

This Happy Land

THE JEWS OF COLONIAL
AND ANTEBELLUM
CHARLESTON



JAMES WILLIAM HAGY

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HISTORIC CHARLESTON FOUNDATION

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Table 7

The Origins of 83 Jewish Male
Newcomers of Record in Charleston,
1851-1861

Place	Percentage	Number
Poland	35	29
Prussia	29	24
Germany	20	17
England	5	4
Russia	2	2
France	2	2
Bohemia	2	2
West Indies		
(Jamaica)	1	1
Scotland	1	1
Europe	1	1

many of the Sephardic Jews moved away or disappeared while the Ashkenazic element grew larger and changed. Over time, more and more Jews came from Eastern Europe. A group that had once been largely English-speaking immigrants became German or Yiddish speaking, especially after 1840. The Jews of the city, therefore, were never a monolithic group; they probably had as many languages among themselves as the general population had. They also followed various religious traditions and customs. Though most would adapt to southern mores, tensions existed within the community. Very likely, as well, the latecomers found it more difficult than their predecessors to blend into the general white population. Nevertheless, the varied backgrounds of the group produced a colorful history.

COLONIAL AND ANTEBELLUM

**JEWS OF CHARLESTON, LISTED BY
PLACE OF BIRTH (EXCLUDING
SOUTH CAROLINA) AND DATE OF
FIRST RECORD IN SOUTH
CAROLINA**

Only persons to whom a fixed date can be assigned are included in this list.

Algiers

David, Leonie, 1858

At sea

Moses, Rebecca (Phillips), 1807

Barbary States

Barrett, Starr, 1788

Bohemia

DeLieben, Israel, 1790

Lewith, Henry, 1859

Lewith, Magdalena, 1852

Weiskopf, Leopold, 1851

Weiskopf, Rose, 1860

Bohemia, Polnau

Pool, Isaac, 1800

California

Hart, Daniel, 1860

Connecticut, Norwalk

Isaacks, Sampson Mears, 1804

Connecticut, Wilton

Moses, Esther (Isaacks), 1800

Curaçao

Hertz, Esther (Peixotto), 1839

Motta, Jacob Ares, 1801

Myers, Rachel (Peixotto), 1839

Peixotto, Joshua, 1829

Peixotto, Rachael de David de Isaac

(Suarez), 1826

Suarez, David, 1799;

Suarez, Jacob, 1799

Denmark

Canter, Jacob, 1785

- Weinberg, B. A., 1848
Wolfe, Simon, 1860
Zacharias, Yetta, 1860
Prussia, Bielefeld
Meyer, Emil Joseph, 1857
Prussia, Bornbaum
Borck, Roschen, 1858
Prussia, Breslau
Hoffman, Henrietta, 1860
Prussia, Fraustadt
Berge, Mortiz, 1838
Hoffman, Rudolph, 1852
Pecare, Rosel, 1833
Prussia, Kreyankeh
Pinkussohn, Pinkus, 1859
Prussia, Kurnick
Schwerin, Julius, 1841
Prussia, Lessau
Dublin, Henry, 1855
Prussia, Neustadt
Benjamin, David, 1855
Bentschner, Hester, 1856
Bentschner, Isidor Wolff, 1852
Falk, Abraham, 1852
Jacobi, Wolf Jacob, 1849
Rich, Eva, 1860
Wolfe, Esther, 1860
Zacharias, Moses L., 1860
Prussia, Posen
Bush, Minna, 1857
Prussia, Posen, Neustadt
Rich, Lippmann, 1860
Prussia, Rogarsen
Prince, George, 1839
Prussia, Schwarsenz
Baum, Jacob, 1854
Rhode Island, Newport
Elizer, Eleazer, 1791
Elizer, Hannah, 1822
Elizer, Priscilla, 1796
Lopez, David, 1793
Mordecai, Esther (Marache), 1803
Rhode Island, Swansea
Isaacks, Abraham Mears, 1800
Russia
Fabian, Henrietta H., 1841
Goldman, L. Jacob, 1861
Hyman, Moses, 1851
Livingston, Lewis S., 1850
Loryea, Aaron, 1850
Loryea, Esther, 1845
Schur, Barnet, 1850
Schur, Bella, 1850
Schur, David, 1847
Schur, Henrietta, 1850
Russia, Courland
Loryea, Isaac, 1849
Russia, St. Petersburg
Housseau, Dortha (Abramowitch), 1852
St. Croix
Benjamin, Judah Philip, 1820
Canter, Isaac, 1800
Canter, John, 1800
Canter, Joshua, 1790
DeLaMotta, Emanuel, 1800
DeLaMotta, Sarah (Canter), 1796
DePass, Rachel (DeLaMotta), 1784
Levy, Rebecca (Benjamin), 1823
St. Eustatius
Benjamin, Philip, 1820
Moses, Philip, 1774
St. Thomas
Abendanone, Grace, 1807
Abendanone, Hyam, 1800
Abendanone, Joseph, 1785
Peixotto, Grace, 1850
Scotland, Glasgow
Loewenstein, Abraham Levin, 1854
Sweden, Stockholm
Hirsch, John M., 1841
Virginia
Epstein, Isabella, 1860
Jacobs, Rebecca, 1858

Mordecai,
Mordecai,
Trager, Eva
Virginia, Pet
Moïse, Est
Samuel, Sa

until that amount was paid.²⁵ Rodrigues apparently paid the fine because soon after that he was participating in congregational affairs.

A study of the ages at which people married indicates that the Jewish females who were born and who died in the city were on average twenty-one years of age at the time of their marriage, whereas the men were twenty-nine. The youngest bride was fifteen and the oldest forty-nine at the time of the first marriage. The youngest groom was eighteen and the oldest forty-six. Figures differ little for those born outside Charleston or for whom the place of birth is unknown and who died in the city. The average age for these women at the first marriage was twenty, and the men, thirty-one. The men, in short, tended to be eight to ten years older than their wives.

Not everyone married, of course. Many families had children who never found a spouse or chose to marry. Some, apparently, simply died young, before having had the chance to marry. On the other hand, 10 percent of the females who reached the age of thirty never married. A larger number of men over thirty never married, 13 percent for those who were born and who died in Charleston and 19 percent for those who died in the city but were born elsewhere. The single men and women usually can

be found living with relatives, although men sometimes lived in boarding houses, and some single males and females owned or rented their homes. One of the people who did not marry was Grace Peixotto (b. St. Thomas, 1817), the daughter of Solomon Cohen Peixotto, who served as the *bazan* of Beth Elohim for some time, and Rachel Suares Peixotto. According to F. C. Adams, an abolitionist who wrote a scandalous account of Charleston in 1855, she was "a notorious woman, who has kept the worst kind of brothel for years, where harlots of all shades and importations break the quietude of night with their polluted songs." According to him, she "remained unmolested in her trade of demoralization" and thus "amassed a fortune," which she openly displayed. She made "fine fun" for the "officials and gallants" of the city. Adams's account states that on July 31, 1852, "this mother of crime" appeared before the city council and asked them to pave the lot in front of her brick house on Beresford Street.²⁶ The brick building still stands, and Grace Peixotto appears in the city directories of 1841, 1855, 1859, and in the Charleston census of 1861. In 1850 she purchased three slaves named Belinda, Judy, and Joe.²⁷ For many years Beresford Street was noted as the red light district, so much so that after World War II the city changed the name to Fulton in an attempt to alter its image.²⁸

25. Minute Book of Beth Elohim, April 30, May 12, 22, 1839. The Esdra and Rodrigues families came from Bordeaux and appear to have been related. In the 1850s Esdra was the secretary of Beth Elohim.

26. Adams, *Manuel Pereira*, 32.

27. MR6C.109.

28. Leland, "Fulton St. House"; Fraser, *Charleston! Charleston!*, 235.