

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
(Suares), 1826
Suares, David, 1799;
Suares, 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, Schwersenz
 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, Dorthea (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
 Abandanone, Grace, 1807
 Abandanone, Hyam, 1800
 Abandanone, 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 *hazan* 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.