

Anton Hieke

Jewish Identity in the Reconstruction South

New Perspectives on Modern Jewish History



Edited by Cornelia Wilhelm

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Anton Hieke

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Ambivalence and Adaptation

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Für Wolf und Irka

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Contents

Acknowledgments — vii

Abbreviations — xi

Figures (Maps, Charts, Images) — xii

Introduction — 1

I Coming to the Reconstruction South — 25

A Sketch of Reconstruction — 25

The Jewish Communities of Georgia and the Carolinas, 1860-1880 — 32

The Chain Migration of Jewish Immigrants — 44

The Economic Background of Migration — 71

II Jews and southern society: Integrated Outsiders — 108

Jews in the Southern Race-Based Society — 108

Public Reconstruction Philo-Semitism — 121

Covert Reconstruction Anti-Semitism — 133

The First Marker of a Southern Jewish Identity: Accepting the Southern Racial Fabric — 164

The Second Marker of Southern Jewish Identity: Jews and the Confederacy — 182

The Third Marker of Southern Jewish Identity:

Considering Residence and Jewish Trans-Regional Identity — 194

The German Identity of Jewish Southerners — 200

III Judaism and Jewish Identity in Georgia and the Carolinas, 1860–1880 — 206

Reconstruction: Formative Years — 206

A Sketch of German and American Reform — 210

The *ad hoc* Advent of Reform Judaism in Georgia and the Carolinas — 222

Cemeteries and the Formation of Congregations — 239

Synagogues in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas — 245

The Historic Congregations KKBE in Charleston and Mickve Israel in Savannah — 256

Atlanta's *The Temple* and Wilmington's *Temple of Israel* — 269

Jewish Small-Town and Micro-Communities, 1860-1880 — 283

Conclusion — 306

Glossary — 311

Appendices — 314

Bibliography — 348

Index — 370

Abbreviations

Archives and Archival Holdings

AJA	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Breman	Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, Ga.
JHC	Jewish Heritage Collection, Special Collections, Addlestone Library. College of Charleston, Charleston, S.C.
JHF-NC	Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, Durham, N.C.
NHCPL	North Carolina Room. New Hanover County Public Library, Wilmington, N.C.
NCSA	North Carolina States Archives, Raleigh, N.C.
R. G. Dun & Co. Collection	R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library Historical Collections. Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass.
SJA	Savannah Jewish Archives/Georgia Historical Society, Savannah, Ga.
UNC-CH	Special Collections, North Carolina Room. University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, N.C.

Periodicals

<i>Allgemeine</i>	Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums (Leipzig, Saxony)
<i>Israelite</i>	The Israelite, since 1874: The American Israelite (Cincinnati, Ohio)
<i>Occident</i>	The Occident and American Jewish Advocate (Philadelphia, Pa.)

Publication

BDI, <i>Statistics</i>	Board of Delegates of American Israelites and The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, <i>Statistics of the Jews of the United States</i> . Philadelphia: Edward Stern, 1880.
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Figures (Maps, Charts, Images)

- Fig. 1 The German States in 1870, Prussia Excluded. — 20
- Fig. 2 The German and Polish Provinces of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1870. — 21
- Fig. 3 Identified adult Jews in North Carolina in 1860. — 34
- Fig. 4 Identified adult Jews in Georgia in 1860. — 35
- Fig. 5 Identified adult Jews in South Carolina in 1860. — 36
- Fig. 6 The Origin of Jews in Wilmington, 1860-80, in the Kingdom of Bavaria. — 47
- Fig. 7 Advertisement of J. & J. Kaufman, Columbus, Ga., 1876. — 65
- Fig. 8 Receipt of Jacob Livingston, Undertaker, Charleston, S.C., 1883. — 91
- Fig. 9 Occupations of Jews in Georgia and the Carolinas, 1870. — 92
- Fig. 10 Occupations of Jews in Georgia and the Carolinas, 1880. — 93
- Fig. 11 “The Peddler’s Wagon,” 1868. — 103
- Fig. 12 The Confederate Battle Flag Flying over a German Allotment Garden — 113
- Fig. 13 Anti-Semitism in Antebellum Literature, 1855. — 135
- Fig. 14 Anti-Semitic Incidents in Georgia and South Carolina, 1860–1865. — 143
- Fig. 15 Reward for a Runaway Slave Owned by Solomon Cohen, Atlanta, Ga. — 168
- Fig. 16 The Jewish Congregations in Georgia and the Carolinas in 1880. — 208
- Fig. 17 Announcement of Jewish Businessmen in Wilmington, N.C., 1876. — 227
- Fig. 18 Oakdale Cemetery, Jewish Section, Wilmington, N.C., Est. 1855. — 240
- Fig. 19 Temple of Israel, Wilmington, N.C., Interior. — 249
- Fig. 20 Moorish-Style Building of Hebrew Benevolent Congregation, Atlanta, Ga. — 250
- Fig. 21 Entrance of Moorish-Style Temple of Israel, Wilmington, N.C.. — 252
- Fig. 22 Neo-Gothic Mickve Israel, Savannah, Ga., Stained-Glass Window. — 254
- Fig. 23 Neo-Gothic Mickve Israel, Savannah, Ga., View from the Bimah to the Organ. — 255
- Fig. 24 Advertisement for a Rabbi, KKBE, Charleston, S.C., 1852. — 259
- Fig. 25 Neo-Gothic Kahal Kadosh Mickve Israel, Savannah, Ga. — 265
- Fig. 26 Members of The Temple, Atlanta, Ga., 1869. — 272
- Fig. 27 Members of The Temple, Atlanta, Ga., 1877. — 273
- Fig. 28 Members of Temple of Israel, Wilmington, N.C., 1876–1880. — 275
- Fig. 29 Members of B’nai Israel, Albany, Ga., 1876. — 286
- Fig. 30 Members of B’nai Israel, Columbus, Ga., 1880. — 287
- Fig. 31 Members of Beth Israel, Macon, Ga., 1859. — 290
- Fig. 32 Members of Beth Israel, Macon, Ga., 1869/70. — 291
- Fig. 33 Temple Beth Israel, Macon, Ga. — 293
- Fig. 34 The Jewish Communities in Georgia and the Carolinas, 1860–1880. — 346

Introduction

A Sketch of Jewish Life in Georgia and the Carolinas, and Aims of Research

Journalist Wilbur J. Cash wrote in 1941 that “the peculiar history of the South ... justifies the notion that the country is—not quite a nation, but the next thing to it.” Jews have always constituted a small minority in the United States of America, and even more so in the American South.¹ In 1860, some twenty-five thousand Jews lived in the territory of the future Confederate States of America, where they made up less than 0.3 percent of the population. Twenty years later, in 1880, the number of southern Jews had not changed considerably but their share had decreased to little more than 0.2 percent, or about thirty thousand out of a population of 13 million southerners, black and white.² Yet, southern Jews were a visible minority group that included several prominent individuals, including the antebellum senators David Yulee of Florida and Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana (Benjamin later served as both Secretary of War and Secretary of State under the Confederacy).³ Rather recently the experience of the Jewish minority in a region marked by race has become of interest in Jewish historiography.

Reconstruction was significant for southern Jewish life inasmuch as it was a formative period for many Jewish communities and congregations in parts of the South where there had been none prior to the Civil War. In some respects there is a wide gap in our understanding of southern Jewry from the period of the Civil War—which has claimed a large share of scholarly attention—to the turn of the twentieth century. Reconstruction also marked the beginning of a transition for many Jewish congregations from Orthodox to Reform Judaism.⁴ Yet, surprisingly little has been published on Jews in the Reconstruction South. Reconstruction is largely an unknown time in American Jewish historiography. In addition to filling this general gap in the scholarly literature on Jews, the following discus-

1 Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Knopf, 1941), viii. The southern states are Ala., Ark., Fla., Ga., La., Miss., N.C., S.C., Tenn., Texas and (East) Va., i.e., former Confederate states.

2 See the individual numbers of Jews in the states in Jacob Rader Marcus, *To Count a People: Jewish Population Data, 1585–1984* (Lanham, New York and London: University Press of America, 1990). The numbers for 1860 and 1880 are debatable, as I will outline in chapter 1.

3 Their Jewish identity is questionable but the Christian society perceived them as Jews. See, for instance, Eli N. Evans, *Judah P. Benjamin: The Jewish Confederate* (New York: Free Press of Macmillan, 1988); Robert D. Meade, *Judah P. Benjamin: Confederate Statesman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1943).

4 Unless noted otherwise “Reform” and “Orthodoxy” are used in their Jewish context only.

sion is also intended to enhance our general understanding of Reconstruction by viewing it from the perspective of a religiously different but nevertheless white minority.

Initially, the following questions guided my research and interest: In a period of American Jewry traditionally referred to in the scholarly literature as “German Jewish,” was Jewish life in the Reconstruction South predominantly German? Did Jews in the South become embedded in a Southern identity and acculturated to Southern customs? And if so, what was the process through which Jewish immigrants became southern Jews? My basic assumptions were that there existed a considerable group of Jews who identified as Germans among the southern Jewish population; that German Jewish immigrants had been welcomed and integrated into southern society, and that they came to internalize a Southern identity. My findings proved these assumptions wrong. German Jews were, as I demonstrate, not the dominant component of the Jewish population in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas. Their “Germanness” distinguished them only marginally from other Jews and in the ways they were perceived by non-Jews. I also argue in the following pages against the emergence of a clear-cut Southern identity among these Jewish residents, and against the Southern white Christian society’s full acceptance of Jews.

Instead, my research findings point to the existence of much less distinct, more ambivalent categories of identity that prevailed among Jews in the Reconstruction South. This sense of ambivalence was expressed in both active and passive ways, suggesting that the German Jewish immigrants to the region considered themselves neither fully Southerners nor non-Southerners; neither Orthodox nor Reform Jews; neither fully accepted nor fully resented; neither fully Caucasian nor black. Ambivalence marked their lives in the South and their adaptation to it. While in some ways they were integrated into southern society, politics, and the racial mores associated with the Lost Cause, they remained a group with transitory tendencies who were seen by many as only temporary sojourners in the South, and they were sometimes resented as non-Caucasian interlopers in the struggle for white supremacy during Reconstruction.

State of Research

Traditionally, historians of the Jewish experience in America have distinguished between three major periods: the Sephardic, dominated by Jews of Spanish or Portuguese heritage (1654–1820); the German (1820–1880); and the East European (1880–1920s). This periodization derived from the focus on immigration

“waves” and was most systematically articulated by the leading American Jewish historian Jacob Rader Marcus.⁵

More recent historians have challenged the neatness of this periodization, especially in regard to American Jewish life in the nineteenth century. Hasia Diner in her *Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820–1880* (1992) rightly concludes that “Jewish migration and community building in the United States followed a pattern more complex than this tripartite conceptualization that has dominated historical and popular thinking ... The fact is that “Germans” made up perhaps a slim majority of the Jewish immigrants of this period.”⁶ Avraham Barkai criticizes the “German Period” more pronouncedly in his *Branching Out: German Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (1994), but for different reasons. Barkai calls for a redrawing of the periodization both in respect to time and definition. He overemphasizes the role of German Jews in America, and considers American Jewry essentially a branch of (European) German Jewry.⁷ Naomi Cohen in her earlier book, *Encounter With Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States 1830–1914* (1984), had called the periodization into question as well but set the focus of her criticism on the Sephardic period. Even so, she postulates a large German dominance in American Jewry after 1830 and basically equates German Jews and American Jewry in general for the time until 1880.⁸ Until now, demographic studies that might have shed greater light on the so-called “Germanness” of nineteenth-century American Jewry have been missing. Good statistical studies are available only for the period immediately preceding the years when American Jewry is thought to have been dominated by German Jews. Ira Rosenwaike’s *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (1985) was the first work to offer good statistics on place of origin for American Jews. For 1830, Rosenwaike found Jews coming mainly from Britain and the Netherlands, rather than German-speaking lands.⁹

5 Jacob Rader Marcus, “The Periodization of American Jewish History” (paper presented at the annual meeting for the American Jewish Historical Society, Washington D.C., February 15, 1958). Marcus’ conception of American Jewish history and his periodization culminated in his four volumes *United States Jewry 1776–1985* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989) which is segmented into the periods.

6 Hasia Diner, *Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820–1880* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 1.

7 Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out: German Jewish Immigration to the United States, 1820–1914* (New York/London: Holmes and Meier, 1994), Introduction.

8 See Naomi Cohen, *Encounter With Emancipation*, Preface.

9 Ira Rosenwaike, *On the Edge of Greatness: A Portrait of American Jewry in the Early National Period* (Cincinnati, Ohio: American Jewish Archives, 1985). See also Rosenwaike, “An Estimate and Analysis of the Jewish Population of the United States in 1790,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 50 (1960): 23–67; Rosenwaike, “The Jewish Population of the United States as Estim-

In regard to the South and its Jews, earlier works published until about World War II aimed at a refutation of anti-Semitism by countering the argument that Jews were aliens to the United States.¹⁰ As such, negative facts such as slave owning were rarely discussed. Precious little appeared in works of southern Jewish history until the 1970s, when it was rediscovered, according to Mark K. Bauman, as “exotic, unknown, and peripheral.”¹¹ Indeed, most historians and readers new in the field are astounded to discover the South’s rich Jewish past and present—myself included. The newly re-established *Southern Jewish Historical Society* (1976, it had existed from 1958–1963) and several publications brought attention back to the South. Especially noteworthy were Eli Evans’s *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South* (1973), Steven Hertzberg’s *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845–1915* (1978), and “*Turn to the South*”: *Essays on Southern Jewry* (1979) edited by Nathan Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky. With the exception of Hertzberg, these authors often discussed southern Jewry as distinctive. They also relied on clichés that are still largely accepted today, like Rabbi Malcolm Stern’s charmingly phrased observation that “[English-speaking congregations in the South] were beginning to be swamped by the growing population of German immigrants who would overrun the South in the Reconstruction period.”¹² Little archival or statistical research, however, was conducted to either verify or disprove such assumptions.

Jews of the South: Selected Essays from the Southern Historical Society appeared in 1984. The articles mostly focused on the antebellum and Civil War periods. In this compilation, Louis Schmier’s “Jews and Gentiles in Southern Georgia Town [Valdosta]” stands out as a rare study of southern Jewry outside the urban centers. Jewish life in Valdosta was portrayed as a rather ambiguous encounter between acceptance and resentment by the Gentile white society.¹³

The 1990s saw a rise of southern Jewish historiography. Tellingly, *Southern Jewish History*, the Southern Jewish Historical Society’s journal, was introduced as late as 1998. Many modern works emphasize the distinctiveness of southern Jewish history, the historical embrace of the region’s Jews by the Gentile (white) majority and the Southern identity of Jews, as does Robert Rosen’s *The Jewish*

ed from the Census of 1820,” *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 53 (1963–1964): 131–178.

¹⁰ See the survey of Mark K. Bauman: “A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography,” *The American Jewish Archives Journal* 59 (2007): 3–78.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹² Malcolm H. Stern, “The Role of the Rabbi in the South,” in “*Turn to the South*”: *Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1979), 24.

¹³ See also Schmier’s “The First Jews of Valdosta,” *The Georgia Historical Quarterly* 62 (1978): 32–99.

Confederates (2000). Their observations stand in accord with the earliest survey on Jewish history of Georgia and the Carolinas. In his *The Jews of South Carolina: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1905), Rabbi Barnett Elzas presented the development of Jewish South Carolina from the viewpoint of a community already come of age. Jews, according to Elzas, were an integral part of southern society. The embrace of Jews and the South was mutual. Jews were “not aliens in the promised land but blood-and-bones part of the South,” as North Carolinian Eli Evans would phrase it some seven decades after Elzas.¹⁴ Consequentially, Elzas’s evaluation mostly focussed on the experience of individual representatives of the South Carolinian elite who were (also) Jewish.

For Georgia and the Carolinas, historical observations focused on larger regional centers. Works on Charleston Jewry tended to appear in intervals of half centuries. Almost fifty years after Elzas, Charles Reznikoff published his *The Jews of Charleston: A History of an American Jewish Community* (1950). James W. Hagy’s *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (1993) for the first time treats Jewry in the city from the bottom up and moves away from the filiopietistic approach of his predecessors. His demographic findings are remarkable. Steven Hertzberg’s *Strangers Within the Gate City* (1978) is the best account yet on Atlanta. Saul Jacob Rubin’s *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah [Ga.] Jewry, 1733–1983* (1983) is self-explanatory. For the Jewry of Savannah, however, Mark I. Greenberg’s Ph.D. dissertation and the articles that were based on it provide a more scholarly picture than Rubin’s narrative.¹⁵ Smaller congregations and communities in Georgia and the Carolinas are described in indispensable and pioneering works often by amateur historians, including Morris Speizman’s *The Jews of Charlotte [N.C.]* (1978), Jack Steinberg’s *United for Worship and Charity: A History of Congregation Children of Israel [Augusta, Ga.]* (1983), and Belinda and Richard Gergel’s *In Pursuit of the Tree of Life: A History of the Early Jews of Columbia, South Carolina, and the Tree of Life Congregation* (1996).

Hertzberg’s and Hagy’s works on Atlanta and Charleston stand out as path-breaking for their perspectives and demographic approaches. Only Hertzberg, however, deals with the Reconstruction period. In essence, quantitative studies of Jewish life are conspicuously absent for much of the South, and on the

¹⁴ Eli N. Evans, *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), xx.

¹⁵ See Mark I. Greenberg, “Becoming Southern: The Jews of Savannah, Georgia, 1830–70,” *American Jewish History* 86 (1998): 55–75; Greenberg, “Savannah’s Jewish Women and the Shaping of Ethnic and Gender Identity, 1830–1900,” *The Georgia Historical* 82 (1998): 751–774; Greenberg, “Creating Ethnic, Class and Southern Identity in 19th Century America: The Jews of Savannah, 1830–1880,” (PhD diss., University of Florida, 1997).

level of the states entirely. Unfortunately, Hertzberg's findings have not been discussed in respect to other regions or cities. Hertzberg is also one of the few scholars to have placed the southern Jewish experience in a larger national context, particularly in his rather overlooked article "Unsettled Jews: Geographic Mobility in a Nineteenth Century City [Atlanta, Ga.]" (1977), which is one of the few taking into account the geographical mobility of southern Jews. More recently, mobility was also considered in Lee Shai Weissbach's *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (2005); and in Leonard Rogoff's *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (2001); and *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (2010). The books of Weissbach and Rogoff are also rather rare examples of works moving beyond individual communities to consider larger regional patterns and introduce comparative perspectives.

Like Rogoff's work on North Carolina,¹⁶ many scholars have recently issued works on entire states. Dale and Theodore Rosengarten's *A Portion of the People: Three Hundred Years of Southern Jewish Life* (2002) is largely concerned with South Carolina's Jewish elite, the distinctiveness of Jewish life there, and the acceptance of Jews in non-Jewish society. Bryan Stone's *The Chosen Folks: Jews on the Frontiers of Texas* (2010) is beyond my own scope but noteworthy for its approach. Like Rogoff, Stone also connects the experience of the states' Jewry with a broader development through the Jewish residents' cosmopolitanism and internal migrations. Although, whereas Stone distinguishes between a German and an East European Jewish identity for Texas, Rogoff calls such distinction into question and treats Jewish North Carolinians as a rather homogeneous group. The period of Reconstruction, however, only plays a minor role for both and larger demographic studies none at all. A comparable work to any of the three is noticeably absent for Georgia.

In 2006, two anthologies appeared that embody the "schools of distinctiveness and revisionism" in southern Jewish historiography.¹⁷ *Jewish Roots in Southern Soil*, edited by Marcie Cohen Ferris and Mark Greenberg, stresses the distinctiveness of southern Jews compared to American Jews more broadly, the existence of an expressive Southern Jewish identity, and Jews' far reaching acceptance in southern society. In contrast, *Dixie Diaspora: An Anthology of Southern Jewish History*, edited by Mark Bauman, follows the editor's own uncompromising call for questioning southern distinctiveness and the mutual embrace of Jews and southern society. Ten years earlier, Bauman in his essay *The Southerner as*

¹⁶ See, for instance, Leonard Rogoff, *Homelands: Southern Jewish Identity in Durham and Chapel Hill, North Carolina* (2001), and his "Synagogue and Jewish Church: A Congregational History of North Carolina" (1998).

¹⁷ See Bauman, "A Century of Southern Jewish Historiography," 23.

American: Jewish Style (1996) posed the overarching question for the southern Jewish historian: was the experience of southern Jews distinctive from an overall American Jewish experience? Is it justified to postulate a unique southern Jewish history or identity after all? Bauman's refutation of southern Jewish distinctiveness was answered in Eric L. Goldstein's "How Southern is Southern Jewish History?" arguing for a mediation between such a denial and the quest for its opposite.¹⁸

By and large—with some exceptions—the field continues to be characterized by the challenges identified by Stanley Chyet in 1979 in his "Reflections of Southern-Jewish Historiography":

The problem is that ... studies [of southern Jewish history] have been episodic or they have focused on the Old South and have paid minimal attention to the New South ... What has resulted is a certain provincialism in the presence of southern Jews and Southern-Jewish history ... We may know something of the experience of notables, but the patterns of Jewish life lived by the less distinguished or less articulate or less heralded Jews in the South have gone without much notice. Not that historiography in the North and in the West have so much to boast of, but it may be said without outrageous exaggeration that historiographically southern Jewry—a group whose communal roots go back to at least the early 1700s—has had to endure something of a shadow existence since the Civil War. It is time for a true Southern-Jewish historiography to begin taking shape.¹⁹

Considerations, Methodology, Terms, and Definitions

Migration played a pivotal role for Reconstruction, and has most often been considered according to a two region model: one region of origin of migrants and one region of settlement after having migrated.²⁰ There was, however, a three region model for European immigrants coming to the South, as most entered the United States in the North. As early as 1927, historian Marcus Lee Hansen called for the understanding of migration as a unity of emigration and immigration, arguing

¹⁸ Eric L. Goldstein, "How Southern is Southern Jewish History?" (paper presented at the Biennial Scholars' Conference in American Jewish History, Charleston, S.C., 2006).

¹⁹ Stanley F. Chyet, "Reflections of Southern-Jewish Historiography," in *"Turn to the South": Essays on Southern Jewry*, ed. Nathan M. Kaganoff and Melvin I. Urofsky (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia), 15, 20.

²⁰ See, for instance, Günter Haag and Kathrin Grützmann, "Wanderungsdynamik," in *Handbuch der Demographie* Vol. I, Ulrich Mueller, Bernhard Nauck, and Andreas Diekmann, ed. (Berlin et al.: Springer, 2000), 184; William Petersen, "Migration," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* Vol. 10, ed. David L. Sills (New York: Macmillan, 1968), 286.

that leaving the old and entering the new home are aspects of one process. Thus, motivation, conditions, relations, and language are most important for the contextualization of the entire process of movement from Europe (as emigrants) to America (as immigrants).²¹ Frank Thistlethwaite moved beyond Hansen in 1960, calling for a broader discussion of “the historic experience of migration, as a totality from the first intimations of dislodgement at home to ultimate reconciliation or defeat abroad.”²² This was only seemingly a reference to the two region model as Thistlethwaite further called attention to the fact that “migration often did not mean settlement and ‘acculturation.’”²³ It was neither final nor closed in itself but—as a precondition for its understanding—requires attention to the global movements with their various interim stages. In his *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (2005), Bernard Bailyn outlined the theoretical basis for Thistlethwaite’s call. Constant interaction, movements, influence, and cross-fertilization on the political, intellectual, social, cultural, religious, and economic level justify the assertion of a common Atlantic history “which is not the aggregate of several national histories, but something shared by and encompassing them all.”²⁴ Thomas Archdeacon moved Thistlethwaite’s concept to the social dimension of migration, not the spatial one, by pointing out the necessity of considering the interaction between migrants and the absorbing society, (Americans), but also the conditions in the different regions of arrival.²⁵ Oscar Handlin discussed migration from the individual’s perspective, and asserted for migrants a sense of uprootedness and alienation, caused by the loss of the old home and the incapability of truly arriving at the new one.²⁶ To this argument John Bodnar offered an alternate portrait which saw migrants “transplanting” their old homes to some degree by taking with them family and traditions. Thus, migrants were able to mediate between the old and the new home.²⁷

²¹ See Marcus Lee Hansen, “The History of American Immigration as a Field for Research,” *American Historical Review* 32 (1926/27): 500–518.

²² Frank Thistlethwaite, “Migration from Europe Overseas in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries,” in *A Century of European Migrations, 1830–1930*, ed. Rudolph J. Vecoli and Suzanne M. Sinke (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 20, 22.

²³ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁴ Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and Contours* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005); see the quote *ibid.*, 111.

²⁵ Thomas J. Archdeacon, “Problems and Possibilities in the Study of American Immigration and Ethnic History,” *International Migration Review* 19 (1985): 112–134.

²⁶ See Oscar Handlin, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People* (Boston et al.: Back Bay, c1990).

²⁷ See John E. Bodnar, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985).

The historiography of the Reconstruction period is extensive—though works generally have not treated the Jewish experience. Whereas early southern writers on Reconstruction saw it as the destruction of the South through political heteronomy and unfit black rule, leading to a rightful struggle for a restoration of antebellum conditions,²⁸ this image has long since been challenged. In regard to the South's struggle for re-establishing the antebellum concept of society and economy through other means, historian C. Vann Woodward emphasized the discontinuity of the Southern system. The war and Reconstruction led to thorough social, political, and economic changes that only seemingly sought the recreation of the antebellum concepts of society.²⁹ Though written more than a half-century ago in 1951, Woodward's analysis remains perhaps the most valid for understanding the nature and significance of Reconstruction. One of the newer works, Edward Bloom's *Reforging the White Republic* (2005), portrayed Reconstruction as nothing too exceptional in the political development of America. He wrote that the "*fin-de-siecle* [sic] northern and southern whites formed a unified and powerful phalanx committed to the restoration and maintenance of the white republic."³⁰ Thus, Bloom drew a connection between the South and the other regions of America for a common struggle for white supremacy as "by and large, southern whites continued to maintain a cultural commitment to Confederate patriotism in the years following the war, and only embraced American nationalism when their understanding of race relations was nationalized."³¹ Blum's pessimistic connection calls for attention to religion as a *leitmotif* for the nineteenth century and, thus, also for the Reconstruction period. He sees a pronounced religion during Reconstruction: "It played a vital role in political meetings and press rooms, city streets and country farms. Congressmen quoted scripture as fervently as Sunday school teachers; popular novelists drew upon Protestant narratives with the gusto of evangelical missionaries ..." ³² Charles Reagan Wilson's *Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause 1865–1920* (1983) underpinned this correlation between religion and Reconstruction. Little has been published on the only non-Christian religious group in the Reconstruction South, typically as part of broader depic-

²⁸ See William Archibald Dunning, *Reconstruction: Political & Economic 1865–1877* (1877), several prints.

²⁹ See Corner Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877–1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, c2006).

³⁰ Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865–1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 9.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

³² *Ibid.*, 9.

tions. Edward Blum concludes that “scholars have yet to attempt a comprehensive study of the role of Southern, and Northern, Jews in Reconstruction.”³³

In my understanding of Reconstruction, I follow the definition of historian Eric Foner, who sees it as a time period marking the beginning of an historical transition that eradicated Southern social distinctiveness. As the predominant political aspect of the time was the struggle over the rights of blacks, Foner sets the beginning of the Reconstruction era from Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. Its official end is commonly associated with the fall of the last Republican governments in the South (South Carolina, Florida and Louisiana), as well as the presidential election of 1877, which led to the retreat of the occupational forces of the United States government in the South.³⁴

More recent studies, such as James Baggett’s *The Scalawags: Southern Dissenters in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (2003), and Richard Current’s *Those Terrible Carpetbaggers: A Reinterpretation* (1988), question the accuracy of the assertion that scalawags and carpetbaggers were profiteers of upheaval and “parasites” of the South. Rather, this literature embraces the idea that

[a]lmost all Northerners who ventured southward during [Reconstruction]—often referred to as “carpetbaggers”—regarded themselves as agents of Southern regeneration, as missionaries of one kind. Even if a majority were drawn by economic opportunities rather than any desire to assist newly emancipated African Americans, they believed that their experience of managing wage labor and their ability to impact Northern values and attitudes would effect a transformation of Southern society.³⁵

On the state level, of which South Carolina may serve as an example, works are numerous and cover most fields. Richard Zuczek provided a general description of Reconstruction in the state with his *State of Rebellion: Reconstruction in South Carolina* (1993). In 1994, Julie Saville published her social and economic study of the state’s transition from slavery to capitalism.³⁶ Edward Dago supplemented Saville’s social study with a political study of black Republicans, *Hurrah for Hampton!: Black Red Shirts in South Carolina During Reconstruction* (1998), as did Charles J. Holden with a description of white conservatives in his *In the*

³³ Edward J. Blum and W. Scott Poole, ed. *Vale of Tears: New Essays on Religion and Reconstruction* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2005), ix.

³⁴ Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877* (New York: Harper-Collins, 2005), preface.

³⁵ Nichola Clayton, “Northerners in the Reconstruction South,” in *Reconstruction: People and Perspectives*, ed. James M. Campbell and Rebecca J. Fraser (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 67.

³⁶ Julie Saville, *The Work of Reconstruction: From Slave to Wage Laborer in South Carolina, 1860–1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Great Maelstrom: Conservatives in Post-Civil War South Carolina (2002). Hyman Rubin added to this discussion with *South Carolina Scalawags* (2006), which equally challenged long held assumptions that these northerners were corrupt and devouring traitors to the state.³⁷

For my discussion of Jewish identity in the Reconstruction South the following considerations were crucial: how does one assess a small minority's identity? How can the historian proceed without overly relying on personal memoirs and family histories that were typically composed by members of the successful elite? How can a historian do justice to the microhistory, in German aptly termed *Alltagsgeschichte*—history of everyday life? And, how can a historian do justice to the macroperspective of Jewish life, avoiding southern-centeredness by placing the region and its Jews in a larger American context? In light of these concerns, I decided to address my subject on three levels. I begin with the social and demographic history of Jewry in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas, exploring its composition and how Jews came to the South, but also how they moved within the United States. Second, I develop a portrait of the lives of Jews in southern society, including their experiences with anti- and philo-Semitism. Finally, I examine the nature of Jewish religious and collective identity during Reconstruction and how it was expressed, confirmed, and adapted.

I decided to focus on the states of Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina because they present the range of experiences that characterized Jewish life in the South during Reconstruction. They are comparable in their histories as original colonies and later Confederate member states, and share a geographic similarity as states situated on the Atlantic shore with an internal distinction between coastal and piedmont regions. Economy and society, however, distinguished them: South Carolina was marked by the plantation system and, with it, a high percentage of black residents. North Carolina was dominated by yeoman farming and, therefore, had a larger proportion of whites and a different economic structure. Georgia stood between these two poles. Georgia and the Carolinas during Reconstruction presented southern Jewish life at different stages of development: a rather large and long-since established Jewish community in South Carolina, compared with a virgin territory in North Carolina that was just beginning to attract pioneering Jewish settlers, and a combination of both in Georgia. South Carolina had been the home of Jews since the late seventeenth century, and was also home of the region's first lasting Jewish congregation, *Kahal Kadosh Beth*

³⁷ On bibliographic overviews for the Reconstruction in general, refer to, for instance, David A. Lincove, *Reconstruction in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 2000); or the bibliographical essay included in James G. Randall and David H. Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Lexington, Mass.: Heath, 1969).

Elohim (KKBE, Holy Congregation House of God).³⁸ It was established in 1749, making it one of the oldest Jewish congregations in the United States. By 1820, the city's Jewish community had developed into the largest in the United States, both in number and percentage of the white population (5 percent of the whites, or 700 Charleston Jews as compared to 0.5 percent, or 550 in New York at the time).³⁹ Until Reconstruction, Jewish communities—not congregations—had developed in virtually every part of the state. From the colonial days onward, Jews in South Carolina had enjoyed political equality. When the Civil War commenced, the state's importance for southern Jewry had already begun to diminish, both because of the economic decline of South Carolina and because of the rise of a new southern metropolis with a Jewish population that outnumbered Charleston's by far: New Orleans.

The Jews of Georgia had experienced a somewhat comparable development but on a smaller scale. The largest community in Reconstruction Georgia—in Savannah—had a congregation, *Kahal Kadosh Mickve Israel* (KKMI, Holy Congregation Hope of Israel), dating back to 1733, more than a decade older than the congregation in Charleston. The Savannah congregation faded away after its initial founding but was reorganized in the last years of the eighteenth century. As a result, during Reconstruction Georgia was already home to an old Jewish community in the coastal region. Beyond Savannah, Jewish communities were not as well established, and were predominantly constituted by Central European immigrants and their descendants. Several congregations had been founded in the late 1840s and 1850s. Thus, during the period between 1860 and 1880, Georgia's Jewry was made up of both longstanding native-born as well as recent immigrant Jewish families, and possessed several congregations. Like in South Carolina, Georgia's Jewry had enjoyed political equality since the colonial period.⁴⁰

North Carolina stood in contrast to both Georgia and South Carolina in terms of its Jewish settlement. Few Jews had been present in the state before the Civil War, making the history of early nineteenth century North Carolinian Jewry one of individual families rather than communities. Located between large settlements of Jews in neighboring Virginia and South Carolina, North Carolina's Jewry was insignificant in the first forty years of the nineteenth century. Until

³⁸ On early Jewish life in Charleston, see, for instance, James William Hagy, *This Happy Land: The Jews of Colonial and Antebellum Charleston* (Tuscaloosa, Ala: The University of Alabama Press, 1993), 5–28.

³⁹ Ira Rosenwaike, "The Jewish Population of the United States as Estimated from the Census of 1820," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 53 (1963–1964): 153.

⁴⁰ On Savannah, see for instance, Saul Jacob Rubin, *Third to None: The Saga of Savannah Jewry 1733–1983* (Savannah, Ga.: Mickve Israel Congregation, 1983).

Reconstruction, predominantly immigrant Jews settled in the state. The first lasting congregation was established in 1872. Thus, North Carolina was second to last of all southern states in the formation of an organized Jewish religious life; only in Florida, which received statehood in 1845, was a first congregation established later (in Jacksonville in 1874). Politically, Jews were discriminated against in North Carolina until Reconstruction. The state's constitution had barred Jews from holding executive offices of government (see the discussion in chapter 3).⁴¹

In assessing the composition of Jewish communities in the Reconstruction South,—which is essential for discussing the “German period” and the ambivalent nature of Jewry it is important to understand the interaction of the American-born and immigrant Jewish factions within the Jewish population. Did German Jews enjoy an elevated social position among the overall Jewish population? This question needs to be answered in order to gauge the importance of German identity and tradition among Georgian and Carolinian Jews. Furthermore, was there a difference in the makeup and character of the Jewish population in the three states? Was the German Jewish element more important in some states than in others? The following discussion is intended to contribute to the understanding of southern Jewry in a period of which current understanding is largely based on assumptions.

In order to address these questions, I decided to conduct a detailed demographic study of all Jews in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas, rather than sampling some communities only. Through this demographic study of the Jewish population on the state level—something that has not yet been done for any other American region—it is possible to assess the Jewish minority according to its national background, shedding light on the proportions of Jews in the region born in America and as opposed to having come as immigrants. The *Statistics of the Jews of the United States* (1878), the only contemporary survey of American Jewry in the nineteenth century, served as a guide. The Union of American Hebrew Congregations gathered the material in the mid-1870s for an effective representation of American Jewry. For all its flaws—the population was often roughly estimated for entire states where Jewish residents did not reply to inquiries—the *Statistics* are the best survey of United States Jewry available for the late 1870s.⁴²

⁴¹ On the early development of Jewish North Carolina, 1776–1835, see, for instance, Leonard Rogoff, *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 17–45.

⁴² Board of Delegates of American Israelites and The Union of American Hebrew Congregations, *Statistics of the Jews of the United States*. Philadelphia: Edward Stern, 1880 [hereafter cited as BDI, *Statistics*]; Lee Shai Weissbach, “The Jewish Communities of the United States on the Eve of Mass Migration: Some Comments on Geography and Bibliography,” *American Jewish History* 78 (1988): 79–108; Condensed Statement of Returns made to the Joint Committee in Statistics of

Most importantly, I gathered biographical information on every Georgian and Carolinian Jew during Reconstruction, as far as this was possible (see below). It hitherto existed only for Atlanta.⁴³ Key sources in this endeavor were the federal census returns for 1850 to 1920 with the emphasis on the returns taken in 1860, 1870 and 1880.

I briefly considered focusing on the 1870 census, the only “real” Reconstruction-era one, but this would have offered little more than a glimpse at a single year. Mobility within the United States as well as economic and personal development of the Jewish residents could not have been addressed sufficiently. In addition, by deciding to employ the censuses immediately before and after Reconstruction, the notorious errors in the census returns could be limited (although unfortunately not eliminated). I discuss Georgian and the Carolinian Jewry between 1860 and 1880, and thus cover the eve of secession, the Civil War, and the first three post-Reconstruction years. This reflects my belief that one cannot understand the period of Reconstruction without also understanding the period of the war.

A British official put the flaws of any census material in a nutshell:

The Government [is] very keen on amassing statistics. They collect them, add them, raise them to the Nth power, take the cube root and prepare wonderful diagrams. But you must never forget that every one of these figures comes in the first instance from the village watchman, who just puts down what he damn pleases.⁴⁴

Indeed, accuracy differed considerably from one community to another, and census takers were often rather careless. Immigrants who were identified as such through other sources may appear in census returns as native-born, as did the entire populations of several Jewish communities in South Carolina. Also, the birthplace for the immigrant head-of-household may have been noted for all family members born abroad, regardless if wife and children had been born elsewhere. If two or more census returns disagreed, I noted the place of birth according to other findings, such as cemetery records or family histories.

The census takers wrote information as they heard it, so that information in the returns is spelled in whatever way the writer decided after hearing it. For the modern historian employing digitally accessible sources, this problem has

the Jews in the US, Union of American Hebrew Congregations, Miscellaneous Records, American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio [hereafter cited as AJA].

⁴³ Steven Hertzberg, *Strangers Within the Gate City: The Jews of Atlanta 1845–1915* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5738/1978), 233. Hertzberg’s definition of “German Jewish,” however, differed from my own.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Evan Mawdsley and Thomas Munck, *Computing For Historians: A, Introductory Guide* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 80.

increased. The handwritten returns (often barely legible) are transcribed in order to make them searchable online, but by transcribers who are often unaware of foreign spelling, a practice that introduces additional errors of identification. I decided to use spellings for family names that appeared in two or more census returns. Where families changed names, I chose the final version in use during Reconstruction. For German names I used the common German spelling if census writers disagreed in two or more returns, or when families themselves would have likely disagreed with the writers.

Available information from the census returns are place of residence, name, place of birth (state or country, rarely town or city), age, occupation, property owned (1860 and 1870), place of birth of parents (from 1880 onward, allowing an identification of second-generation immigrants), and years of marriage and immigration (from 1900 onwards, for which reason I considered them as well if applicable). With the exception of those of the Eleventh Census (1890), which was destroyed by fire, all census returns are accessible and searchable online. I accessed them through genealogical databases such as Ancestry.com and Heritage Quest.

Since the first census taken in 1790, religion has not been noted. Historian Avraham Barkai points out the basic principles of any demographic study of Jews: “Only the combined and cross-referenced use of cemetery surveys, congregation records, directories, official census data, and supplementary sources can hope to achieve a more or less full identification of the total Jewish population of any locality.”⁴⁵ I identified Jews through their expression of a collective Jewish identity. For example, I identified residents of Georgia or the Carolinas as Jews if they were members of congregations,⁴⁶ exclusively Jewish organizations such as B’nai B’rith or Free Sons of Israel, interred in Jewish cemeteries, or married by a rabbi. The disadvantage of this system is self-evident. Only residents who joined a Jewish organization, or who buried in one of the three states, could be identified as Jewish. Because of this fact and a pronounced mobility among Jews, which meant that many were transient and thus unaffiliated with any Jewish organization, my demographic survey cannot be considered totally definitive, even as it provides as comprehensive a portrait as possible of the Jewish populations in the three states under study.

Congregational and organizational membership lists as well as burial and marriage records were identified in local, regional, and national archives, such as

⁴⁵ Avraham Barkai, *Branching Out*, 12.

⁴⁶ One exceptionally rich source of congregational material were the Membership Questionnaires, The Temple Records, 1853–1959, Ida Pearle and Joseph Cuba Archives of The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum, Atlanta, Ga. [hereafter cited as: Breman].

the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio.⁴⁷ Generally speaking, Jewish cemeteries were regional centers for the dead, as congregations were for the living. Jews who were interred at cemeteries in larger communities might have lived in small towns or villages without a burial ground. Printed cemetery records exist only for South Carolina, where the most important ones were published in 1903. Further material relating to Jewish cemeteries was either gathered through my own surveys of the burial grounds or provided by local historians. For material otherwise not obtainable, especially for out-of-region burials, I used a database for burial sites (www.findagrave.com). From tombstones I gathered vital statistics, of course, including community of birth and death if available. Cemetery records were dismissed if the deceased did not appear in census returns for 1860 and 1880, which means that they were born after 1880, died prior to 1860, or had been born and had died between two succeeding census years.

I retrieved further information on Georgian and Carolinian Jews between 1860 and 1880 from passport and naturalization applications (which occasionally reveal the community of birth), ship's passenger records, slave ownership data from the slave schedules of the Eighth Census (1860), city and business directories, credit reports, military records of the Confederacy and Union armies during the Civil War, and local and family histories (both American and German). I also consulted a host of contemporary press publications including local and national newspapers as well as specifically Jewish organs like the *Occident and American Jewish Advocate*, published in Philadelphia from 1843 to 1869, and *The (American) Israelite* of Cincinnati, Ohio. These publications are partially accessible online; otherwise I viewed them on microfilm, as well as consulting original editions at various archives. One special source was the *Jewish South*, published in Atlanta beginning in 1877, and later in New Orleans. It was the first paper devoted to southern Jewry. It is accessible on microfilm at Emory University in Atlanta, and offers coverage on otherwise unrepresented Jewish small-town and micro-communities. For the same reason, the R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Reports proved to be invaluable for my research. I accessed the originals of these evaluations of worthiness of credit at the Baker Library of Harvard Business School in Cambridge, Mass. When known Jewish residents could not be found in the census returns, their residence was either identified through cemetery records or deduced from the place of birth of children as shown in later census returns.

The demographic material for Jewish residents of Georgia and the Carolinas between 1860 and 1880 was incorporated into a Microsoft Access database.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ On this, see for instance, Cornelia Wilhelm, "German Jews in the United States: A Guide to Archival Collections," *German Historical Institute Reference Guide* 24 (2008).

⁴⁸ As guidelines for the composition of the database were used Evan Mawdsley and Thomas

Through identifying spouses and children, parents and siblings, as well as immediate relatives or friends living in the household, I was able to construct a thorough picture of family networks as they developed—regardless of possible later relocation of family members. After the completion of the data gathering, I provided several archives with excerpts of the database for specific communities.

The aim of this survey was the identification of the proportion of German Jews in the overall Jewish community in the states at the time and their mobility within the United States. The results are discussed in Chapter 1. In my assessment of anti- and philo-Semitism I also considered contemporary non-public material such as the R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Reports and diaries, as well as public material such as newspapers and speeches. I set my focus on the possible differentiation between immigrant and American-born Jews in the perception of the Gentile society. The results are laid out in Chapter 2, discussing the life of Jews in southern society and the emergence of a distinctive Southern Jewish identity. Findings of the database were additionally used to identify the country of birth of members of congregations in Georgia and the Carolinas. The possible impact German Jewish immigrants had on the formation of religious institutions and the character of Jewish identity is described in Chapter 3. To understand this demographic—quantitative survey of (German) Jewish life in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas as an end in itself would be misleading. It would render the work a gathering of information only. The quantification of Jewish life is merely a tool to contextualize sources, assumptions, and conclusions in the historiography of southern Jewry.

Discussing the “German Jewish Period” in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas requires a clear definition of the terms “Jewish” and “German.” Jews cannot be defined solely in terms of ethnicity or religion; both elements must be taken into consideration. As a general rule, I defined Jews as those who expressed a collective identity in the tradition of Judaism.⁴⁹ In other words, if contemporary residents or immigrants saw themselves as Jews, I have included them as such, without regard to their level of religious observance or to which denomination (for example, Reform or Orthodox) they belonged. I did not use the standard of Jewish matrilineal descent, as this would have excluded individuals who

Munck, *Computing For Historians: An Introductory Guide* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993); R. Darcy and Richard Rohrs, *A Guide to Quantitative History* (Westport, Conn., and London: Praeger, 1995).

⁴⁹ On “collective identity,” see, for instance, Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (München: Beck, 1999), 132; Joseph C. Hermanowicz and Harriet P. Morgan, “Ritualizing the Routine: Collective Identity Affirmation,” *Sociological Forum* 14, no. 2 (1997): 197–214.

converted to Judaism and included some who were born to a Jewish mother but never identified as Jews. Rooted in the time-frame of my work, 1860 to 1880, those who converted to Christianity before 1860 are not counted as Jews. If converted after 1880, they were identified as Jewish. If converted between 1860 and 1880, I counted them as Jews until their evidenced time of conversion. I did not try to identify Jews through “Jewish” names for three reasons: biblical names were popular among Christian Americans; some individuals with Jewish-sounding names may have been converts to Christianity or the descendants of converts; and name changes among immigrants were common, making it hard to define precisely what a “Jewish” name might be. Family names of Hebrew, German, or Polish origin became Americanized. The Wallach’s of North Carolina changed their name to Wallace, the Böhrs of Wilmington, N.C., to Bear, and the Rabinowitzes and Silberbergs of Savannah to Robinson and Silverhill.

For “German,” the definition requires a distinction between a political and a socio-cultural concept of Germany. Unified Germany did not become a reality until 1871, roughly in the middle of the American Reconstruction period, when the (Second) German Empire was founded. Historian Celia Applegate writes that the “[c]onsciousness of national belonging is one of the most striking and least understood of modern phenomena. The modern nation asserts its legitimacy in many ways, but most strikingly in the willingness of its members to believe in it, to identify with it, and even to die for it.”⁵⁰ This is collective identity in other words, and it had to evolve at least twice in nineteenth century Germany as the modern concept of *Heimat* emerged, and which Jews adopted as well. The first iteration came in the Napoleonic era and particularly the following Congress of Vienna, which changed the map of Germany dramatically as German states absorbed smaller entities whose populations—Gentile and Jewish—developed a sense of togetherness as Bavarians, Prussians, etc. This sense of national belonging was further strengthened and transformed with German unification in the 1870s.

After Poland’s partitions in the eighteenth century, Prussia—and therefore Germany after 1871—was home to about 3.5 million non-Germans, predominantly Poles in the provinces of West Prussia and Posen/Poznań. Scattered over Prussia with its strong national minorities were 400,000 Jews. Some 60 percent lived in largely ethnic German provinces like Westphalia or Silesia, compared to 40 percent in the mainly ethnic Polish areas.⁵¹ Identifying these Jews as either

⁵⁰ Celia Applegate, *A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1990), ix.

⁵¹ *Meyers Konversationslexikon: Eine Encyklopädie des allgemeinen Wissens* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1888), 342–343.

Germans or non-Germans for the mid-1800s is a difficult task. I decided to consider them non-Germans for the following reasons: Jews living in the former Polish territories of Prussia (West Prussia and Posen/Poznań) became German Jews, true, but this shift in consciousness came after the period in which most Jewish immigrants arrived in Reconstruction Georgia and the Carolinas. Jews in Prussia had been emancipated with the *Judenedikt* of 1812, which excluded Polish Jews, who were denied residence in the German provinces of Prussia after 1815. From 1833 onward, Jews in Posen were admitted to ‘honorary Prussian citizenship’ if they were able to prove their proficiency in German language and culture. By 1846, only 20 percent of them met this requirement. Thus, while Polish Jews in Prussia Germanized rapidly and almost completely over the course of the nineteenth century, this occurred later than it did for their brethren west of the Polish provinces. According to historian Sophia Kernlein, the linguistic acculturation to German began half a century later than in the largely German-speaking territories where (Western) Yiddish had basically died out. By the mid-1800s, the languages of Jews in Prussia’s Polish provinces were Yiddish, Polish, and German. At the end of the 1870s, Prussian Jewish publications ceased to differentiate between German and Polish Prussian Jews. Historian Israel Bartal concludes that “[m]ost Jews in the areas annexed from Poland to the neighboring states continued ... regarding themselves as “Polish Jews,” and that is how they were seen by German, Austrian, and Russian writers and bureaucrats.” *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* consequently treats Prussian Poland as a socio-cultural part of Eastern Europe until about 1880.⁵²

52 “Poznań” and “Prussia,” in Fred Skolnik, et al. eds. *Encyclopaedia Judaica* Vol. 16 (Detroit, New York, et al.: Thomson Gale, 2007), 429–432, 653–656; Leo Trepp, *Geschichte der deutschen Juden* (Stuttgart, Berlin and Köln: Kohlhammer, 1996), 119; Sophia Kernlein, *Die Posener Juden 1815–1848: Entwicklungsprozesse einer polnischen Judenheit unter preußischer Herrschaft* (Hamburg: Bölling und Galitz, 1997), 237, 239; Israel Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772–1881* transl. by Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1; See “Poznań,” in Gershon David Hundert, ed. *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* vol. 2 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 1444–1446.

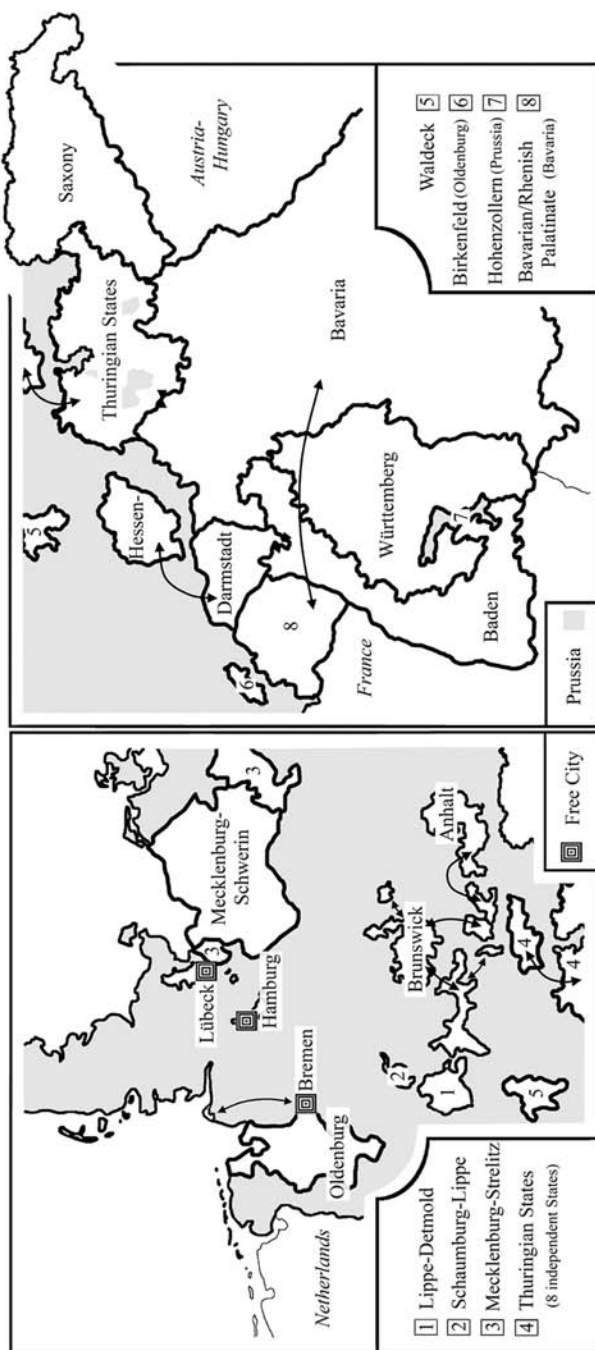


Fig. 1: The German States in 1870, Prussia Excluded.

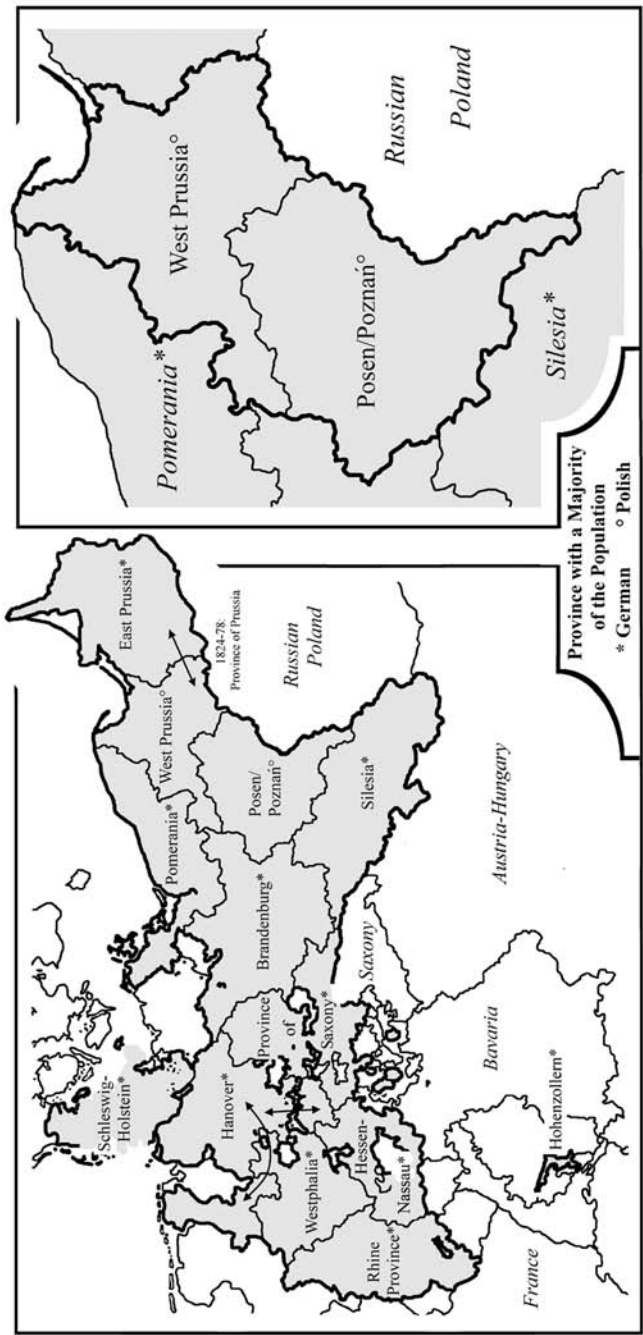


Fig. 2: The German and Polish Provinces of the Kingdom of Prussia in 1870.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Jews from Prussian Poland had become German Jews; in the mid-nineteenth century, they were still Polish Jews. Accordingly, I differentiate between German Jews and Polish Jews also within the political entity of the German Empire. The categorization of the demographer Usiel Schmelz was especially helpful.⁵³ For 1850, Schmelz considers as German Jews those living in the immediate territories of the later German Empire (Alsace-Lorraine excluded), and as Polish Jews those from the territories annexed by Poland after World War I (Prussian Poland). By 1850, the German and Polish Jewry within “Germany” had remained largely unaffected by the high internal migration of later decades. Therefore, “German Jews” refers to those who were born in later member states of the (lesser) German Empire with a German majority population; “Polish Jews” refers to those from a province with a Polish majority population. Similarly, I refer to “Germany” and “Poland” as socio-cultural rather than political units.

Immigrants who stated “Prussia” or simply “Germany” as their place of origin in the census returns were not considered German until further proof was found of the communities of their birth, as they could have been from Prussian Poland. Austrian immigrants were likewise counted as non-Germans. Jews in Austria-Hungary adapted to the language and identity of their neighbors and, according to the *YIVO Encyclopaedia*, “had command of both languages [German and Czech in Bohemia] and a more fluid national identification than subjects of other regions.” Despite German-language pockets in non-German territories—Prague especially—it is almost impossible to identify immigrants from this multi-ethnic entity as Germans, Czechs, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, or Italians.⁵⁴ Assigning Jews from Austria-Hungary, or any given province thereof, a German identity has to be dismissed for practical reasons.

A note regarding immigration to Georgia and the Carolinas (which I will discuss in chapter 1): I have differentiated between the general reasons emigrants had for coming to America, and the more specific reasons they had for coming to the South in particular. Only factors connecting immigrants to an eventual (although often temporary) residence in the South were taken into account.

In *Jewish Life in Small-Town America* historian Lee Shai Weissbach—for the first time in respect to Jews in America—defines small-town Jewish communi-

⁵³ Usiel O. Schmelz, “Die demographische Entwicklung der Juden in Deutschland von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis 1933,” *Zeitschrift für Bevölkerungswissenschaft* 8 (1982), 51.

⁵⁴ “German Literature,” Gershon David Hundert, ed. *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* vol. 1, 584–585. On identity, see also, for instance, Gary B. Cohen, “Jews in German Society: Prague, 1860–1914,” *Central European History* 10 (1977): 28–54.

ties as places with at least one hundred but less than one thousand Jews.⁵⁵ This system of classification is less helpful when focusing on the Reconstruction South, since none of the communities in Reconstruction Georgia or the Carolinas reached one thousand Jews, and many did not even attain a Jewish population of one hundred. As my own research reveals, a Jewish community that reached one hundred souls in the Reconstruction South was considered to be a fair-sized community by contemporaries. By the same standard, a city with five hundred Jews constituted a Jewish metropolis, since in the three states studied here, only the communities of Charleston, Savannah, and Atlanta reached this size. To allow a distinction between small-town and even smaller communities, I refer to Jewish communities fewer in number than one hundred Jewish residents of all ages as “micro-communities.”

Census returns are cited in their shortest possible form. As information is based on census returns summarizing data of a number of individuals and communities at one time, the recommended form of citation stating each individual name and page was impractical. Differing from the recommended citation⁵⁶ the form used is “Ninth Census, 1870, Community, State” (thus ‘Ninth Census, 1870, Wilmington, N.C.,’ for example). The census returns are accessible through several searchable databases that provide templates. The reader is encouraged to reassess the individual name provided in the text in the respective census returns through online databases.

Information gathered from the R. G. Dun & Co. Credit Report volumes (Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School, Cambridge, Mass.) is cited differently from the recommendation of the Baker Library.⁵⁷ My citation of entries to companies offers the company’s name, followed by the year of entry and the community from where it was reported, e.g. “‘Solomon Bear,’ 1866, Wilmington, N.C., Vol. 18, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection.” The number of the volume refers to that of the respective state, and the page numbers were omitted as most volumes are indexed. Abbreviations as used in the R. G. Dun & Co. Collection are given in their non-abridged form as they are barely accessible for the reader without prior knowledge.

A glossary of non-English terms is attached as an appendix. Hebrew, Aramaic, and Yiddish terms, including names of congregations, are given in their translit-

⁵⁵ Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2005), 28. Lee Shai Weissbach focuses on Jewish life in the 1920s, after the East European mass-migration when the overall Jewish population was much higher than in 1880.

⁵⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, Census Office, Ninth Census, 1870.

⁵⁷ E.g. Ohio, Vol. 3, p. 29, R. G. Dun & Co. Collection, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School.

erated common English form, and are explained when used for the first time. The circumciser according to the Jewish rite, מוהל, for instance, appears as *mohel* (plural *mohelim*). German terms are used when necessary, and appear in accordance with German usage. For example, *Gemeindezwang*, is preferred over the unfamiliar English translation: “compulsion of congregation.” The translations of German sources are mine, unless noted otherwise.

English exonyms are used for European cities, regions, states, and countries of origin, for example, “Munich” and “Bavaria” rather than “München” and “Bayern.” “Württemberg” and “Hessen,” however, are noted in their endonymic German forms rather than “Wurttemberg,” “Hesse” or “Hessia.” For matters of clarity, the German form *Posen* is preferred over the Polish *Poznań* to distinguish the nineteenth century Prussian province from the modern Polish city. The names of smaller German cities and villages are given according to their endonymic German form, which include umlauts and other diacritical marks, thus allowing a distinction, for instance, between the two Bavarian communities “Fürth” and “Furth.” American toponyms are employed in their contemporary form of the Reconstruction period, e.g. “La Grange,” and “Laurensville,” rather than the modern “LaGrange, Ga.,” and “Laurens, S.C.”⁵⁸ For the sake of uniformity, states and countries are given in the borders of 1870. Thus, for instance, Hanover is shown for 1860 as a part of Prussia. It had been an independent kingdom then, and became a Prussian province in 1866. Also, the German states are shown as independent entities although they became member states of the German Empire in 1871. Equally, American counties are shown in the borders of 1870.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ See, for instance, Donald J. Orth, “Principles Policies, Procedures: Domestic Geographic Names,” *United States Board on Geographical Names*, http://geonames.usgs.gov/docs/pro_pol_pro.pdf (accessed April 4, 2011).

⁵⁹ See, for instance, David L. Gorbitt, *Formation of North Carolina Counties, 1663–1943* (Raleigh, N.C.: State Department of Archives and History, 1950), 283–294.

I Coming to the Reconstruction South

A Sketch of Reconstruction

Washington's Reconstruction Policies

The Confederate States of America surrendered to the United States of America on April 9, 1865. In the words of historian Bertram Korn, “[i]nto the four years of the Civil War were compressed the experiences and lessons and pain of generations.”¹ “Reconstruction,” as historian Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney write, “witnessed far-reaching changes in America’s political and social life.” Legislative actions “permanently altered the federal system and the nature of American citizenship.” Washington had to ensure a re-integration of the Southern states into the United States, and the first-time integration of southern blacks into American society—more than a third of the nine million southerners of 1865.² Any of these problems would have been a challenge to any nation. As such, the period immediately following the Civil War, Reconstruction, was more crucial for the further development of America than the war itself.

The war that was to secure Southern independence left the Southern states in shambles. As a result of Union General William T. Sherman’s scorched earth policy on his infamous March through Georgia, Georgia and South Carolina especially became symbols for the destruction. Sherman wrote to General U.S. Grant “Charleston [is] now a mere wreck.”³ A northern traveler, Sidney Andrews, wrote on South Carolina’s Columbia and Charleston:

The ruins here [in Columbia] is neither half so eloquent nor touching as that at Charleston ... [It is a] city of ruins, of desolation, of vacant houses, of widowed women, of rotting wharves, of deserted warehouses, of weed-wild gardens of miles of grass-grown streets, of acres of pitiful and voiceful bareness—that is Charleston.⁴

¹ Bertram W. Korn, *American Jewry and the Civil War* (Marietta, Ga.: R. Bemis Publishing, 1995=1951), 217–218.

² Eric Foner and Olivia Mahoney, *America’s Reconstruction: People and Politics after the Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 11; Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States Colonial Times to 1970 I* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1975), 24–36.

³ Sherman is quoted in Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, 309.

⁴ Sidney Andrews is quoted in Louis M. Hacker and Hélène S. Zahler, ed. *The Shaping of the American Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 654–658.

A quarter of the southern young men of fighting age had died, and the Union had occupied a territory the size of Western Europe.⁵ The Southern version of America—in the words of historian Emory Thomas the Southern *weltanschauung*, its philosophy of life—had evaporated.⁶ The Southern concept of a society based on slavery (see next chapter) had embodied the distinctiveness of the region. This concept was invalidated, made void, and had to be redefined after Appomattox. The South faced an upheaval of which overcoming the destruction of the infrastructure caused by the war was relatively minor. More important was the struggle for a new groundwork of society and economy.

In North Carolina in 1865, for instance, the number of people dependent on governmental aid was “greatly reduced; amounting now to only 10,000.” In Augusta, Ga., bread riots broke out and the Union Army had to restore order in Wilkes County, Ga., for the same reason.⁷ In 1867, South Carolina’s *Charleston Courier* published a letter urgently pleading for relief. The writer described that “[f]amine is in the land, or soon will be; the wolf is at the door.”⁸ The same year, some one hundred thousand South Carolinians—one in six!—had less food on hand than what would be needed to feed them for a week.⁹

On top of the war-related destitution and food riots, the reorientation of Southern whites was a necessary outcome of the eroded Southern social concept. It was difficult, to put it mildly. John William De Forest, a Union officer and Freedmen’s Bureau agent in South Carolina in 1866 and 1867 wrote bitterly:

[T]wo thirds of the men of this class [poor white southerners] had fallen in the war or were cripples, leaving their wives and children to start beggary in an impoverished community. They would not work, and they did not know how to work, and nobody would set them to work. Such a thing as a “poor-white” girl going out to domestic service was absolutely unknown; not merely because she was as ignorant of civilized housewifery as a Comanche squaw, but also because she was untamed, quarrelsome, perhaps dishonest, perhaps immoral; and finally, because she was too proud to do what she called “nigger’s business.” ... The crackers are not a caste, but only the dregs of society.¹⁰

5 U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong., 1st Sess., 1867, Appendix 24.

6 Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation 1861–1865* (New York City et.al.: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), 4.

7 *Daily Intelligencer* [Atlanta, Ga.], September 6, 1865, 2; Charles E. Wynes, “1865–1890,” in *A History of Georgia*, Kenneth Coleman, ed. (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1977), 207.

8 *Charleston Courier* [S.C.], December 7, 1866, quoted in: W. Martin Hope and Jason H. Silverman, *Relief and Recovery in Post-Civil War South Carolina: A Death by Inches* (Lewiston, N.Y. et al.: Edwin Mellen, 1997), 11.

9 Ibid.

10 James Henry Croushore and David Morris Potter, ed. *John William De Forest: A Union Officer in the Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), 157–158.

With the advent of Reconstruction especially, whites and blacks were overwhelmed by the new conditions. Many blacks had little vocational training. Much of the black and white population was illiterate: In Georgia in 1860, 95 to 97 percent of blacks could not read or write—a number that dropped modestly to 84 percent in 1880.¹¹ The ratio for whites was not necessarily far below.

In Washington, two of the three branches of the national government, executive and legislative, had diametrically opposed concepts of the post-war South and America. The third, the judicial, had soon declared its neutrality.¹² And, Reconstruction created heated debates as to which branch was superior. The initial issue was whether black suffrage—and thus complete political equality—was a requirement for the re-admittance of southern states.¹³ Congress argued for this at the expense of the whites' previous political rights. The policies of Reconstruction outlined and followed by presidents Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson foresaw a reconciliation of Southerners and Northerners as most pending.¹⁴ Southern blacks were to be integrated into southern society as free residents but not citizens. The reconciliatory path was most famously worded in Lincoln's second inaugural address in 1865: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive ... to bind up the nation's wounds ..."

Lincoln's Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction, December 1863, offered a full reintegration of the southern states into the corpus of the United States provided a tenth of each state's voters of 1860 swore an oath of allegiance to the Constitution of the United States, including the 13th Amendment. Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, an ardent southern unionist, equally foresaw a restoration of the southern states, not re-admittance as Congress argued. Lincoln and Johnson emphasized that the southern states had never had the constitutional right to secede. They thus had effectively remained members of the Union.

Presidential Reconstruction was a failure as the states took advantage of the opportunities offered by Johnson's leniency. The newly enacted Black, or Freedmen's, Codes granted a cementing of black dependence on whites, who were not owners anymore but *de facto* inescapable employers. The Freedmen's Code

¹¹ Jacqueline Jones, *Soldiers of Light and Love: Northern Teachers and Georgia Blacks, 1865–1873* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980), Appendix I.

¹² See Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase's declaration of neutrality in: "Mississippi vs. Johnsons" in: George T. Kurian, *A Historical Guide to the U.S. Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 558; Frederick J. Blue, *Salmon P. Chase: A Life in Politics* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent University Press, 1987), 270–271.

¹³ Foner, *Reconstruction*, 179.

¹⁴ James L. Sundquist, *The Decline and Resurgence of Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1981), 27

of South Carolina, for instance, allowed the employer/master of former slaves to resume the rights and position of former owners, like the “authority to inflict moderate chastisement and impose reasonable restraint [on the apprentice] ... and to recapture him if he departs from his service.” Also, self-determination was infringed upon again. Black employees were not allowed to leave the premises of the master without permission. Also, mixed marriages were prohibited, and blacks were denied the right to choose their profession freely if unable to pay high fees.¹⁵ Courts in Maryland and North Carolina assigned thousands of black children to white masters without consent, sometimes without the knowledge of their parents.¹⁶ In Union-occupied Savannah “[i]n a case of a colored woman to recover her daughter’s child from Mrs. D. Hirsch,” the provost court ruled in April 1865: “[T]he child was allowed to live with the defendant, Mrs. Hirsch, until it desires to live with its grandmother. If the child remains with Mrs. Hirsch, she shall educate the child and provide her with a trade.”¹⁷ The black grandmother thus did not receive custody over her own grandchild.

Congressional reports drew a disastrous picture of the progress of Reconstruction under the president’s auspices. The race riots in Memphis, Tenn., and New Orleans, La., in 1866, especially had symbolized the failure. According to a Union General, “Johnson’s leniency had unleashed the barbarism of the rebellion in its renaissance.”¹⁸ Following the results of the Congress’s collected reports, some three quarters of the white population in North Carolina, for instance, was hostile to Washington and would “throw every obstacle in the way of carrying out its laws ... without rendering themselves liable to punishment.”¹⁹ These hostilities were mainly “a refusal to recognize the condition of the former slaves as freedmen, and a disposition to oppress them by combining and stating to them that they intended, as soon as the power was in their hands again, ... [to] make it worse for [blacks] ... than before they were freed ... The confederate soldiers ... seem to feel bitter towards the free class on account of their being raised to an equality with them.”²⁰ In Georgia, the people “have no attachment to the Union, none of the feelings which we deem patriotic. [In comparison, however, the

15 “The South Carolina Freedmen’s Code,” in Louis M. Hacker und Helène S. Zahler, ed., *The Shaping of the American Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 628–637.

16 Foner, *Reconstruction*, 201.

17 *Savannah Daily Herald* [Ga.], April 2, 1865, 4.

18 Quoted in Foner, *Reconstruction*, 262–263.

19 “Interview with Lieutenant George Sanderson,” in: U.S. Congress, Joint Committee on Reconstruction, *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*. 39th Cong., 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1866), 175. Sanderson was a Union soldier from Boston, Mass., stationed in North Carolina.

20 *Ibid.*, 175–176.