

THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of SOUTH CAROLINA

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May 20-21,
2017



"Little Jerusalem"

by Alyssa Neely and Dale Rosengarten

In the first half of the 20th century, upper King Street became a Jewish enclave, affectionately dubbed "Little Jerusalem." Starting as an Indian trade route known as "Broad Path," the trail up the spine of the peninsula emerged in the colonial period as Charleston's major commercial artery. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, an influx of immigrants, notably East European Jews, Italians, Greeks, Chinese, and Lebanese, joined Germans, Irish, and English and changed the city's demography. For several decades a visible Yiddishkeit bloomed in the upper wards, and the neighborhood north of Calhoun and west of King became a small southern version of Manhattan's Lower East Side. Men who began as peddlers established businesses—dry-goods, furniture, shoe-repair, and tailor shops; hardware, jewelry, and secondhand stores or pawn shops; mattress factories; groceries and delicatessens. At one time some 40 stores on upper King were closed on Saturdays for the Jewish Sabbath. Shopkeepers held daily prayer services above Zalkin's kosher meat market and in back of Sam Solomon's wholesale jobbers. Their wives often worked behind the counter; at home they kept kosher kitchens, with African-American cooks standing at the stove and Jewish bubbes giving instructions. The "greenhorns" attended Beth Israel, while the older families went a couple of blocks south on St. Philip Street to Brith Sholom.

"My father had a sense of humor that was really something else . . . if you asked him how business was, he would tell you in Yiddish . . . 'I haven't spoken the first word of English yet today.' He hadn't had a customer."

—Irving "Itchy" Sonenshine,
October 21, 1997

Ben & Vera Yaschik's grocery
corner Percy & Bogard

MEAT MARKET

Elihu & Essie Mazo's grocery, 478 King

"Mazo's was an institution in the Jewish community. There was never a Sunday that we wouldn't go for a ride and stop by Mazo's to get some delicatessen."

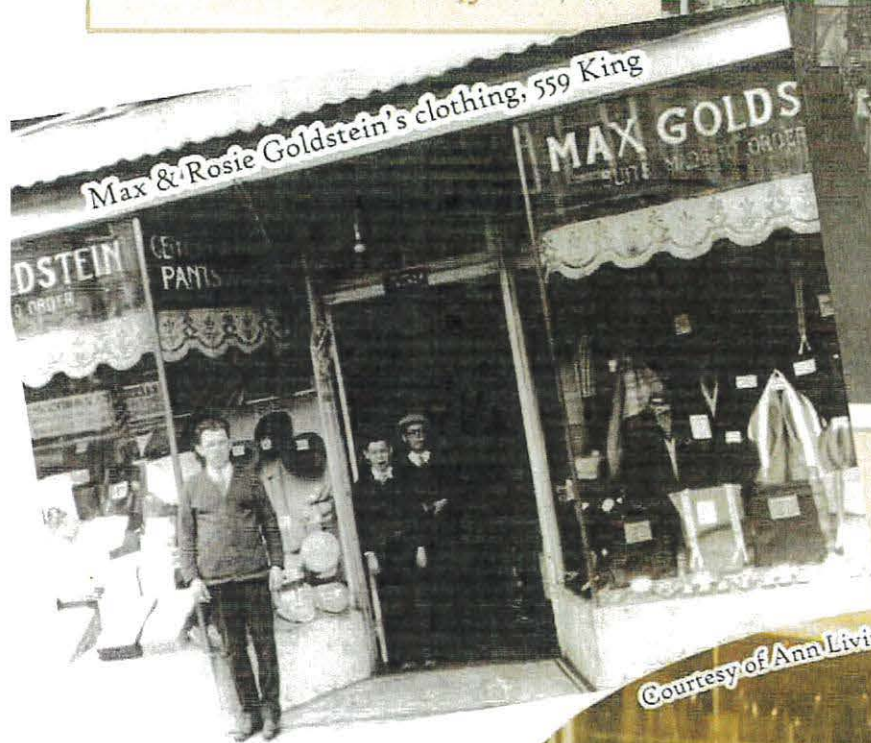
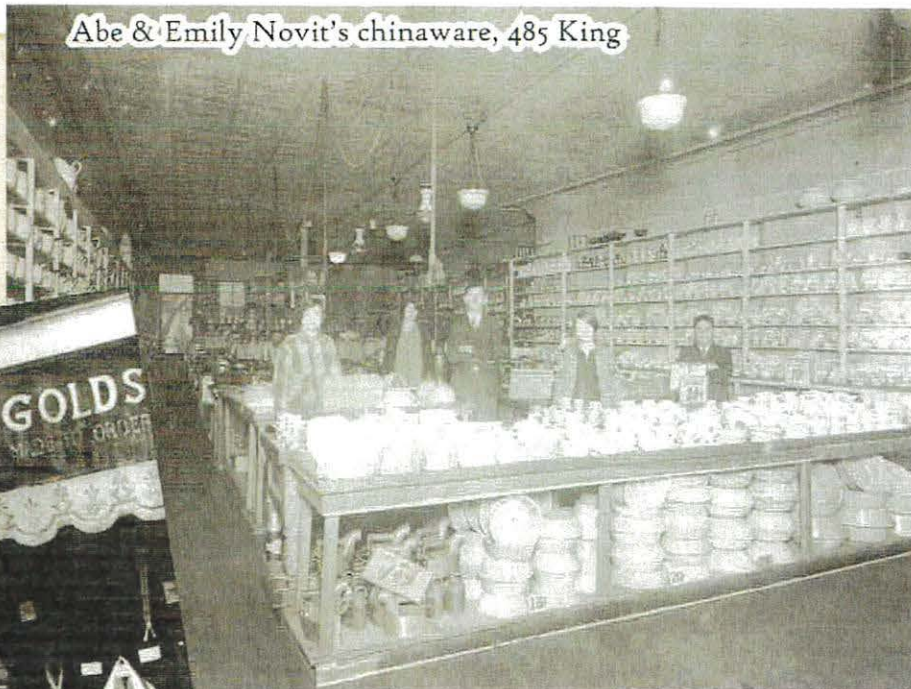
—Abel Banov, April 3, 1996

Charles Nachman's dry goods, corner King & Queen

"We had a shtetl . . . bordered by Meeting, Cannon, Rutledge, and Warren . . . a Jewish enclave . . . We were called Little Jerusalem . . . by people who were outside the Pale, so to speak . . . there was no meanness connected with it."

—Gus Pearlman, June 10, 1997

Abe & Emily Novit's chinaware, 485 King



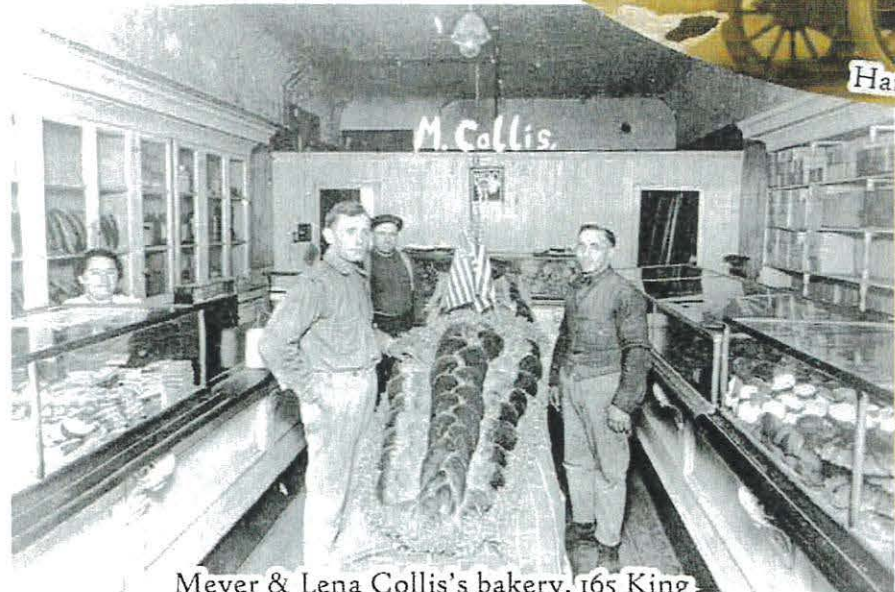
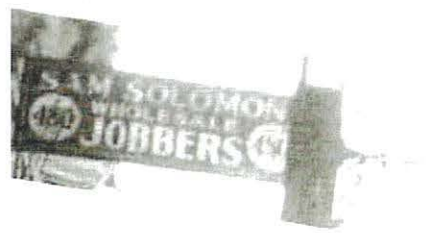
"We didn't hang out on King Street. In fact I never went to upper King Street. . . That was like a different county or city to me."

—Marcelle Kleinzahler Furchgott, May 14, 2014

Courtesy of Ann Livingstain Mandel, Allan Livingstain, and Betty Sholk-Quiat.



Harris Livingstain Co., pawnbrokers, 438 King



Meyer & Lena Collis's bakery, 165 King

"The ones who wanted to close on Saturday wanted to observe Shabbos, see. I remember vividly Sonny [Goldberg] telling me, not long before he died, that he used to love Friday afternoon. Friday afternoon he would get ready to leave the store and go home . . . dress up, shower, get ready for Shabbos. It's like he was reborn again. He didn't care what happened to the business. He just was going to take it easy on Shabbos, and he did."

—Irving "Itchy" Sonenshine, October 21, 1997

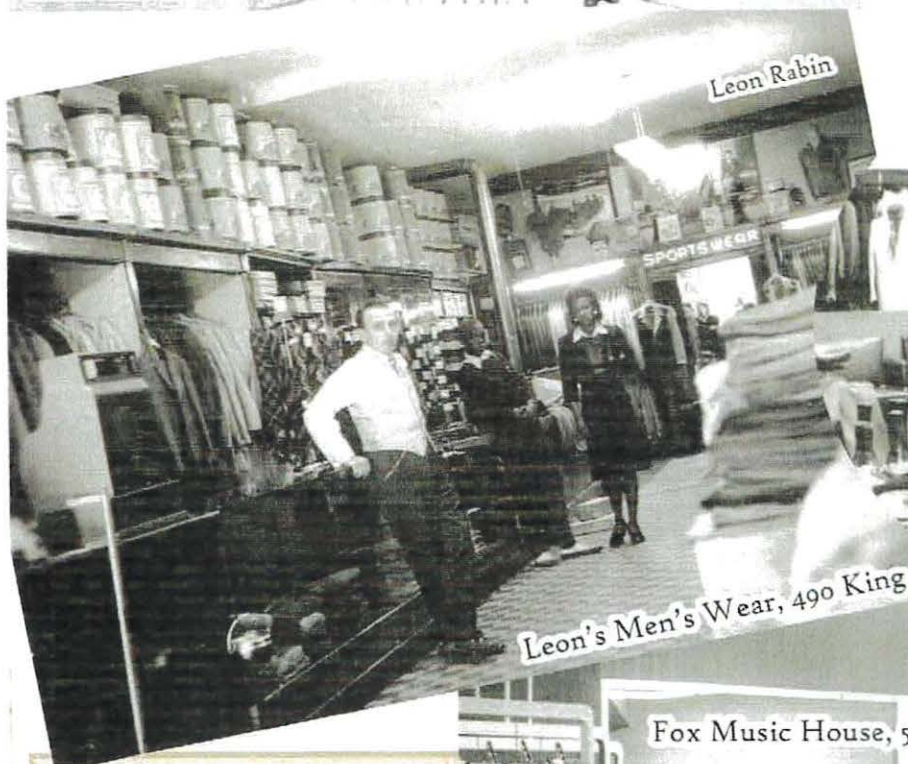


Alex Karesh

545 King

"My daddy was George Goldberg... owned a store... at 569 King Street, which is two doors south of Cannon Street. There were no less than six men's clothing stores on that block. First we had my daddy, of course. Then across the street was M. Dumas, a branch of the downtown [M. Dumas] at the corner of Woolfe and King Street, run by Nathan Goldberg, who was his son-in-law. A very famous clothing store and a very high competitor of ours was Brickman's... then you had... J. Needle & Company, and... the Bluesteins, of course, the most historic and famous store, and then you had Mike, Sam, and Jake. They were the Prystowsky brothers and they owned sort of a nicer store. They really shouldn't have been on that block."

—Charles Goldberg, January 24, 2013



Leon Rabin

Leon's Men's Wear, 490 King



Joe Frazier at Leon's Men's Wear, 497 King

"Uptown, where we operated, had the... merchandise that was more inferior [than in downtown stores]. The clientele at that time was about eighty percent black. The other end of King Street was probably the very opposite."

—Sam Kirshtein,
January 24, 2013



Fox Music House, 535-537 King

Otto & Sarah Fox

Photo by Louis J. Schwartz, courtesy of Harold I. Fox.

"When I came out of the air force in 1956, there were thirty-two furniture stores on King Street. We had no problems with each other. Most of us worshipped together. If you needed a particular piece of furniture from a bedroom suite, you called up somebody that you know that had them and they lent them to you. You either paid the money for it—the wholesale, by the way—or you returned the item."

—Joseph Chase, January 24, 2013



Sam Solomon Co., wholesale clothing, 480 King

Quotes are from the Jewish Heritage Collection Oral History Archives:
<http://jhc.cofc.edu/oral-history-archives/>

All photos courtesy of Special Collections, College of Charleston, unless otherwise noted.



Abe & Ida Appel



Edward's, Inc., discount department store, grand opening, 517 King
Edward Kronsberg, with brothers Milton and Macey

Myer "Al" Spikler, Al's Delicatessen
478 King



"Mama's social life was that all these salesmen would come in for their Coca-Cola and slice of bologna . . . she would become friends with them. So this Christian insurance man said, 'Jews are just so lucky, so lucky. You send your children to college; I can't send my children to college.' My mother said, 'You call this lucky? I wake up at five in the morning and I go to bed at twelve and one o'clock at night. You think I'm lucky?'"

—Dorothy "Dutch" Idalin Gelson Cohen,
March 5, 1995