services in 1914.<sup>62</sup> Weissbach's discussion of Ohavay Zion in *The Synagogues of Kentucky* noted that the community eventually shifted from Orthodox to

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<sup>59</sup> "Our History" manuscript, 1-2, Box 10, Folder 2, Temple Adath Israel records.

<sup>60</sup> "Our History" manuscript, 3, Box 10, Folder 2, Temple Adath Israel Records.

<sup>61</sup> "Our History" manuscript, 3 & 6, Box 10, Folder 2, Temple Adath Israel Records.

<sup>62</sup> Weissbach, *The Synagogues of Kentucky*, 25-27.

Conservative Judaism.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, unlike Adath Moshe in Athens, Ohavay Zion became a permanent congregation that still worships in Lexington today.

Demographically, Athens and Lexington were both small but growing cities in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1870, around the time that Jews began to settle in the town in significant numbers, Athens was home to nearly 4,000 people. Combined with the other towns throughout Clarke County, the total population was just over 11,000 with a roughly equal number of white and black citizens.<sup>64</sup> Lexington was a significantly larger town than Athens with a total population of around 17,000, with Fayette County as a whole boasting 26,000 people.<sup>65</sup> Despite the difference in size between the two towns, both witnessed very similar growth of their Jewish populations. In 1878, Lexington's Jews numbered 140 while Athens was home to 110. By 1918, Lexington's Jewish population had grown to 385 while Athens trailed not far behind with 340. As Athens' total population was 16,748 and Lexington's was 41,534 during 1920, Jews in Athens made up roughly 2% of the total population while Lexington's Jews were .93%. Though both communities had reached considerable size by 1920, they still only made up a very small section of the population in their respective towns.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Weissbach, *The Synagogues of Kentucky*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Jackson Woofter, *The Negroes of Athens, Georgia* (Athens, GA: 1913), 6.

<sup>65</sup> George Washington Ranck, *History of Lexington, Kentucky* (Cincinnati, OH: R. Clarke & Co., 1872), 404.

<sup>66</sup> Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America*, 339-340.

## CHAPTER 3

### JEWISH-CHRISTIAN ENCOUNTERS

The relationship between southern Jews and their Christian neighbors can be seen through a variety of areas in everyday life. Jewish businesses were likely the most frequent point of interaction between the two groups as newly arrived Jewish families often quickly set up stores or set out on the road as peddlers. As Jews became a part of the local community, they also received much more attention in the local newspapers. These papers were not only a place where Jewish businesses could advertise their wares, but also where Christian editors educated their readers on Jewish customs and synagogue affairs. Jews in both Athens and Lexington also became involved in local clubs and fraternal organizations by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, exemplifying both tolerance towards Jews by Christian whites and the involvement of Jews in local politics and philanthropy. Lastly, the proximity of Jewish families and white families in terms of the homes, businesses, and their burial grounds all reflected mutual respect and tolerance.

Jewish businesses in Athens were a common sight throughout downtown by the late 1880s. Moses Myers by that time had been one of the city's oldest merchants and operated a number of different businesses throughout his years. He started a millinery establishment in 1859 and another firm in partnership with Charles Stern which dissolved in 1869.<sup>67</sup> Shortly afterwards, Myers joined with many of Athens' businessmen and established the Athens Mutual Loan

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<sup>67</sup> "New Millinery Establishment," *Southern Watchman*, March 31, 1859; "Notice," *Southern Watchman*, January 13, 1869.

Association to assist local businesses with their expansion.<sup>68</sup> By the mid-1870s, Myers expanded his millinery into a dry goods emporium. In 1875, advertisements of Moses Myers's dry goods store referenced a recent expansion of his storeroom and increase in his stock, reflecting the growth of his business over the previous years.<sup>69</sup> By the early 1880s, Myers had developed a reputation around Athens as one of its most successful merchants. Shortly after Myers left for New York City to acquire goods for his business in 1882, the *Southern Banner* stated that he was "one of the best merchants in Athens" and that he "catered to the many customers who come from all over Northeast Georgia, and it is acknowledged that in taste and ability to please the public, Mr. Myers cannot be excelled."<sup>70</sup> Praise for Myers and his role as one of Athens' top businessmen was frequent in local papers as reporters stopped by Myers's store to speak with him and compliment his wares.<sup>71</sup>

Moses Myers was heavily involved in nearly all the affairs of the Athens business community. In 1886, he helped to establish the Athens Savings Bank and was elected to serve as its vice-president, a position he held until his death ten years later.<sup>72</sup> Fellow Jewish merchant Myer Stern also served on the bank's board of directors alongside Myers.<sup>73</sup> In 1888, alongside Stern and a number of other merchants, Myers helped to establish the Classic City Building and Loan Association.<sup>74</sup> Just three years later, he and others founded the Athens Leather Manufacturing Company which planned to manufacture shoes, harnesses, and other leather goods.<sup>75</sup> In 1892, the look of downtown Athens began to shift as three story brick businesses rose in popularity. After seeing neighboring merchants constructing these new buildings, Myers

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<sup>68</sup> "New Advertisements," *Southern Watchman*, July 2, 1869.

<sup>69</sup> "College Avenue Dry Goods Emporium!" *Southern Watchman*, November 17, 1875.

<sup>70</sup> "Gone to Market," *Southern Weekly Banner*, February 21, 1882.

<sup>71</sup> "M. Myers & CO.," *Banner-Watchman*, September 19, 1882.

<sup>72</sup> "At Rest – Mr. Moses Myers Pays Nature's Last Debt," *Weekly Banner*, May 29, 1896.

<sup>73</sup> "Their Annual Meeting – New Officers Elected for the Savings Bank," *Weekly Banner*, July 12, 1892.

<sup>74</sup> "Charter," *Weekly Banner-Watchman*, May 22, 1888.

<sup>75</sup> "Georgia, Clarke County," *Weekly Banner*, May 12, 1891.

began to build his own on College Avenue as his business continued to grow and demanded more room for its operations.<sup>76</sup> Soon afterwards, the Board of Trade of Athens was established with Moses Myers as one of its first members.<sup>77</sup> By the time of his death in 1896, the *Athens Banner* described him as one of “Athens’ most prominent and most respected citizens” and commented on his position as one of the Jewish community’s leading members.<sup>78</sup>

Moses Myers was certainly one of the most involved Jews in Athens’ business scene, but many other Jews owned and operated their own companies throughout town. Joseph Jacobs, the son of Gabriel Jacobs, ran the Athens Pharmaceutical Company on the corner of Clayton Street and College Avenue before later moving his business to Atlanta.<sup>79</sup> Solomon Flatau began a brokerage company on East Clayton Street in the late 1880s with his brother Lee under the name Flatau Brothers.<sup>80</sup> Simon Hirschfield and George Blumenthal ran a dry goods store on East Broad Street while Maurice Jankower dealt in furniture on East Clayton.<sup>81</sup> Charles Morris’s shop sold clothes, hats, and furnishings and Michael Bros, run by M. G. and Simon Michael, operated a dry goods store on East Broad.<sup>82</sup> After Moses Myers’s death, Myer Stern took over his position as V.P. of the Athens Savings Bank and M. G. Michael joined the bank on its board of directors.<sup>83</sup> Altogether, Jewish businesses were a common sight in Athens by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially dominating the dry goods and clothing sectors.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Here’s Another – Mr. Moses Myers will Build at Once,” *Weekly Banner*, February 23, 1892.

<sup>77</sup> “Board of Trade,” *Weekly Banner*, January 17, 1893.

<sup>78</sup> “At Rest – Mr. Moses Myers Pays Nature’s Last Debt,” *Weekly Banner*, May 29, 1896.

<sup>79</sup> “Athens Pharmaceutical Co.,” *Weekly Banner*, August 3, 1880.

<sup>80</sup> *Athens City Directory [1889]* (Athens, GA: M. C. Pope & Co., 1889), 97.

<sup>81</sup> *Athens City Directory [1889]*, 110 & 142.

<sup>82</sup> *Athens City Directory [1889]*, 134-135; “Michael Bros.,” *Athens Daily Banner*, November 3, 1894; “Charles Morris, Clothier, Hatter, and Furnisher,” *Athens Daily Banner*, November 3, 1894.

<sup>83</sup> “The Savings Bank,” *Athens Daily Banner*, July 9, 1896.

<sup>84</sup> Of the eleven clothing stores listed in Athens in 1897, seven were owned by Jewish businessmen. Both dry goods businesses were run by Jewish citizens as well. *Athens City Directory for 1897-1898* (Athens, GA: W. G. & M. E. R. Finney, 1897), 150 & 152.

Similarly in Lexington, Kentucky, Jews were heavily involved in the commercial interests of the city. When Moses Kaufman arrived in Lexington in 1867, he did so with the interest of quickly establishing a business with support from his uncles in Cincinnati under the firm I. P. Strauss & Bro. Throughout his life in Lexington, he operated several firms such as M. Kaufman & Co., Kaufman, Berkley, & Wilson Co., and ultimately the Kaufman Clothing Company which all specialized in men's clothing.<sup>85</sup> As discussed previously, by the time of Kaufman's arrival in Lexington the only major Jewish business in the city was Benjamin Loevenhart's men's clothing store which was shortly thereafter passed on to his son, Henry.<sup>86</sup> Arriving the same year as Kaufman, Jacob Speyer initially worked as an auctioneer throughout the region before later shifting focus towards the sale of hide, fur, and wool alongside his brother Julius under the firm Speyer Brothers. Speyer and his family ran this company for the rest of his life, and he eventually served as a director of the Phoenix and Third National Bank of Lexington.<sup>87</sup>

Eventually Lexington became the home of many successful Jewish merchants who entered a variety of different sectors. Simon Weil and his sons managed large cattle-dealing firms and owned farms across several counties as well as land in Canada and Mississippi. Simon Wolf and Dolph Wile, under Wolf, Wile & Co., operated what the *Lexington Herald* described as one of the largest dry goods stores in Kentucky. Beyond his dry goods business, Wolf also was a director of the First and City National Bank and served on the Board of Commerce. Jews in Lexington were not only active as merchants, but several Jewish men began work in different professions by the 1910s. Dr. Joseph Davis practiced medicine and was a member of the Board

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<sup>85</sup> Untitled newspaper clipping from ~1904 concerning Kaufman's political and business history, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>86</sup> "Jewish Citizens Play Prominent Part in All Affairs of City," *Lexington Herald*, April 15, 1917.

<sup>87</sup> William Connelley and E. M. Coulter, *History of Kentucky*, ed. Charles Kerr, vol. 4 (New York: The American Historical Society, 1922), 145.

of Health while Harry and Jesse Miller worked as attorneys. Additionally, Philip Blumenthal was a chemist at the University of Kentucky and Leon Frankel as an engineering professor.<sup>88</sup>

Altogether, the Jews of Lexington throughout this period were not only highly successful merchants, but they became progressively more involved in other professions.

Lexington's Jewish merchants and many other local businessowners were members of Lexington's Commercial Club. Moses Kaufman, as one of the city's most successful business owners, was a prominent member of the organization. As a part of their annual banquet, Kaufman was invited to speak on the state of Lexington's business community in 1914.<sup>89</sup> In his speech, Kaufman complimented the great transformation of the city over the previous fifteen years from what he described as "an ordinary country town" while in 1914 there were "not many cities that [could] boast of handsomer show-windows and finer store rooms." He believed that it was important to continue this growth and stressed the construction of more interurban railroad lines that could connect nearby towns with Lexington as the center of commerce. While Kaufman was the only Jewish merchant invited to speak at the club's banquet, his speech illustrated both the respect that Lexington's business community felt towards him as well as his interest in the city's commercial interests.<sup>90</sup>

A sign of tolerance towards Jews was their physical proximity to white Christians. Not only were Jewish businesses a frequent point of interaction between the two groups, but Jewish settlers often lived alongside Christian neighbors. The Jewish dead, though having their own dedicated burial sections operated by their congregations, were similarly entombed in close proximity to white Christians. Lexington's Jews, through the Spinoza Society, purchased an acre of land from the Lexington Cemetery Company in 1885 which was described by a *Herald*

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<sup>88</sup> "Jewish Citizens Play Prominent Part in All Affairs of City," *Lexington Herald*, April 15, 1917.

<sup>89</sup> "The Commercial Club Annual Banquet – 1914," pamphlet, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>90</sup> Moses Kaufman, untitled speech manuscript, Moses Kaufman papers.

reporter as on the slope of a hill and “one of the most beautiful spots in the [cemetery].”<sup>91</sup>

Athens’ Jews were buried on a plot purchased from the Athens Manufacturing Company in 1873 in the northeastern corner of the Oconee Hill Cemetery atop a hill. This starkly contrasts with sections for poor and black burials in the older parts of the cemetery which were positioned on much lower elevation, closer to the Oconee River.<sup>92</sup> Ultimately Jews in both cities lived next door to white Christians in their community and rested alongside them as well after death.

Another point of encounter between Jews and Christians were through local newspapers in both Athens and Lexington which discussed their cities’ Jewish communities. Frequently, newspapers published articles that explained Jewish holidays to their city’s Christian population. As Louis Schmier noted in his research on Valdosta, Georgia’s Jewish community, Christians were very unfamiliar with Jews. Christians were largely ignorant of Jewish beliefs and customs, and sometimes turned to old stereotypes and stories regarding Jews to give them some level of understanding of their new neighbors.<sup>93</sup> The local press served as an instrument to help bridge that gap in understanding between Jews and Christians. Moses Kaufman himself wrote articles for the local newspapers which explained Jewish holidays such as Hanukkah and Passover. Kaufman’s articles read as letters to Christians in Lexington and showcased connections between the two faiths. For instance, in an article explaining Hanukkah, Kaufman told the story of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire as context for a familiar subject to Christians: the birth of Jesus. Emphasizing that Jesus was a Jew, Kaufman commented that without the Maccabees there would have been no Jews left in Judea by the time of Jesus’s birth.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> “Beautiful City of the Jewish Dead” - *Lexington Herald* newspaper clipping, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>92</sup> Charlotte Thomas Marshall, *Oconee Hill Cemetery of Athens, Georgia*, vol. 1 (Athens, GA: Athens Historical Society, 2009), 430-431.

<sup>93</sup> Schmier, *Chant of Ages; Cry of Cotton*, 108-109.

<sup>94</sup> Moses Kaufman, “Hanukah – The Feast of Dedication (John:22): Christmas,” newspaper clipping, January 5, 1922, Moses Kaufman papers.

Newspapers in Athens likewise worked to understand Jewish customs and educate fellow Christians on the matter. Many of these articles offered brief explanations of the backgrounds of each Jewish holiday while also conveying important information that Christians should know regarding their Jewish neighbors. For instance, in its discussion of Passover the *Southern Watchman* explained that “No leavened bread is allowed in the [Jewish] household during the continuance of this season, and religious services are held daily.”<sup>95</sup> In 1873, the year after that article was printed, reporters for the *Northeast Georgian* expressed their gratitude towards Gabriel Jacobs for sharing some of the unleavened bread with them as they wrote to their audience about the Jewish Passover.<sup>96</sup> Another frequent mention in these newspaper articles was the state of Jewish businesses during their holidays. Due to the close association between Jews and local commerce, most articles made sure to mention when Jewish stores would close on a holiday.<sup>97</sup>

Christian newspapers both defended Jews, speaking highly of their character, and showed how Christians still saw Jews as inherently different from themselves. Anton Hieke described this stance by many newspapers as illustrating the view that Jews were “integrated outsiders.” Hieke’s assessment of media concerning Jews in the Reconstruction era was that its philosemitism was tainted due to this line of separation. Jews were often successful at integrating into Christian communities but they were ultimately not the same as Christians.<sup>98</sup> In a *Southern Watchman* article from 1879, the writer commented, “The Jews now form an important element in our population, are good law-abiding citizens, and we trust our people will contribute liberally

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<sup>95</sup> “Jewish Passover,” *Southern Watchman*, April 3, 1872.

<sup>96</sup> “The Passover,” *Northeast Georgian*, April 18, 1873.

<sup>97</sup> “Jewish New Year,” *Northeast Georgian*, October 3, 1873.

<sup>98</sup> Anton Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South: Ambivalence and Adaptation* (Boston, MA: De Gruyter, 2013), 121-123.

towards assisting them in the erection of a house of worship.”<sup>99</sup> Likewise, in 1904, the *Clarke County Courier* praised Jewish charity and commented, “There are as many as noble, true-hearted people among this class as ever lived, and Athens takes the lead. Our city should be congratulated [for] the splendid class of Jewish citizenry within her borders.”<sup>100</sup> Despite 25 years having passed between the two articles, Jews were still seen as a different group of people from the rest of white, Christian society. However, both still illustrate a positive view of Jewish community members as they were described as “good law-abiding citizens” and “true-hearted people.” The language used in the *Courier* article shows a level of pride regarding Athens’ Jews and a developing association between the rest of the city and its Jewish population.

Not only did local newspapers simply refer to local Jews as upstanding members of the community, they also often served as a defense against attacks targeting Jews. In its coverage of a fight that broke out between a Jewish man and an Irishman, one paper described the Jewish man as a “sheeny.” Shortly afterwards, the *Athens Weekly Banner* responded to the outrage of its “Israelite friends” and denounced the insult. The paper explained that the term was “used by all the enemies and slanderers of the race as an epithet of contempt.”<sup>101</sup> Not only did the press call out public insults toward Jews, but local newspapers were also a space where articles discouraging antisemitism were published. An 1884 fictional article in the *Weekly Banner-Watchman* described an argument between a boy and a groceryman concerning Jews. The groceryman criticized the boy for hanging out with a Jewish boy and echoed stereotypical views of Jews as being dishonest in business and Christ-killers. The boy, successfully rebutting each of the grocer’s claims, ultimately left the man “thinking what [a] fool he had made of himself” as he

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<sup>99</sup> “Jewish Synagogue,” *Southern Watchman*, October 21, 1879.

<sup>100</sup> “Items of Interest,” *Clarke County Courier*, November 18, 1904.

<sup>101</sup> “An Insult,” *Athens Weekly Banner*, July 29, 1890.

lost the argument.<sup>102</sup> Articles such as this countered Jewish stereotypes and promoted the image of Jews as a good and respectable people.

Southern Jews were frequently involved in local politics and occasionally commented on larger national and international affairs that directly affected other Jews. Moses Kaufman of Lexington, who was perhaps an extreme example of Jewish political involvement, served the city of Lexington in several positions over the years. He was first elected to serve on the Lexington City Council in 1879, and he remained on it until 1895, serving nearly every year in between. At the same time, fellow Jewish Lexingtonian Louis Strauss was elected to the Board of Alderman. Remarkably, both Strauss and Kaufman served as the presidents of their respective boards at the same time during these years. After Kaufman's tenure, other Jews worked on the city council such as I. J. Miller and Fred Lazarus. During his tenure on the city council, Kaufman even served as Lexington's acting mayor for a time. Kaufman afterwards served a single term in the state legislature representing the city of Lexington and was the sole Jewish member.<sup>103</sup> After completing his term, Kaufman served the city as its treasurer for four years then as city auditor for another eight. Throughout those years Kaufman was also an active member of Lexington's Democratic committee, acting as the chairman of both the city and county committees. Rewarding his years on the Democratic committee, Kaufman was appointed postmaster of Lexington by President Woodrow Wilson, and he remained in that vaunted position nine more years until his retirement in 1924.<sup>104</sup> While Jews in Athens were also involved in city government, their political experience was limited in comparison. Moses Myers served a term as an alderman from Athens' fourth ward and Moses Morris represented the third ward for several

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<sup>102</sup> "The Bad Boy," *Banner-Watchman*, April 8, 1884.

<sup>103</sup> "Jewish Americans Honored by the People," *American Israelite*, January 5, 1905, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>104</sup> "Active, Useful Life of Moses Kaufman Ends," *Lexington Herald*, October 11, 1924.

years until his death in 1908.<sup>105</sup> Beyond serving positions as aldermen, one of the only other Jews in Athens to serve the city politically was Moses G. Michael who was a member of the Democratic Executive Committee of Clarke County. He also was appointed as Lieutenant Colonel and Aide de Camp on Governor Allen Candler's staff.<sup>106</sup>

Local Jews in Athens and Lexington were both heavily concerned with international affairs concerning Jews. When Alfred Dreyfus was accused of treason against the French government, Athens' Jews followed the case closely. Reporters for the *Weekly Banner* met with a number of Jewish citizens concerning the case and were surprised with how well informed each of them were concerning the case as compared to the Christian population which was fairly ignorant of its proceedings. Each Jew the *Weekly Banner* interviewed expressed a unanimous sense of Dreyfus's innocence and hoped for justice.<sup>107</sup> As conditions for Jews in Eastern Europe worsened at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Athens' Jews again voiced their concerns. Jewish citizens led by M. G. Michael began fundraising to support Jews in Russia, actively soliciting donations from Jews and non-Jews alike.<sup>108</sup> Similarly when World War I erupted in Europe, Jews from the Adath Moshe congregation organized efforts to aid civilians who had been affected by the war with M. G. Michael leading the charity drive.<sup>109</sup>

Domestically, Jews also shared interests in local and national affairs. Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, during yellow fever outbreaks, Athens' Jews were quick to provide charity for those affected. When outbreaks hit Shreveport and Memphis in 1873, the newly established Jewish congregation collected \$20.00, a little over \$500.00 today, to donate alongside other groups from

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<sup>105</sup> "At Rest – Mr. Moses Myers Pays Nature's Last Debt," *Weekly Banner*, May 29, 1896; "The Resolutions of the Committee – Honoring the Memory of the Late Mr. Moses Morris," *Athens Banner*, November 1, 1908.

<sup>106</sup> "History of Michael Bros. Is Portion of History of Athens," *Weekly Banner*, September 5, 1902.

<sup>107</sup> "Athens Jews are United," *Weekly Banner*, September 9, 1898.

<sup>108</sup> "Athenians to Aid the Jews of Russia," *Weekly Banner*, December 8, 1905.

<sup>109</sup> "Adath Moshe Congregation Gives Aid to War Sufferers," *Athens Daily Herald*, January 1, 1916.

Athens.<sup>110</sup> Twenty years later when another outbreak affected Brunswick, Georgia, the Jewish community alone was able to muster about \$90.00 as well as food and clothing.<sup>111</sup> By the start of the 20th century, Jews in Georgia had begun to receive more attention from government officials and the Democratic Party. This became evident in the 1904 Democratic primary in Georgia as party members debated when to schedule the state primary. As one representative pushed for the primary to be held on a Saturday to benefit farmers, another representative, Clarke Howell, argued in opposition. He believed that this would “deprive a large element of the Jewish population of their chance to vote.” Ultimately, the decision was made to schedule the primary on a different day since otherwise “the present would be bad as hundreds of Democrats would be disfranchised.”<sup>112</sup> Jews throughout the state, despite their small numbers, were seen as important enough members of the state’s Democratic Party to warrant considering the Jewish sabbath as a factor in determining a primary date.

Moses Kaufman was certainly the most outspoken Jewish man in Lexington when concerning the politics of his day. When efforts to ban the Sunday showings of films became an issue in 1918, Kaufman voiced his opposition in the *Lexington Herald*. Kaufman boldly asked clergymen, “[Is it] the same age-old cry of making others conform to your way of thinking – of forcing your views and opinions on others – upon the narrow-minded contention that [the clergymen] alone are in the right and all those who differ with them in the wrong.” Kaufman argued that the clergy’s main reasoning for this ban was that they believed Sunday movies violated the sabbath or prevented some people from attending Church, to which he accused them of trying to “fill the churches by coercion.” Ultimately, Kaufman’s position rested on the idea that it should be up to individuals rather than religious leaders to decide what is best for them,

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<sup>110</sup> “Aid for the Stricken Cities,” *Southern Watchman*, October 15, 1873.

<sup>111</sup> “Never Behind – When it Comes to Doing Good Works,” *Weekly Banner*, October 3, 1893.

<sup>112</sup> “April 20<sup>th</sup> is Named as Date for Primary,” *Athens Banner*, March 1, 1904.

especially after a week of tiring work which left Sundays as one of the few opportunities for people to relax.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Kaufman argued against prohibition, despite rarely touching alcohol himself, because he objected to having other's views forced upon him. Most of his explanations for this position centered around either the economic impact that prohibition would have throughout Kentucky or his view that the Bible did not object to the drinking of alcohol but instead commanded it.<sup>114</sup> Throughout many of his interactions and debates with Christians in Lexington, Kaufman frequently used the Bible to reinforce his own arguments.

Perhaps a more frequent point of contact between Christians and Jews in these towns was through a variety of fraternal organizations, religious groups, and the local colleges and universities. For instance, Kaufman was a frequent guest speaker at today's University of Kentucky and Transylvania University. Sometime around the turn of the century, he was observed to have "delivered occasional lectures on Jewish history before the history class of the Hamilton College, and spoke on other occasions from the Jewish standpoint."<sup>115</sup> Professors from the University of Kentucky frequently invited him to their classes to discuss "questions pertaining to the Jews... on civic problems."<sup>116</sup> One of the local universities' faculty clubs even invited Kaufman to speak in front of them. He suggested that he would be happy to talk about the history of the Jews since universities tended to exclusively discuss ancient history regarding Rome and Greece.<sup>117</sup> Kaufman had a long relationship with the University of Kentucky dating back to his time on the city council. He helped his friend, the first president of the University of Kentucky, James K. Patterson, in securing the university's present position in the city. Despite

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<sup>113</sup> "To Close or Not to Close, Is Question," *Lexington Herald*, July 7, 1918.

<sup>114</sup> Pamphlet on local option by Moses Kaufman, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>115</sup> Hamilton College was originally a women's school in Lexington which was later operated by Transylvania University. See "Jewish Americans Honored by the People," *American Israelite*, January 5, 1905, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>116</sup> "A Reply to Henry Ford," newspaper clipping, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>117</sup> Letter by Moses Kaufman to an unknown professor concerning Kaufman coming to speak to a faculty club on Jewish history, Moses Kaufman papers.

opposition within the council, Kaufman managed to pass resolutions to grant land to the University of Kentucky as well as \$30,000 of funding from the city of Lexington. As mentioned previously, there were three Jewish men working for the university as professors by 1905.<sup>118</sup> The University of Georgia likewise maintained a relationship with the local Jewish population. Around 1907, Rabbi Koplowitz of the Congregation Children of Israel was employed to teach a Hebrew course for the university, though low attendance and Koplowitz's busy schedule seemed to prevent him from teaching it for an extended period. A committee of local Jews including Koplowitz, M. G. Michael, and Charles Stern frequently donated books to the university's library in the early 1900s.<sup>119</sup> In 1897, there were six Jewish students out of a student body of 267.<sup>120</sup> M. G. Michael was a graduate of the university, having attended there for four years before becoming a traveling salesman.<sup>121</sup>

When fraternal organizations across the nation exploded in membership throughout the late 1800s, Jews in both Athens and Lexington decided to join. Given how these organizations were dominated by middle-class Protestants, this decision might seem surprising.<sup>122</sup> Jewish immigrants who came from Europe generally had been barred from fraternal and Masonic organizations in their homelands. For many Jews, entrance into fraternal orders in the United States was a social opportunity and served as a "port of entry to civil society" and a "means for general uplift and access to American society."<sup>123</sup> Many of these popular fraternal organizations

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<sup>118</sup> "Jewish Americans Honored by the People," *American Israelite*, January 5, 1905, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>119</sup> "Chancellor Barrow Reports to Trustees," *Weekly Banner*, June 14, 1907.

<sup>120</sup> "The College Statistics," *Athens Daily Banner*, October 8, 1897.

<sup>121</sup> "History of Michael Bros. Is Portion of History of Athens," *Weekly Banner*, September 5, 1902.

<sup>122</sup> Mark Carnes, *Secret Ritual and Manhood in Victorian America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 4-5.

<sup>123</sup> Cornelia Wilhelm, "Unequal Opportunities: The Independent Order B'nai B'rith in Nineteenth-Century Germany and in the United States," in *American Jewry: Transcending the European Experience?* ed. Christian Wiese and Cornelia Wilhelm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 129.

also required their members to be white, enforcing racial separation within their lodges.<sup>124</sup> While not surprising for the period, this policy also shines a light on how Southerners viewed Jews racially around the turn of the century. As the racial position of Jews was frequently up for debate around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, membership of local Jews in these organizations showed that they were largely viewed as white by their neighbors and they desired to socially integrate into the rest of the community.

A number of prominent Jews in Athens were members of fraternal orders, including several of the city's oldest Jewish settlers. For instance, Gabriel Jacobs had been both an Odd Fellow and a Mason during his lifetime.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, Caspar Morris's funeral in 1890 was conducted by one of the local Masonic lodges.<sup>126</sup> Moses Morris showcased a strong interest in joining many of these organizations. In January of 1898, he was elected as the personal secretary of Williams Lodge No. 15 of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows.<sup>127</sup> Later that year, he was elected as the Chief of Records for the Oconee Tribe of Red Men.<sup>128</sup> Among the city's other fraternal orders, Morris also became the regent of the Royal Arcanum, and a member of the St. Elmo Lodge No. 40 of the Knights of Pythias. Beyond Morris, the Knights of Pythias alone had a large group of Jewish members including Solomon Flatau, Lee Flatau, Sam Funkenstein, Emil Gottheimer, M. G. Michael, Simon Michael, Charles Morris, Mendel Morris, and Louis Morris.<sup>129</sup> The Athens Jewish community was very involved in fraternal organizations, even taking up several leadership positions.

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<sup>124</sup> Mary Ann Clawson, *Constructing Brotherhood: Class, Gender, and Fraternalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), 132-133.

<sup>125</sup> "Mr. Gabriel Jacobs," *Weekly Banner*, January 3, 1896.

<sup>126</sup> "Death of Mr. Caspar Morris," *Athens Weekly Banner*, April 29, 1890.

<sup>127</sup> "New Officers Installed," *Athens Daily Banner*, January 12, 1898.

<sup>128</sup> "Officers Chosen," *Weekly Banner*, December 30, 1898.

<sup>129</sup> "St. Elmo Lodge – Knights of Pythias," *Athens Daily Banner*, November 24, 1899; "Arcanum," *Weekly Banner*, December 14, 1906.

Certainly, Lexington's Jews were involved in the city's fraternal orders as well. The Devotion Lodge No. 160 of masons in Lexington was home to numerous Jewish members such as Moses Kaufman, L. J. Loevenhart, Henry Loevenhart, and Maurice Weil.<sup>130</sup> The B'nai B'rith was another popular fraternal organization for Jewish men to join. Originally created after a group of Jewish men were rejected from joining one of New York's masonic lodges in 1843, the B'nai B'rith reflected the secret rituals and regalia of popular groups such as the Masons and Odd Fellows but with an additional "Jewish flavor."<sup>131</sup> Lexington's Jewish community established their own B'nai B'rith lodge in 1887.<sup>132</sup> The organization originally gathered at the Masonic Temple on East Main Street before renting a space at the Odd Fellows' Temple by 1888. Some of its early leaders included Simon Wolfe, I. Shubinski, and Henry Loevenhart.<sup>133</sup> While the B'nai B'rith was not a source of frequent interaction between Jews and Christians, it was a welcoming place for Jewish men to socialize together in addition to the insurance benefits the order offered its members.<sup>134</sup>

Local clubs were yet another space in which Jews and Christians met with one another in a social context. The Ladies Garden Club in Athens was one of the earlier examples of local clubs that included both Jewish and Christian women in Athens. The club was formed in 1892 and its first iteration lasted around eight years. In 1907, the club was reestablished by a number of former members and, by 1910, was flourishing with over one hundred members. Members of the club shared seeds and cuttings with one another as well as held events such as a large flower exhibition in the Fall.<sup>135</sup> Bertha Myers, the wife of Moses Myers, was a longtime member of the

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<sup>130</sup> "In Memoriam – On the Death of Brother Maurice Weil," *Lexington Leader*, July 16, 1917.

<sup>131</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 140.

<sup>132</sup> Untitled list of congregational information, Box 7, Folder 39, Adath Israel Records.

<sup>133</sup> *City Directory of Lexington, KY, 1888* (Lexington, KY: Prather & Snyder, 1888), 9; *Emerson & Dark's Lexington Directory, 1898-9* (Lexington, KY: Emerson & Dark Publishing Co., 1898), 40.

<sup>134</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 140-141.

<sup>135</sup> "The Ladies Garden and Improvement Club," *Athens Banner*, November 3, 1910.

club and joined both iterations of it. She ultimately served as one of the chairmen for the Ladies Garden Club and assisted in organizing the Fall show.<sup>136</sup> Another instance of Jewish and Christian women interacting through social organizations came in 1904. In a meeting of the Athens Woman's Club, one member noticed that the Jewish women of Athens had not been invited to join the club due to an "oversight." The club quickly passed a motion to extend an invitation to the city's Jewish ladies.<sup>137</sup> However, the meeting minutes of the club never mention the presence of another Jewish woman within their ranks until 1912 when Mrs. Max Michael and Mrs. Louie Funkenstein were welcomed to the club. In the years following, other Jews joined the club including Mrs. Esther Morris, Mrs. Simon Michael, Mrs. M. G. Michael, and Mrs. Aaron Cohen.<sup>138</sup> Both the Ladies Garden Club and the Athens Woman's Club's inclusion of local Jewish women showed growing interaction and familiarity between Jewish and Christian women in Athens.

Members of the Jewish community were sometimes invited as guest speakers to several organizations, usually on subjects regarding Judaism or Jewish history. Rabbi Koplowitz evidently was frequently invited to speak to fraternal organizations and other religious groups. While on vacation in North Carolina in 1907, Koplowitz addressed Balsam's Methodist and Baptist Sunday schools as well as the local lodge of Odd Fellows.<sup>139</sup> Later that year, Koplowitz spoke to the Royal Arch Masons of Madison, Georgia on the origins of many masonic symbols in the Talmud and other Jewish literature.<sup>140</sup> Similar to Koplowitz, Lexington's Moses Kaufman was a frequent guest of the city's religious organizations. At the annual convention of

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<sup>136</sup> "It Closes – The Chrysanthemum Show is Over," *Weekly Banner*, November 14, 1893; "Ladies Garden Club Exhibit," *Athens Herald*, March 30, 1922.

<sup>137</sup> Minutes, 1899-1911, 58, Athens Woman's Club collection, Heritage Room, Athens-Clarke County Library, Athens, GA.

<sup>138</sup> Minutes, 1912-1920, 11, 191-193, Athens Woman's Club collection.

<sup>139</sup> "Koplowitz is Preaching," *Weekly Banner*, August 23, 1907.

<sup>140</sup> "Chapter Masons in Madison, GA," *Weekly Banner*, December 6, 1907.

Kentucky's Young Men's Institute in 1904, a Catholic fraternal organization, Kaufman was one of a few non-Catholic speakers. His speech meant to reinforce ties between Catholicism and Judaism, discussing how the two, like a mother and daughter, had feuded for centuries but that had finally come to an end. His speech concluded by celebrating that both Catholic and Jew could now "dwell together in harmony," referencing his own presence amongst an audience of Catholics.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, when he addressed the Knights of Columbus fraternal order, he compared Judaism and Catholicism to a mother and daughter, with Protestant denominations as Judaism's grandchildren. He hoped to further ties between Jews and Catholics, focusing on the many things the two faiths had in common historically.<sup>142</sup> On another instance in 1923, Kaufman spoke at Centenary Methodist Church in Lexington where he detailed the Roman conquest of Jerusalem and the end of Jewish nationhood. The *Lexington Herald* commented that his speech sought to "[deny] that the dispersion of the Jews to the four corners of the earth came as retribution for sin."<sup>143</sup> Ultimately, Kaufman's goals with these speeches were to further deepen bonds and understanding between local Christians and Jews, perhaps indicating anxiety of growing national antisemitism near the end of the progressive era.

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<sup>141</sup> "A Remarkable Incident" - *Catholic Telegraph* newspaper clipping, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>142</sup> Untitled manuscript of a speech by Kaufman given to the Knights of Columbus, Moses Kaufman papers.

<sup>143</sup> "Graphic Picture of Fall of Jerusalem is Draen in Address by Moses Kaufman," *Lexington Herald*, April 29, 1923.

## CONCLUSION:

### THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE IN THE SOUTH

In a span of fifty years, Jewish immigrants who once came to towns like Athens and Lexington in small numbers and worked to build their own businesses became heavily involved in nearly every aspect of small-town life. Some of the earliest arrivals in these communities began their lives in the American South on the road as peddlers, saving money when they could in the hopes of one day opening shop in the small towns dotting the American countryside and starting their own families.<sup>144</sup> This was the experience of some Jewish leaders such as Athens' Gabriel Jacobs and Lexington's Benjamin Loevenhart who turned from peddlers to successful businessmen. Once Jewish families settled down in their new homes, they quickly worked to get involved in different areas of city life, putting them in frequent contact with local Christians. Efforts by Jewish leaders such as Moses Myers and Moses Kaufman to get involved with the larger local business community and city government represented their desire to integrate themselves into their larger communities.

The portrayal of local Jews in newspapers throughout this span of time as upstanding citizens and pillars of the community, while not unique to Lexington and Athens, reflected their importance in the eyes of white Christian Southerners. These articles which commented on neighboring Jews showed admiration for not only Jewish involvement in civic affairs, but also a level of respect for their religious devotion. Moses Myers, for instance, was remembered by the *Weekly Banner* as "one of the most substantial and highly esteemed citizens of Athens" and his faith praised as he "was a firm believer in the rules and doctrines of his religion and observed

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<sup>144</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 99-101.

them with great consistency and firmness of purpose.”<sup>145</sup> As familiarity between Christians and Jews in these communities grew, the language that the local papers used in reference to them also shifted. The earliest articles mentioning Athens’ Jews referred to them as “the Israelites of this place” while later articles frequently said “our Jewish citizens” which illustrated a growing affiliation between the two communities.<sup>146</sup>

Despite the frequent praise of Jews in local papers, they were always discussed as a distinct element of the population. Regardless of the high level of assimilation into Southern white culture that many Jews achieved, they were seen as different than the Christian majority. This reflects Hieke’s view of southern Jews as “integrated outsiders.”<sup>147</sup> As Rogoff states, Jews were happy to adopt the “view of themselves as members of a pure, fixed, uniform white race which had preserved its lineage since antiquity.”<sup>148</sup> Jews were certainly aware of the racial hierarchy when they arrived in the American South. Their heavy involvement in middle class social affairs, especially local fraternal orders, exemplified their desire to associate with white Southerners and clearly portray themselves as respectable civic-minded neighbors. Their willingness to interact with Christians, aided by their small demographic size which did not pose a challenge to Southern whites, helped the Jewish citizens of Athens and Lexington to build good relationships within their new communities.

For a time, the experiences of the Jewish communities in these towns seemed full of tolerance and excitement as Jews had gone from immigrant settlers to leaders not only within their own Jewish congregations, but within their towns as a whole. Antisemitic attacks were relatively infrequent throughout these years and in the few instances where they did flare up,

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<sup>145</sup> “At Rest – Mr. Moses Myers Pays Nature’s Last Debt,” *Weekly Banner*, May 29, 1896.

<sup>146</sup> “Jewish Worship,” *Southern Watchman*, May 31, 1871; “Items of Interest,” *Clarke County Courier*, November 18, 1904.

<sup>147</sup> Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South*, 121-122.

<sup>148</sup> Rogoff, “Is the Jew White?” 398.

they were quickly repudiated.<sup>149</sup> Moses Kaufman's dream of America that he had once written about as "the land where all men are held to be equal and opportunities are greater and where restrictions and oppression are unknown" likely felt true given his own experience in the United States.<sup>150</sup> He had achieved great economic success, witnessed the flourishing growth of Lexington's Jewish community, and rose to local political fame through his service to the city. However, before his death in 1924, Kaufman witnessed massive outbreaks of antisemitic attacks nationwide. The lynching of Leo Frank in 1915 and the subsequent revival of the Ku Klux Klan were clear examples of this. In the final years of his life, Kaufman frequently wrote in Lexington's newspapers concerning this rise in antisemitic thought, particularly defending the Jewish people from attacks made by Henry Ford's *Dearborn Independent*.<sup>151</sup> He diligently worked to refute claims made by Ford's paper, leaning heavily on his knowledge of history and Jewish scripture to publicly dismiss its claims and fight back growing antipathy towards Jews across the nation.

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<sup>149</sup> Hieke, *Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South*, 121.

<sup>150</sup> *Reminiscences: Part One* by Moses Kaufman, May 1921, Temple Adath Israel records.

<sup>151</sup> Moses Kaufman, "Thoughts Suggested by Henry Ford's Bitter Philippic Against the Jews," *Lexington Herald*, July 25, 1920; Moses Kaufman, "A Nation Within a Nation – Intermarriage – The Ghetto," *Lexington Herald*, November 14, 1920.

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