

Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina NEWSLETTER

HONORING HISTORY ★ CELEBRATING CULTURE ★ CONNECTING COMMUNITIES

Professor Jonathan Sarna's Review of the book

DOWN HOME: Jewish Life in North Carolina

“Down Home is the best and most comprehensive history of Jews in any one of the fifty states. Lively, well researched, and beautifully illustrated, it is a warts-and-all history that properly integrates 425 years of Jewish life in North Carolina with larger trends in American and Southern Jewish life. The volume sets a new standard for state-wide histories of American Jews, and sheds new light on Southern Jewry, Black-Jewish relations, and the American Jewish experience as a whole.”

Jonathan D. Sarna,
Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun
Professor of American
Jewish History,
Brandeis University and
author of *American
Judaism: A History*

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First History of Jews in North Carolina to be Published next Spring

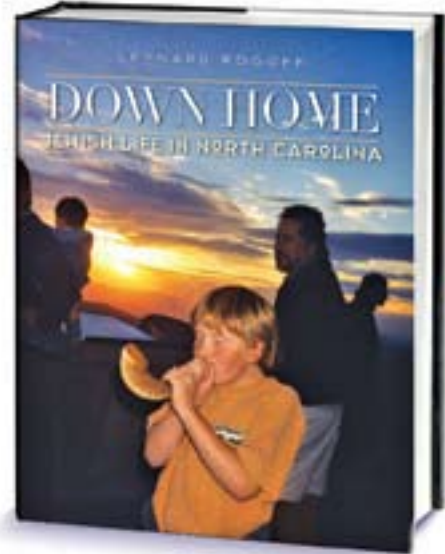
Laura Gribbin, UNC Press

On April 15, 2010, the University of North Carolina Press, in association with the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina, will publish Leonard Rogoff's *Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina*, a sweeping history of Jewish life in the Tar Heel State from colonial times to the present. *Down Home* is part of a larger documentary project of the same name that includes a film and a traveling museum exhibition.

This beautifully illustrated volume incorporates oral histories, original historical documents, and profiles of fascinating individuals. The first comprehensive social history of its kind, *Down Home* demonstrates that the story of North Carolina Jews is attuned to the national story of immigrant acculturation but has a southern twist.

Leonard Rogoff considers how the North Carolina Jewish experience differs from that of Jews in other southern states. He explores how Jews very often settled in North Carolina's small towns, rather than in its large cities, and he documents the reach and vitality of Jewish North Carolinians' participation in building the New South and the Sunbelt. Many North Carolina Jews were among those at the forefront of a changing South, Rogoff argues, and their experiences challenge stereotypes of a society that was agrarian and Protestant.

More than 125 historic and contemporary photographs complement Rogoff's engaging epic, providing a visual panorama of Jewish social, cultural, economic, and religious life in North Carolina. This fascinating, complex, and entertaining book will not be surpassed even as the story it tells will continue to unfold in the decades to come.



**The Down Home book will be available
April 2010. Pre-order at www.jhfn.org**

The book has been several years in the making and is the result of a close collaboration between UNC Press and the Jewish Heritage Foundation. According to Will Grossman, director of operations at the Foundation, "All of us at the Foundation have enjoyed our collaboration with UNC Press's professional staff. We are honored to have this book published by a North Carolina publisher with such a great national reputation."

Elaine Maisner, UNC Press senior editor, notes, "It's been a pleasure to work with the Jewish Heritage Foundation of North Carolina and with historian Leonard Rogoff on *Down Home*. They are true and unwavering appreciators of the value of history, well done."



DOWN HOME

Jewish Life in North Carolina
A DOCUMENTARY

Remarkable stories of Jewish life in North Carolina from its pioneering settlers to the diverse communities of today.

An exceptional documentary that brings a poignant history to life.

81 minutes • color • 2009

\$19.95 each (plus \$1.55 tax,
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President's Message:

Dear Friends,

I've now seen the Down Home film over a dozen times. Each time I find something new and poignant to marvel at. At its most recent screening at the Triangle Jewish Film Festival, it struck me how many of the voices in the film are no longer with us. Jewish tradition teaches us to honor our elders and to tell their story. The Down Home project is our effort to do just that. It would be a shame if the heroic experiences of our Tar Heel Jewish forbears were lost forever.

During a recent planning meeting at the North Carolina Museum of History, Will Grossman and I visited their exhibits about pirates, fishermen of the Core Sound, and farm families in Western North Carolina. We were proud to think that the Down Home exhibit will soon share the stage at such an important and wonderful museum-- that the stories of our forefathers and foremothers will finally be celebrated. The exhibit will open June 13, 2010 at a very special gala event. You can read more about the exhibit and its fabrication on these pages.

In addition to the film and exhibit, the Down Home book, published by UNC Press will be released on April 15, 2010. It has already received critical acclaim. And finally, our educational curriculum committee is completing the public school DVDs and teacher's guides that will be released for the 2010 school year.

Creating Down Home has been an effort of devotion and hard work, and we can finally see its bright light at the end of the tunnel; a light that will shine for years to come on the remarkable 400-year story of Jewish settlement in North Carolina.

Thank you.
Henry



Did You Know?



by Leonard Rogoff, JHFC Historian

The title Down Home suggests that Jews sank roots deeply in the state's soil, but we also know that most Jews in the state are migrants. Jews tend to be a mobile people, who move in search of opportunity.

Yet state maps and gazetteers reveal Jewish names engraved on the landscape. Like the people themselves, they have some times moved on. Weil, located at a river junction in Wayne County, was a rural community, the site of a brickyard and rail station. It bore the name of a very prominent antebellum Goldsboro family, who provided leadership to the Jewish community for almost a century.

Louis Baer, a storekeeper in Dunn, gave his name to Baerville. The merchant's first love was farming, and his land purchases gave rise to a rural neighborhood. Erlanger, now a suburb of Lexington, was a mill village named in 1914 for the textile magnates Charles and Abraham Erlanger, who manufactured fabric there for their BVD underwear brands. Starmount, a prominent place name in Greensboro, anglicizes Sternberger, the mill-owner who developed the area. Street names like Kaplan, Cone, or Benjamin attest to a Jewish presence, and parks honor generous and prominent citizens from a baseball diamond at Leinwand Field in

Elizabethtown to the thousands of mountain acres at Moses H. Cone Memorial Park in the Blue Ridge.

Two towns still have Jewish provenance. In 1943, citizens of Hemp decided to honor the mill owner and civic benefactor who kept the town prosperous throughout the depression years. Hemp was renamed Robbins. Karl Robbins was a New Yorker, who also resided in Pinehurst. (He later purchased the 4,000 acres that formed Research Triangle Park.) Although not involved with the state's Jewish community, Robbins was a founder of the New York Jewish Federation and a benefactor of Yeshiva University. Robbins, the hometown of former presidential candidate John Edwards, was described in the national media as a model of the small-town South.

In mountain Transylvania County, the town of Toxaway on the French Broad River was frequently confused with the nearby resort of Lake Toxaway. In 1905 industrialist Joseph Silversteen (or Silverstern), who owned a local tannery and lumber mill, renamed it in honor of his two business partners, Joseph Rosenthal and Morris Omansky. He came up with Rosman, now home to some 500 residents.

Exhibit Premieres at North Carolina Museum of History

Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina Opens June 13-gala event

B.J. Davis, Education Section Chief, North Carolina Museum of History



Design for the "Commerce and Community" module of the Down Home exhibit.

After more than eight years and the creation of a documentary film and publication of a book, the Foundation's Down Home triptych comes to complete fruition with the exhibit Down Home: Jewish Life in North Carolina, which will premiere at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh on Sunday, June 13, 2010, at a gala event and open to the public the following day.

Encompassing over 1,500 square feet of gallery space on the museum's third floor, the exhibit will tell the story of Jewish life in North Carolina by integrating several main themes. "Love of Learning" explains why Jews are known as "People of the Book" and discusses the central tenant of lifelong learning. "Keeping the Faith" explores rituals and symbols of Judaism and looks at what creates a Jewish identity. "Family First" shows how the home is as much a center of Jewish life and culture as the synagogue, and "Building Businesses,

Creating Communities" highlights success stories and shows how Jewish North Carolinians have integrated into their surroundings while building ties across racial, religious, and cultural divides.

Staff members at the North Carolina Museum of History have been busy working alongside Foundation board members, staff, and contractors to ensure that the exhibit's premiere is successful. "We want all visitors, whether they're from North Carolina or not, to understand that the story of Jewish life in the state contains important parallels to many distinct cultural groups that have made North Carolina their home," says Jackson Marshall, the museum's assistant director for interpretive programming.

To supplement the exhibit, the museum plans to provide a broad range of programming in the form of lectures, family programs, hands-on activities, podcasts, and educational materials.



Design for the "Love of Learning" module of the Down Home exhibit.

Exhibit in Final Construction Phase

Mike Cindric, Design Dimension, Inc.

The exhibit is structured around four main themes: Family, Community, Faith, and Learning. The objective is to define what it is to be a Jew in North Carolina, to examine how Jews have assimilated into the Carolina culture, and to observe how Jews have shaped North Carolina life as well as how North Carolina has affected the evolution of the state's Jewish culture.

The main design challenge has been developing an exhibit that is to be shown at five venues, each with a different gallery size, footprint, ceiling height, installation requirements, and lighting condition, while retaining the rich content and imagery of the exhibit at each venue. Models of each exhibit gallery, populated by miniature exhibit components, have been created to simulate visitor experience and insure cohesive narrative flow.

Currently, designers are developing the construction documents, finalizing image selection, artifact acquisition, media development, and a variety of other design details. Last-minute touches to the text and exhibit narrative are being applied by historian Leonard Rogoff, researcher Rebecca Cerese, and exhibit developer Benjamin Filene. At the same time, exhibit designers from McRae Design of Greensboro and Design Dimension of Raleigh are turning the narrative into exhibit experiences that will enlighten, inform, and entertain. Once the design is complete, exhibit components will be fabricated by Design Dimension and media pieces will be produced by Warren Gentry & Associates. The exhibit will premiere at the North Carolina Museum of History (Raleigh) in June, 2010, will also travel to the Cape Fear Museum (Wilmington), the Greensboro Historical Museum (Greensboro), The Levine Museum of the New South (Charlotte), and the University of North Carolina at Asheville.

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