

THE JEWS OF GREENSBORO: IN OR OUT OF THE UPPER CLASS?

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In 1955—a year before C. Wright Mills published *The Power Elite* (1956)—Harry Golden (1955:6) wrote of the South: “the ‘most Gentile’ section of America has provided the most favorable ‘atmosphere’ the Jewish people have known in the modern world.” Golden’s claim seemed then, and still seems, surprising in light of a sizable social-psychological literature indicating that residents of the South are more authoritarian and anti-Semitic than residents of any other region in America (e.g., Adorno et al., 1950; Glock and Stark, 1966; Selznick and Steinberg, 1969).

Golden is not alone in perceiving the South as a “hospitable” place for Jews. Eli Evans (1974:211), in a personal history of being Jewish in the South, claims that “most Jews in the South live in a relaxed atmosphere without fear for their safety or worry over their future.” He concludes:

Like the rest of the United States, the South has had its anti-Semitic episodes, its share of incidents and ugliness. The question that I have sought to explore is whether it is indeed true that the South is the most anti-Semitic part of the United States. I don’t think that most Jews in the South would agree with the findings of the polls and studies, for most Jews live their lives in a placid atmosphere as part of the white majority.¹ (Evans, 1974:226)

Is the conclusion drawn by the social-psychological and sociological literature correct, or are the more personal and subjective analyses of Jewish southerners such as Golden and Evans more valid? A broader question concerns the role of American Jews, not just southern Jews, in the power structure. No doubt many Jews, southern and northern alike, have achieved economic security and power. Stephen Isaacs (1974:124), in his excellent *Jews and American Politics*, analyzes the salient role Jews play in American political life, and asserts, “Jews are now the most affluent group in America.”²

These claims are corroborated by the self-descriptions of American Jews. Rose (1959) found that Jews from a small town in upstate New York were most likely to categorize themselves as upper middle class (74 percent) and upper class (12 percent); only 14 percent rated themselves as less than upper middle class. Fleishman (1975) found that 91 percent of his North Carolina Jewish sample fell into the first three of Hollingshead’s five social classes (based on a two-factor measure, education and occupation). The list of studies showing Jews to be economically successful is a

long one. But the question remains: Have Jews become part of America's upper class?

Baltzell (1969) proposes that as of 1950 there was a separate "class hierarchy within each of our larger religious communities"—Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish. But he claimed that at the very top, for Jews and Catholics in these highest circles, class has become much more important than religion:

While most Americans . . . are living and moving up the class hierarchy within each of our larger religious communities, there exists today an important qualitative difference in the nature of social relationships at the very top levels of society. In other words, while there are upper-, middle- and lower-class levels *within the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish communities*, there are Protestants, Catholics and Jews *within the elite*. To put it another way, class tends to replace religion (and even ethnicity and race) as the independent variable in social relationships at the highest levels of our society. (Baltzell, 1969:306)³

Domhoff (1967:52) suggested a "small, parallel Jewish upper class . . . may or may not be more fully assimilated into the national upper class in the next several decades." At least, as of a decade ago, then, some Jews had been successful enough to be described as "upper class," although not yet assimilated into the larger, more powerful, American upper class.

Some Jews, while proud of their accomplishments, do not identify themselves as part of an upper class, even on Domhoff's separate-but-equal basis, asserting that Jews are not part of the power structure. If "it" (which never needs specification) happened in America, class position would quickly surrender to religious prejudice. As Arthur Hertzberg, president of the American Jewish Congress, put it:

If the crunch ever comes between the "haves" and the "have-nots," the "haves" are perfectly willing to sell out the Jews . . . to save what they have . . . both Jews and Blacks are marginal to the power structure of the United States. The goyish world looks at Jews as a pool of brains to be used and at Blacks as a pool of backs to be used. The WASP world would be perfectly willing to let the brains and the backs fight it out. (Isaacs, 1974:167)

Are Jews "marginal to the power structure of the United States," part of a "small, parallel, upper class," or have they crossed over into the larger, formerly WASPish, ruling class? This study of Greensboro, North Carolina advances some tentative answers to these questions.

JEWISH GREENSBORO'S FIRST FAMILY

Birmingham's (1967) historical treatment of the great New York Jewish fortunes occasionally took him south of the Mason-Dixon line. Seligmans and Lehman visited the South before settling permanently in New York City. Others, not discussed by Birmingham, remained in the South. The most significant of these, for the Jews of Greensboro, was immigrant Herman Kahn. To avoid conscription, 17-year-old Herman Kahn left a small village in Bavaria, Altenstadt on/Iller, in 1845. Since an older sister lived in Richmond, Virginia, he settled there. He was apparently somewhat of an embarrassment to his sister Elise, who had been in America for some years. Herman didn't speak the language correctly, and although he changed his last name from "Kahn" to "Cone," he simply didn't fit into Richmond's German-Jewish community. According to the family history, perhaps apocryphal, they

“wanted him out of town badly enough to furnish a stock of goods and a horse and wagon from which to peddle in the country” (Cone, S., unpublished:27).

Herman Cone's two oldest sons, Moses and Ceasar, organized the Cone Export and Commission Company in 1890, a sales and financial agent for southern cotton mills, financed largely by their father's wholesale grocery business. Their best grocery customers had been the mill-operated mercantile stores found in mill villages. And, as Moses had traveled throughout the Piedmont, he began to sense how the mills operated and especially their business shortcomings. In the words of his nephew: “He went straight to the top—got to know the owners. They were big fish, but in small, separate ponds.” Often Moses stayed at the mill owner's home, where they would likely stay up late into the night, playing poker, smoking cigars, and talking business. Moses found that small independent mills had a common problem: they lacked sufficient capital to buy cotton at the time it was required. Indeed, many mill villages paid for groceries with yarn or cloth.

So Moses made an offer: he would provide cash to the mills for a monopoly on their goods. Such monopolies were not illegal, and many mill owners were delighted with the offer. They would do the producing and the Cones would do the marketing.

Within a year, Cone Export and Commission Company, with offices in New York City, was selling for 47 different North Carolina cotton mills. By 1894 (a decade after Herman retired), 6,008 of 7,274 shares of stock in Cone Export and Commission Company, valued at more than \$300,000, were held by Herman Cone and his sons. In 1895, the Proximity Mill, owned by the Cones, began production in Greensboro. By 1904, the common stock in Cone Export and Commission Company was valued at over \$1,000,000. The Cone family, as it does today, maintained majority interest. When Moses died in 1908, his immense personal fortune included a 35,000-acre estate in the North Carolina mountains and a “home” that, as the *Greensboro Daily News* put it, “Would be called a mansion in New York or a castle in the old country.” He provided for the construction of the Moses H. Cone Hospital to be built in Greensboro.

Thus it was that Herman Kahn become Cone and his two oldest sons guided the family business into textiles in Greensboro, North Carolina. Cone Mills became the world's leading producer of denim, corduroy, and flannel. The family fortune grew so large as to provide steady incomes for sisters Etta and Claribel, who lived in Baltimore, travelled widely and frequently in Europe, and became celebrated for their friendship with Gertrude Stein (Cone, E.T., 1973; Mellow, 1974; Pollack, 1962).

The impact of Cone Mills on Greensboro has been massive. In 1920, Cone Mills employed approximately 3,000 of the population's 20,000 people. The Cone family participated in community leadership and assimilated into the local upper class, as indicated by acceptance in such local bastions as the Greensboro Country Club and a good bit of marrying out of the faith. Though the population of Greensboro is much larger today and the percentage of residents employed by Cone Mills much smaller than in 1920, the family's impact is still quite visible: schools, roads, and the hospital are named after various Cones. Their impact has been so great, in fact, that Golden (1974:21) has written that “there was never an ‘our crowd’ in the South, except perhaps the textile Cones of Greensboro, North Carolina.”

For the past 75 years, then, the Jews of Greensboro lived in a town whose most prominent, wealthy, and visible people have been a Jewish family named Cone.

METHODS

A network analysis of Greensboro's elite social and economic institutions was performed. Membership lists for the temple and synagogue, local country clubs, and the Greensboro City Club, an exclusive downtown dining spot, were obtained. Also, membership on Greensboro-based companies' boards of directors listed in Dun and Bradstreet (1976) as recording over \$1 million in sales was ascertained. Finally, lists were compared for overlap. In short, were Jews members of country clubs, the City Club, and on the boards of directors of large companies? If so, how many? Such representation was assumed (after Mills, 1955; Lundberg, 1968; Domhoff, 1967, 1970, 1972, 1974) to be the best indication of true acceptance into the upper class of Greensboro.

The 1975 membership list used for Temple Emanuel contained 300 families. The 1975-1976 list for Beth David contained 240 families. Certainly, numerous people whose mothers were Jewish (the Talmudic requirement for being a Jew, unless one "converts" into the faith), or who simply defined themselves as being Jewish (a simpler operational definition used by Isaacs, 1974:14), live in Greensboro but are unaffiliated. In fact, the director of the North Carolina Triad Federation of Jews, an umbrella organization coordinating activities among the five congregations in Greensboro, High Point, and Winston-Salem, estimated that another 250 Greensboro families define themselves as Jewish, but are not members of either congregation. Except in specially noted cases, the Jews of Greensboro were operationally defined as members of the temple in 1975 or the synagogue in 1975-1976. Thus, the data generated a *conservative* estimate of the degree of Jewish acceptance. The use of membership lists was not only a practical approach to the problem, but also delivered a meaningful definition, membership in a temple or synagogue implying both a public and a private commitment to being Jewish.

The second method used to gather data was that of intensive interviewing. The sample selection used what has been referred to as the "snowball approach"—a few contacts suggesting friends and acquaintances they thought willing to be interviewed, and these people suggesting others. In addition, as certain patterns and issues began to emerge, interviews with subjects clearly having relevant information were scheduled and completed. For example, interviews with Ben Cone, Sr., mayor of Greensboro from 1949 to 1951, and his son Ben, Jr. ("Benjy"), a convert to Judaism after an Episcopalian rearing, were obtained. Further, individuals acquainted with key figures or prominent in the temple, the synagogue, or various clubs, and both long- and short-term Jewish residents of Greensboro, were interviewed. Though not a random sample of Greensboro's Jewish community, the selection process incorporated a wide variety of people with extremely diverse backgrounds.

RESULTS

Network analysis

To what extent were Jews members of various private and exclusive clubs in Greensboro? As can be seen in Table 1, our data verify that three of four social clubs selected as being the most exclusive and prestigious in Greensboro have Jewish members. Ironically, the fourth, Starmount Country Club, is known as "the Jewish

TABLE 1
**Jewish Membership in Greensboro Country Clubs, in the
 Greensboro City Club, and on Boards of Directors**

	# of Members	# of Jewish Members	% of Jewish Members	Members of Temple	Members of Synagogue
Greensboro Country Club	943	24	2.5%	23	1
Sedgefield Country Club	526	8	1.5%	7	1
Starmount Country Club	--	--	--	--	--
Greensboro City Club	681	41	6.0%	38	3
Boards of Directors of Million Dollar Companies	417	14	3.4%	11	3

country club": it and surrounding residences were owned and developed by a wealthy Jewish family,⁴ and most interested and eligible Jewish families in Greensboro join Starmount. Yet, unlike other investigated clubs, Starmount issues no membership directory and hasn't for more than a decade. Nor was a membership list available for examination. The club's policy, though surprising, created little difficulty for the network analysis, for there are known Jewish members at Starmount. Members' estimates of Jewish membership range from 15 percent to 70 percent.⁵

A number of striking characteristics become apparent in Table 1. First, Jewish members in all three clubs with available membership lists were much more likely to be temple members than members of the synagogue, approximately 90 percent being affiliated with the temple.

Second, the percentage of Jewish members in these clubs is approximately equal to or greater than the percentage of Jews in the Greensboro population. While Isaacs (1967:27) and Fleishman (1975:5) estimate the percentage of Jews in North Carolina at 0.2 percent, they represent a higher proportion in Greensboro than in the state at large. If average family size, 4.1 (Petersen, 1975:340), is multiplied by 540, the number of families in the two Jewish congregations, the Jewish population of Greensboro (by our definition) thus derived, 2214, is 1.4 percent of the total population at the last census, 154,511.⁶

Third, 3.4 percent of the members of Greensboro's major corporations' boards of directors are Jewish. This has not been the pattern found elsewhere. Ferdinand Lundberg, in *The Rich and the Super-Rich*, summarized various findings of consistent Jewish underrepresentation in high corporate ranks. He concluded:

Even in cities with large Jewish population, like New York and Philadelphia, where frequency in the population might be expected to be reflected at least locally in management ranks, the percentage of Jewish participation is negligible. (Lundberg, 1968:363)

Howe (1976:611) made the same point, claiming research showed that few Jews occupy "positions of genuine power within the corporate economy." One study of Harvard Business School graduates found "the non-Jewish graduates propor-

TABLE 2
Housing Values of Jewish Greensboro Residents

	Synagogue	Temple	Both
High	108 (59%)	144 (62%)	252 (61%)
High or upper middle	37 (20%)	49 (21%)	86 (21%)
Upper middle or middle	33 (18%)	31 (14%)	64 (15%)
Middle or lower	<u>5 (3%)</u>	<u>9 (3%)</u>	<u>14 (3%)</u>
	183 (100%)	233 (100%)	416 (100%)

tionately outnumber Jewish graduates in executive positions in the leading American corporations by better than 30 to 1."

Overrepresentation of a city's Jews on large corporation boards of directors is quite atypical: Greensboro seems to be the only sizable American city to show such a pattern. Not surprisingly, almost all the Jewish directors are temple, rather than synagogue, members. And, not surprisingly, almost one-third are named Cone.

A closer look at Jewish boards of directors members reveals that 10 of 14 are from three families. In addition to the four Cones, three are Bates (of Bates Nitewear) and three are Davidsons (of Davidson Supply). The other four are Martin Bernstein and Lawrence Cohen (both of Jewel Box of Greensboro), Maurice Fishman (of Guilford Mills), and Sidney J. Stern, Jr. (of United Guaranty).

Further research indicates that Jewish residents of Greensboro live quite well. They live in the most desirable neighborhoods; a full 82 percent are found in the two highest residential categories on a Chamber of Commerce map of the city showing housing values; only three percent live in the two lowest. A careful check of Irving Park, the most elegant and high-priced neighborhood in Greensboro, indicates that earlier patterns still hold: of the 26 Jews living in Irving Park, 24 are members of the temple, two are members of the synagogue.

Birmingham (1958:83) writes that, "It is at the debutante stage that what is known as 'The Great Division' begins to take place, and Jewish and Gentile Society are parted like the Red Sea." This is one chasm Greensboro's Jews have not bridged, and may indicate incomplete assimilation. Over the years, a handful of Jewish girls have received invitations to "come out." A check of debutante lists published in the *Greensboro Daily News* for the past four years reveals that of 113 who "came out," only one was Jewish.

There has also been a dearth of Jewish women in Greensboro's Junior League, not surprising when one considers that "League members are also, to a large extent, debutantes and former debutantes" (Birmingham, 1958:122-123). Currently, there are 336 "active" and 378 "sustaining" (dues-paying, over age 40 and, for the most part, inactive) members of the Junior League. Of the 714 women, four are Jewish (0.6 percent), all are sustaining members, and two are Cones. One of these is a past organization president (and her daughter was the sole Jewish debutante from 1973 to 1976).

Both network analysis and investigation of residential patterns indicate that some

few Jews of Greensboro have become part of the local upper class. Is this also their perception? Has a unique history and pattern of acceptance into the local upper class affected their sense of being Jewish?

INTERVIEWS

When asked how she felt about Greensboro, one former resident of a Jewish suburb in Philadelphia responded that although she had some reservations when she arrived in the early 1950s, she had grown to love it: "You couldn't move me from this town—you couldn't move me!" Her positive reaction typified those of almost every interviewed Jewish resident. They felt that they were very much a part of the larger community, that the town had been good to them, and that, in short, Greensboro was a fine place for Jews to live.

"If there was, we didn't know it!" was the response of one long-time Jewish resident when asked about anti-Semitism in the early part of the century. Almost all those interviewed could recall no more than possibly a few anti-Semitic personal experiences, often of such questionable nature and minor importance as to generate reluctance at labeling them as anti-Semitic in character. Most attributed the dearth of anti-Semitism to the presence, since the 1890s, of the Cones (or, as the older residents put it, to "Mr. Moses" and "Mr. Ceasar," the two sons of Herman Cone).

Many experienced no anti-Semitism (or, as one put it, "zero prejudice"). More often, reference was made to "remarks," either by people who did not realize they were Jewish, or by comments made to their children at school. One former Baltimore resident, a high-school student of the late 1960s, noted, "You didn't gyp someone in Greensboro, you 'Jewed' them" (Cohen, 1970:138).⁷

There were several cases of overt, anti-Semitism: one family had the words "dirty Jew" scratched on their car, one merchant had anti-Semitic slogans painted on his store, and in the late 1960s anti-Semitic slogans were painted on the synagogue. Such events, however, seem to have been rare. Interviewees (especially males) tended to minimize the importance of such experiences: they were few and far between, it was worse back in Pittsburgh, or it probably wasn't anti-Semitism anyway.⁸ When one married couple was asked if they had ever experienced anti-Semitism in Greensboro, the man paused and said, "There's been no anti-Semitic feeling of any kind." His wife volunteered that someone had drawn a swastika on their house when they first moved into their current neighborhood. The husband did not consider this to be anti-Semitism, explaining it "was just some kid in the neighborhood, and it never happened again." Such examples suggested psychological defense mechanisms of denial in action, and called into question the accuracy of some respondent perceptions about the lack of anti-Semitism.

Yet, despite near unanimity in finding little anti-Semitism in Greensboro, Jews were quite aware of being excluded for being Jewish. Two Jewish members of the Greensboro Country Club separately referred to current concerns that there may be a quota—that had been reached—on Jews at "the country club." They were unaware of the admissions committee's composition, but were sensitive to the fact that neither they nor Jewish friends had been asked to serve. Similarly, one interviewee observed that Jews at Starmount Country Club were "clannish" by choice—playing golf with other Jews, taking meals with other Jews, and associating with other Jews "not because they're not accepted, but because they're more comfortable with other

Jews." But she was quite aware that Jewish members had not served on major committees at Starmount.

The deep-rooted pervasive concern that anti-Semitism could surface, even in as comfortable an environment as Greensboro, was expressed by a man one would expect to be least concerned. Ben Cone, Sr., eldest Cone of his generation (77 at the time of the interview), former mayor (1949-1951), member of the Greensboro Country Club and the Greensboro City Club, former member of the board of directors at Cone Mills, and married to a non-Jew, said that although he was "never particularly aware of any, there's always latent anti-Semitism, still is."

Evans felt that, for Jews in the South, assimilation was necessary for survival. He asserts that when the Jewish immigrants arrived in the South prior to the Civil War, it did not take long to define the situation:

The country was dividing and the South was closing ranks. To the Southerners, all the players were rooted in one place, black and white, status sure and unalterable. No one, least of all the foreigners, uttered a word out of line with prevailing opinion. The harmony of views was disturbed only by the news of the stinging indictments of the abolitionists in the North, lashing out at slavery as immoral and lecherous. For anyone in the South who would dare even murmur agreement with those moralizing Northern preacher-jackasses, why they'd just get a few of the boys together to boil up a little tar for the sympathizers, maybe even the lynching tree for the leaders of the runaways, if the night was right for it.

The fear of them, then—no one crossed the Southerner in his native land. The Jew was conditioned to fear authority from the boot of the tsar and the emperor; he knew his place—the perpetual visitor, tentative and unaccepted, his primary concern to remain and survive. Subconsciously, the region would stake a claim to a corner of his soul, too; for he was white and he would acquiesce and become like them in many ways. (Evans, 1974:42)

Isaacs, also a southern Jew (his father is editor of a Louisville newspaper), makes quite the same point when he claims that the primary motive for assimilation was fear, that Jews settling the South had their legitimate share of fear so they assimilated:

In America, Jews in the old South were not "liberals," were not progressives. They rather easily managed to ignore Isaiah's call to "relieve the oppressed." Many owned slaves and most went along with the idea of a slave-based economy. Not a single Jew has been identified among the abolitionists in Charlestown, South Carolina, . . . home to the largest Jewish community in the United States at one time. The man regarded as the "brains of the Confederacy" was Judah P. Benjamin, a Jew. Almost a century later, after the Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* in which school desegregation was ruled unconstitutional, many Jewish Southerners protested strongly. Some members of the American Jewish Committee who lived in the South pleaded with the committee to back off its active role in promoting civil rights. (Isaacs, 1974:180)

On the issue of slavery, evidence indicates that Southern Jews were no different than other Southerners. In his article, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789-1865," Bertram Korn concludes:

A pattern of almost complete conformity to the slave society of the Old South on the part of its Jewish citizens. They participated in the buying, owning, and selling of slaves, and the exploitation of their labor, along with their neighbors. The behavior of Jews towards slaves

seems to have been indistinguishable from that of their non-Jewish friends. This description also characterizes the opinions of Jews about slavery. (Korn, 1973:123)

The historical pressures noted by Evans, Isaacs, and Korn were present in Greensboro; assimilation of the larger gentile population's values and behavior has characterized the Jewish community.⁹ Such assimilation is most apparent when examining the entry of wealthier Jews into the local upper class. Baltzell (1969:306) seems correct when concluding that, upon entry into "the highest level of society," class tends to replace religion.

It is especially informative to examine carefully the Cone family, Greensboro descendants of Herman Kahn, whose first step toward assimilation shortly after arriving in Richmond was to "Americanize" his name to Cone. Herman's oldest son, Moses, married a Jewish woman, but had no children; Ceasar Cone, the second son, also married a Jew, and had three sons—Herman, Benjamin, and Ceasar II. One of the many indicators of assimilation in the South is the nontraditional practice of naming one's sons after oneself, thus "Jr." or "the II." Jews traditionally have named their children after a deceased relative—nonsouthern Jews considered it "goyish" to name a child after oneself. Not so in the South. Evans (1974:263) quotes Sam Massell, former Jewish mayor of Atlanta: "I never knew that it wasn't done in Jewish families until ten or fifteen years ago when somebody first told me. There were so many of them here."

Ceasar's elder son, Herman, married a Jew, Louise Wolf, but both Benjamin and Ceasar II married gentiles. Though some of the oldest people interviewed indicated that the Jewish community was shocked back in 1937 when Ben Cone married Anne Wortham, an Episcopalian, Ben did not see it that way: "I don't think there was a negative or positive reaction. Happens every day. Arnold Schiffman did it too, several others had. My mother didn't exactly like it, but she came to be fond of my wife." A year and a half later, the third son, Ceasar II, married Martha Abercrombie, also an Episcopalian.

The three Cones—Herman, Ben and Ceasar II—had eight children and, currently, 17 grandchildren, three of whom have been or are being raised as Jews.

In at least one branch of the Cone family, there are some signs of reversal in the trend toward further assimilation. Although Ben's children were not raised as Jews, two have converted to Judaism, for different reasons. Ben, Jr., known as "Benjy," returned from Vietnam in 1967 and, greatly affected by the six-day war in Israel, converted, going on to head the Israeli bond campaign. While remaining active in community affairs, he says of himself, "I'm still a twice a year Jew—Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur." In 1974, Benjy's older sister, Jeannette, married a Jew and converted to Judaism. Benjy's wife is not Jewish and has no plans to convert; the children are being raised as Episcopalians. How active the few Jewish Cones will be in the temple remains to be seen. At the moment, there are more non-Jewish Cones than Jewish Cones in Greensboro: those who are Jewish tend to be, like Benjy, "twice a year Jews;" others do not attend that often.

Herman Kahn was one of thousands of Jews who changed his name (or had it changed by immigration officials) upon arriving in America. Through the years numerous Jews have changed their names from those recognizable as Jewish (e.g., Bernie Schwartz) to ones less Jewishly identifiable (e.g., Tony Curtis). While no available data support a tentative hypothesis that more southerly moving Jews than Jews moving to other regions did this, a number who did so were discovered and

interviewed. One man expressed his reasons, and his sense that the younger generation has changed its attitude on this issue, in the following manner:

At that time there was a definite feeling in going to a new place that you wanted to be assimilated That is a philosophy I was exposed to when I was young, and one that I think is typical of what's happened in the United States. The idea of losing identity in those days was the thing to do. Today there seems to be a search for identity. Who knows which is right? Only time will tell.

Evans (1974:191) writes that "the process of assimilation is subtle and goes beyond overlooking religious laws or marrying gentiles." What is striking about some affluent Greensboro Jews is not the subtlety of their assimilation, but its absence. Some behavior has shocked the Jewish community, not simply in acceptance of gentile attitudes (though that is part of it), but by the intensity and vehemence with which they reject their Jewish heritage. Two examples, not typical of Greensboro's affluent Jews, are illustrative of the degree of "assimilation" which some have achieved.

The first concerns a man who came to Greensboro from a wealthy New Orleans family. He married into an even wealthier Greensboro family, developed an immense amount of land, and is now worth millions. His major development includes a country club, a large shopping center, and one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Greensboro (light blue—the highest rating—on the Chamber of Commerce map). His children all married out of the faith, most becoming Unitarians. He, too, dropped his membership in Temple Emanuel and became a Unitarian.

For reasons that remain unclear, he not only decided that he did not want to be buried in the family plot at the Hebrew Cemetery, where his in-laws had been buried, but also he moved the remains of his in-laws to a non-Jewish cemetery, thereby shocking and enraging the Jewish community. As one woman said when telling this story (many spoke of it), "It makes my blood boil to talk about it!" His only offered explanation was that because the road near the cemetery had been widened "it was too noisy."

The second case concerns a prominent individual interviewed. When asked about anti-Semitism in Greensboro, he replied:

I'm anti-Semitic. I don't like Jews. I've been to meetings where they repulse me. Jews are more prejudiced than non-Jews. They're more against each other (as I am) and against letting non-Jews participate in what they're doing.

He went on to say:

The anti-Semitism has grown in proportion to the number of northeast Jews who come down here to live. They've built up a certain amount of feeling that didn't exist before I hate to see the way they go about their business here. Take the Eastern Music Festival for example, it's become a Hebrew monopoly. I can't stand those festivals anymore because of the Jews.

I go to a Jew party at . . .

In addition to overtly anti-Semitic language, a striking parallel to the attitudes of established German Jews toward the incoming Eastern European Jews at the turn of the century exists. Baltzell writes:

Thus, the term “kike,” first coined by German Jews as a derogatory stereotype applying to the new Russian immigrants, was now used by gentiles when referring to Jews in general, the cultivated and Americanized German as well as the impoverished and alien garment workers on the Lower East Side. This was, of course, a terrible shock to the established Jews, especially the cultivated elite, some of whom became anti-Semitic themselves. For the outraged German Jew saw, shuffling down the gangplank, himself or his father, stripped of the accessories of respectability. (Baltzell, 1969:302-303)

The Greensboro descendant of German-Jewish immigrants had become viciously anti-Semitic in his language, his wrath primarily directed toward migrating “North-east Jews.”

Although the two congregations have had a number of rabbis over the years, one particular rabbi—and his wife—played an important liaison role to the upper-class gentile community. Rabbi Rypens of Temple Emanuel came to Greensboro in 1931, retiring in 1959. Even his detractors, who felt he was not traditional enough in his approach to Judaism, admit that he was “well-liked” and “highly respected” in the broader, gentile community. One of the first things mentioned about Rabbi Rypens was his appearance: he was tall, silver-haired, beautiful, and “not at all Jewish looking.” One particular description, by a wealthy Jewish woman, was especially revealing:

Mr. Rypens was very handsome—a beautiful man. I used to think when he stood on the pulpit under the everlasting light, I used to think, that’s maybe people’s image of Jesus.

What could indicate Jewish assimilation more than a Jew associating the beautiful and the holy with an image of Jesus?

If Rabbi Rypens “didn’t look Jewish,” his beliefs and attitudes were even less Jewish, in traditional terms. Consider, for example, his feelings about the bar mitzvah, the ceremony by which 13-year-old males are initiated into “the full practice of the faith” (Kahn, 1968:7): “(He) didn’t ever think bar mitzvah was necessary. He thought it was a totally wasted ceremony. They’re not old enough to make any promises.” One person close to him called him “reform reform.”¹⁰

The rabbi was a gentle man who never raised his voice or a fuss and who got along famously with the more affluent classes. He lived in the most exclusive neighborhood in Greensboro and was a member (honorary) of the Greensboro Country Club.

The rabbi’s wife established important ties with the upper-class gentile community, and brought it into contact with the upper-class Jewish community. Whereas the rabbi is remembered for his appearance, Mrs. Rypens is remembered for her pedagogic skills. A teacher who could teach anyone anything, it is even claimed that she tutored a recently arrived physician so that he could pass his state medical boards in anatomy. Though she knew little about anatomy, she knew how to teach, and he passed with ease.

In the early 1930s Mrs. Rypens opened a school in her home. Tutoring one or two students full time for the first six years, class size increased, to as many as 11 students during the 1940s. By the late 1940s the school had become a pre-prep school: Mrs. Rypens taught the child for one year, the ninth, and the child then went off to prep school. By the late 1950s the word was that “she could get you in anywhere”—Exeter, Abbot, Andover, or any other elite prep school. The school operated until 1970. During these 38 years, the rabbi’s wife educated the children of Greensboro’s

wealthiest families, Jewish and gentile alike. A look at the various class rosters reveals such locally prominent names as Preyer, Bowles, Bryan, Tannenbaum, Schiffman, and, of course, Cone. All her students were from affluent families, since even back in the 1950s, "You had to have \$1000 or \$1200 and that was a hell of a lot of money." Of the 129 students who over the years were enrolled at "Mrs. Rypens School," only 19 were Jewish.

Mrs. Rypens did not simply teach 129 students Latin, English, mathematics, and the like. She enabled her non-Jewish students, and their parents, to see how utterly respectable she and her rabbi husband were. She taught them well, belonged to their country club, lived in their fine neighborhood, and gave them love, affection, and self-confidence—how bad could it be to have Jewish associates if they were like Mrs. Rypens?

In addition, she eased the entree of her Jewish students into the predominantly gentile world of the upper class. Baltzell points out:

While public schools are largely neighborhood schools, and thus often ethnically homogeneous, the best private schools cater to a class clientele from all parts of the city and its suburbs, and increasingly tend to include a small nucleus of children from elite Jewish families. The boarding school is, of course, even a more powerful class-assimilating atmosphere for the minority of Jewish youths who go there from wealthy and prominent families. (Baltzell, 1969:308)¹¹

Thus, Mrs. Rypens prepared her few Jewish students for Andover, Deerfield, Exeter, and other elite prep schools by creating the right mix and the right atmosphere.

CONCLUSIONS

What conclusions can we draw about the Jews of Greensboro? First, the findings support the contention of Golden, Evans, and others that the South has provided receptive environments for Jews. Both the network analysis and the interviews indicate that Jews are socially accepted both generally and at the highest levels. Greensboro Jews live in the most affluent neighborhoods, are members of the country clubs, the City Club, and are on the boards of directors of major corporations. Their disproportionately high representation on boards of directors has not been the case elsewhere, not even in northern cities like New York and Philadelphia (Lundberg, 1968:363). Only in the Junior League were Jews underrepresented; as pointed out, however, though it has not had many Jewish members, it had a Jewish president.

There is no reason to assume, however, that Greensboro typifies the way Jews are treated in the South. In fact, some current but as yet incomplete research on the Jews of Winston-Salem, a nearby city of comparable size and population, suggests quite a different pattern (Zweigenhaft, forthcoming). In Winston-Salem, there are no Jewish members in the two most prestigious country clubs, the Junior League or a downtown dining club, and very few Jews on boards of directors of major corporations.¹²

It appears that each city has its unique behavior pattern, based primarily on its particular history. The presence of the Cones in Greensboro has clearly shaped its response to Jews; in contrast, wealth in Winston-Salem is almost exclusively gentile, mostly in tobacco.¹³ The Chicago Club only recently has opened its doors to Jews,

while the membership of Jews has been an issue at Los Angeles' California Club (Domhoff, 1977). As the brouhaha over Griffin Bell's nomination as Attorney General in early 1977 revealed, the Piedmont Driving Club in Atlanta has yet to allow Jewish members (Kaiser, 1976).

As to whether or not Jews have made it into the upper class, many who qualify financially and have the inclination seem to have done so in Greensboro. Furthermore, they have done so in precisely the way Baltzell (1969) described; that is, class has become more salient in their lives, religion less so. Whether Greensboro is indicative of the South as a region, or of a current national pattern, or neither, remains to be seen.

Finally, what does it mean to have Jews in the upper class? Not necessarily a better world, or even a more liberal one. In fact, such acceptance into the highest circles results in strengthening rather than weakening the ruling class. Lundberg's comments are worthy of consideration:

The clubs make sure, in advance, that anyone taken in agrees broadly with their *weltanschauung*.

If Jews were suddenly admitted to the clubs and upper corporate positions would it be a gain for liberalism? In view of Baltzell it would (and he is probably right in this) result in a strengthening of the ruling class, in making it more competent, less mindlessly castelike. It would make the ruling class more effective . . . (Lundberg, 1968:358)

There are, then, obvious individual benefits to Jews who gain membership in the upper class. But, as this study notes, these may come accompanied by assimilation.

NOTES

1. Golden (1955) and Evans (1974) are not alone in their belief. Hero (1973:239) points out that:

For generations Southern Jews and Gentiles have been saying that there is less anti-Semitism in the South than elsewhere in the United States and have taken pride in the rapport between Jews and Gentiles in the region.

2. See also Goldstein (1970:154-158).

3. As of 1940, Baltzell had not found this to be the case. In an article on Philadelphia's Jewish upper class from 1782 to 1940, Baltzell (1958:271) wrote:

The Jewish community in Philadelphia is one of the oldest and most influential in America. Isolated socially from the Gentile world in a variety of ways, this ethnic and religious community perpetuates an ancient and rich cultural tradition. Its well-developed institutional structure, which parallels that of the Gentiles, is supported by a highly articulate associational and class structure.

4. The developer of Starmount, Ed Benjamin, was married to Blanche Sternberger. Starmount (the English translation of Sternberger) never excluded

Gentiles: as far as can be determined, a majority of its membership has always been Gentile.

5. Although it was not possible to obtain Starmount's membership list, a list of the Starmount Ladies Golf Association, consisting of the women golfers at Starmount, was secured. There were 102 women on the list—six were members of the temple, and three were members of the synagogue. Those interviewed thought this (8.8 percent) a minimum estimate, since few of the Jewish women are golfers.

6. The population statistic was provided by the Planning Department of the City of Greensboro, and includes only those who reside within city limits. The estimated population for the entire Greensboro metropolitan area is 197,287. Using this figure, the percentage of Jews in Greensboro drops to 1.1 percent.

7. A number of the younger people interviewed recalled that, in elementary and junior high school, other children threw pennies at their feet to show that Jews were money grabbers and penny pinchers. They also referred to widespread use of the phrase "to Jew someone down."

8. "The whole plea—for the dream was nothing else—reminded one vividly of the defense put forward by the man who was charged by one of his neighbors with having given him back a borrowed kettle in a damaged condition. The defendant asserted first, that he had given it back undamaged; secondly, that the kettle had a hole in it when he borrowed it; and thirdly, that he had never borrowed a kettle from his neighbor at all." (Freud, 1965:152-153).

9. The present use of the term corresponds to the first major variable in the process of assimilation: "Change of cultural patterns (including religious belief and observance) to those of host society." (Gordon, 1964:70-71)

10. Rypens may not have been atypical in this respect. Golden (1974:89) describes an Atlanta rabbi in the following way:

As the spiritual leader of this Reform temple Rabbi Marx did not confer Bar Mitzvah, even upon request. He urged his congregants to ignore the dietary laws. He held Sunday services for those unable to attend on the Sabbath eve. But he remained the spiritual conscience of Atlanta Jewry for all the years of his rabbinate.

11. Domhoff (1967:16) points out that such assimilation also works to the upper class's benefit:

Educating the big-city rich from all over the country is only one of the functions of the private schools . . . First, they are a proving ground where new-rich-old-rich antagonisms are smoothed over and the children of the new rich are gracefully assimilated. Then too, they are the main avenue by which upper-class children from smaller towns become acquainted with their counterparts from all over the country. Perhaps equally important . . . the schools assimilate the brightest members of other classes, for such assimilation is important to social stability. Sweezy calls the private schools "recruiters for the ruling class, sucking upwards the ablest elements of the lower classes and performing the double function of infusing new brains into the ruling class and weakening the political leadership of the working class." Indeed, many private schools employ persons to search out talented members of the lower classes.

12. Golden (1974:176) suggests that the Winston-Salem pattern is more typical of

the South than is Greensboro's: "This remains the pattern throughout the South. The Jews are excluded from the social country clubs and the downtown city club."

13. It is likely that other historical factors, e.g., the long-time presence in Greensboro—but not Winston-Salem—of a number of colleges and universities and a sizable Quaker community, have also had some effect. For an extended discussion of these factors, see Zweigenhaft (forthcoming).

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A JOURNAL ON JEWISH PROBLEMS IN THE USSR
AND EASTERN EUROPE

Volume 8

Number 1

Spring 1978

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CHRONICLE OF EVENTS

1 September 1977 · 28 February 1978

Published by

**The Institute of Jewish Affairs Ltd.,
13/16 Jacob's Well Mews, George Street,
London, W1H 5PD**

The Journal appears twice a year, in spring and autumn

Annual Subscription £4 or \$8.
(air mail surcharge £3 or \$5.50)

Single issues £2.25 (\$4.50), with additional charges for air mail