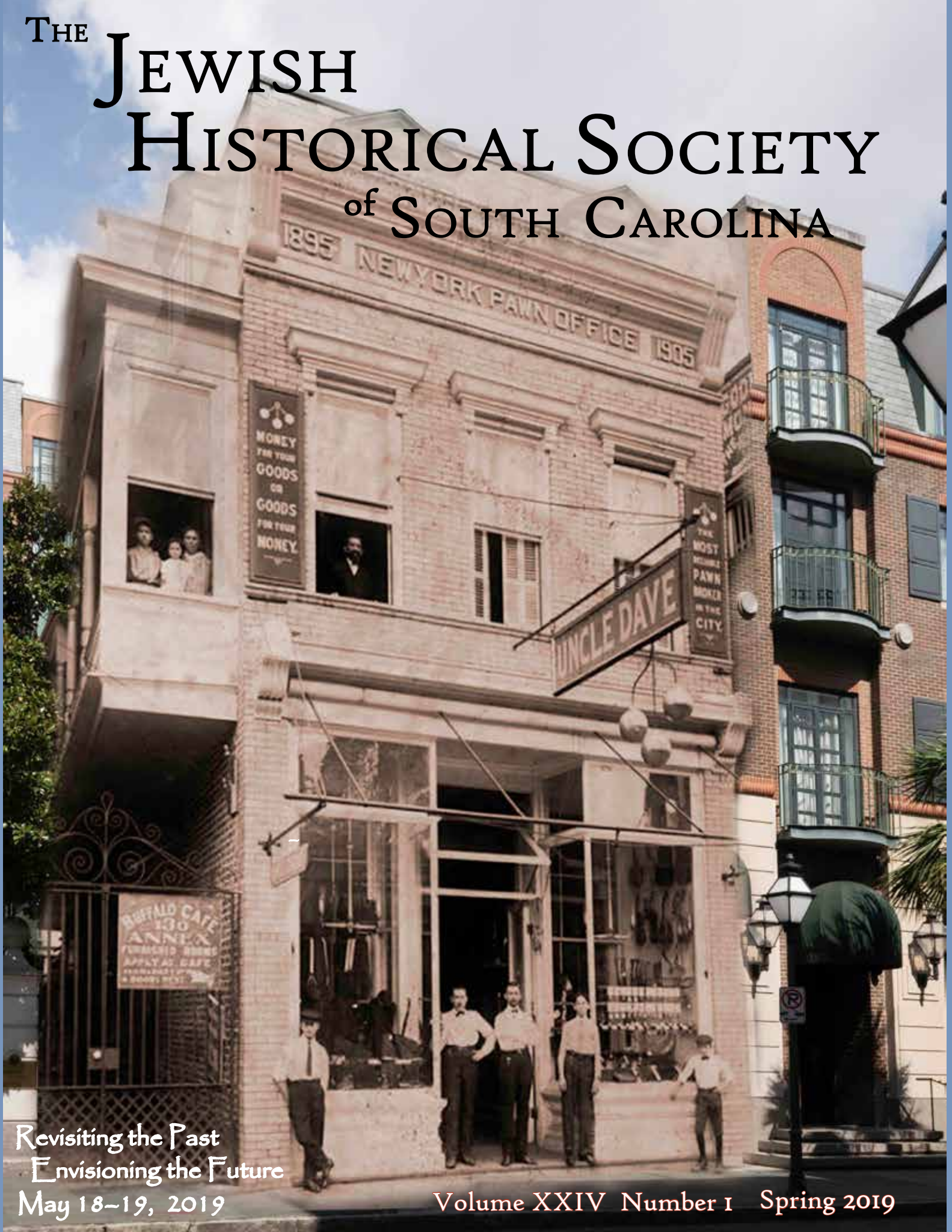


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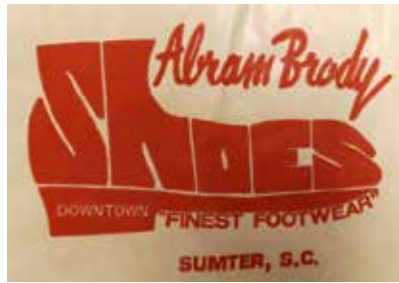


Revisiting the Past
Envisioning the Future
May 18-19, 2019

Volume XXIV Number I Spring 2019

Reuben's son David, born and raised in Sumter, joined the North Carolina retailing operation after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania.

Abram continued to operate a shoe department within the newly-owned Capitol. When The Capitol relocated to Jessamine Mall in 1980, the shoe department remained and became Abram Brody's Shoes at 16 South Main Street. In 1983, on Abram's death, the old Capitol store was renovated, and the shoe store became part of the new Brody's On Main Department Store, managed by Alex and his son Mark. The store carried a higher priced line of women's wear than the Brody's Department store. Brodys on Main closed after Mark departed Sumter about 1988. Abram Brody Shoes remained for another ten years—still



owned by the Brodys—and was sold around 1999, ending the reign of the Brody retail giants of Sumter.

In a 1959 essay written by my parents, Sara and Abram Brody, in honor of the 25th anniversary of The Capitol Department Store, they remarked that the growth of the Brody business “gives inspiration to individual ownership in today's great economic structure of chain stores and large combines.” K-Mart, the first chain to come to Sumter, opened in the early '60s, signaling the decline of locally operated stores. It's interesting that K-Mart—owned by Sears, which is also liquidating—is set to close in March 2019. After 50 years of rise and decline, the chain store is now eclipsed by Amazon and the internet.

The Furchgott Stores, since 1866

by David Furchgott, from family records and the meticulous research and editing of cousin Alison Walsh, aided by the personal recollections of cousin Maurice Furchgott

Brothers Herman Fürchtgott (1841–1912) and Max Fürchtgott (1844–1921) migrated from Nitra (in present-day Slovakia) to New York City in the early 1860s. The reasons for their leaving are unknown. By all appearances the Fürchtgotts were a well-established family spread across a region from Vienna to Budapest and into the hinterlands of what is now Slovakia. Upon arrival, the brothers Americanized their family name to Furchgott.

After a brief few years of acculturation in New York, they moved to Charleston in 1865 as the American Civil War ended, where they were joined by their brother Leopold (1852–1928).

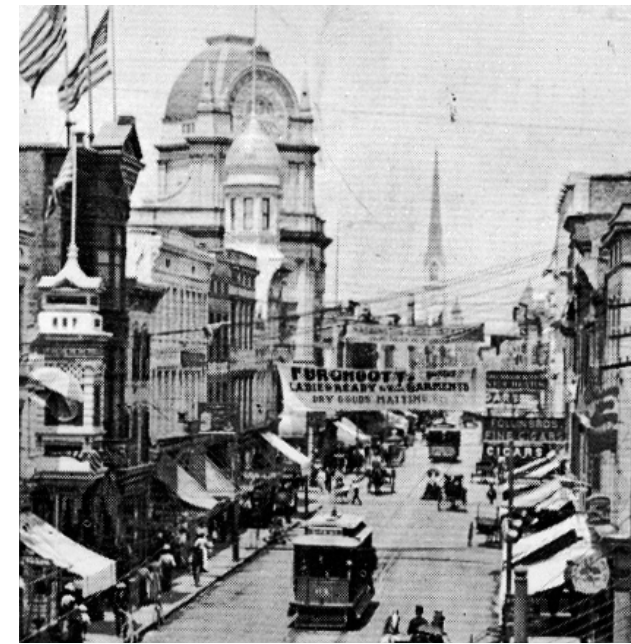
The turbulence in central Europe at that time had been volatile as well, so it is curious that their father, Abraham Isaac, and his wife, Marie (née Herzog) Fürchtgott, saw all three of their boys emigrate nearly at once, leaving them with their four daughters in Nitra. America was a land of opportunity, and Charleston, up until a few decades before the Civil War, boasted its largest concentration of Jews.

In 1866, the brothers opened their first dry goods store, Furchgott & Bro., near the southwest corner of Calhoun and King streets, probably living over the initial store and moving among three locations near that corner in a four-year period. In 1869, Charles Benedict (1848–1909) of Jacksonville became a partner, and the business became Furchgott, Benedict & Co., moving twice again to a prestigious location further downtown at 259 King Street.

Also in 1869, Leopold moved to Jacksonville, Florida, to establish another store with Benedict at the equally prominent location on Bay Street facing the St. Johns River. Charles Benedict was well established in Jacksonville. He was born in Austria and probably had family ties to the Fürchtgotts in Nitra, which is only 80 miles from Vienna, or possibly could have met them through the Masons, with which Max Furchgott was very involved.

In 1879, Morris Kohn created a New York buying office for the firm and provided additional financial backing. The Furchgott brothers' maternal uncle Philip Herzog of New York was also a silent partner and backer of the business. The

Max and Herman Fürchtgott, 1860s. Receipt, Furchgott, Benedict & Co., 275 King Street, 1875. Courtesy of the Furchgott/Furchtgott family.



largest earthquake ever to take place on the east coast, with almost all the buildings in the city either flattened or damaged. Max Furchgott led a number of major charitable efforts to help with the recovery, but he moved his family to New York for several years. There the children attended religious school at Temple Emanu-El.

In 1887, soon after the earthquake, Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict constructed a glamorous new building at 259 King Street on the site of their damaged store. Finding little success, Max moved to New York the following year, apparently to join his family, and then returned in 1901 to establish M. Furchgott & Co. Dry Goods at 265 King Street. In 1907, he moved the store to 240–242 King Street, advertising as being “in the bend of King Street.” Three years later, the business was renamed M. Furchgott & Sons. The “& Sons” were Arthur, Melvin, and Oscar Furchgott. The location is now part of Charleston Place, a hotel and high-end shopping center that occupies a whole city block.

Herman left Charleston and moved west, first to Denver where he operated several business ventures, including at least one similar retail dry goods department store. He later moved to St. Louis and finally to Chicago, where he died in 1912. Herman had one son and seven daughters.

Both the Charleston and the Jacksonville stores were considered innovative: they were the first to have elevators, the first to have women salesclerks and home delivery by automobile. Also, they were among the first to have telephones and to serve black customers.

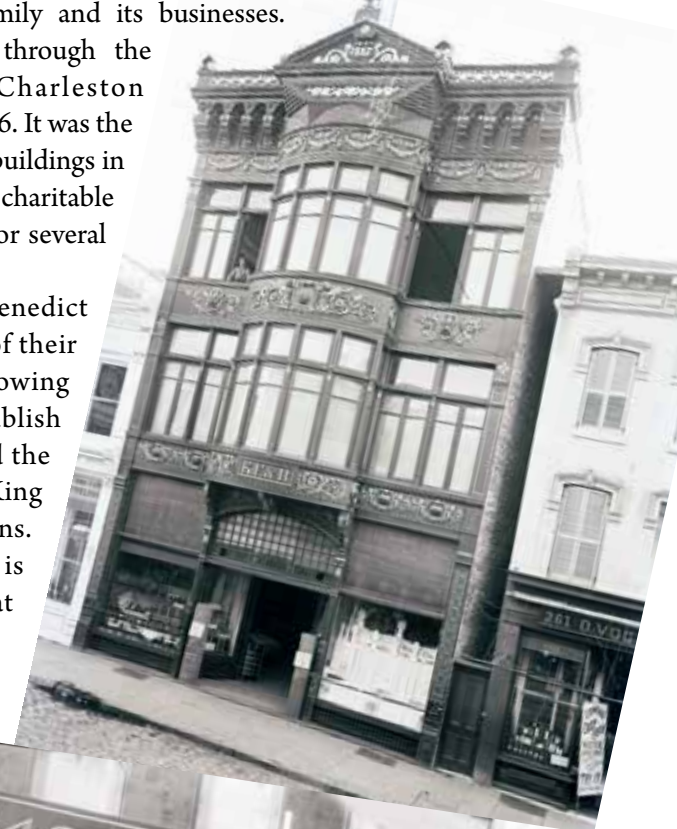
Clockwise from top: Furchgott banner advertising “Ladies Ready To Wear Garments” and “Dry Goods Matting, etc.,” hangs over King Street, Charleston, SC, 1901, in this postcard reproduction of Morton Brailsford Paine's photograph, Special Collections, College of Charleston. Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict, 259 King Street, Charleston, SC, with 1887 carved in the pediment, courtesy of George LaGrange Cook Photograph Collection, South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina. M. Furchgott & Son, 242 King Street, Charleston, SC, courtesy of the Furchgott/Furchtgott family.

firm became Kohn, Furchgott, & Benedict (Kohn became a partner in 1881). Kohn was also from Austria with the same likely connections to the Fürchtgotts as Benedict. Around 1875, a store was briefly opened in Atlanta, but was sold in 1878 to the Keely Company.

Webb's *Historical, Industrial and Biographical Florida of 1885* said of the firm: “Their amount of sales mark this as one of the largest dry-goods houses in the South. . . . All members of the firm are practical men in the business, and are courteous, painstaking gentlemen; and, it need not be added, honorable, reliable business men, of which Jacksonville and Charleston have every reason to be proud.”

Max Furchgott returned almost yearly to Europe on buying trips and to visit family. In fact, his first two sons, Herbert and Lionel, died in 1882 in the fifth cholera pandemic while visiting Nitra. They are buried in the Jewish cemetery there. Tragedy didn't end for the Furchgott family and its businesses.

They also lived through the devastating Charleston earthquake of 1886. It was the



Following the 1921 death of Max Furchgott, the sons took over M. Furchgott & Sons. The Charleston store lasted through the first few years of the Great Depression with Melvin Furchgott at its helm. His brothers opened smaller stores elsewhere, Arthur first in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and then briefly in Goldsboro, North Carolina, and Oscar later in Florence, South Carolina.



Furchgott's Department Store, Jacksonville, FL. Courtesy of metrojacksonville.com.

In Jacksonville, Furchgotts of Florida thrived under Leopold's leadership. He moved to New York, retaining the position as head of the company and passing the management

to his brother-in-law, Frederick Meyerheim. The main store in Jacksonville was six stories tall, with 60,000 square feet of floor space (they once expanded to include the building next door). By the 1940s, it was known as the largest department store in the Southeast. The Jacksonville business also had three mall locations in the 1960s and '70s and a location in Daytona Beach, all of which were closed by

the mid-1980s. The main store building is still standing as a testament to the heyday of Jacksonville's downtown and to the Furchgott family businesses.

Rails to Retail: Mercantile Pioneers in St. Stephens

by Deborah Lipman Cochelin

Long before Jews arrived in today's northern Berkeley County, the area south of the Santee River served as a refuge from religious persecution for a portion of the French Protestants actively recruited by the English

Proprietors of Carolina after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The Huguenots, as they came to be called, some of whom had been wealthy landowners in France, were drawn to Carolina by the promise of religious freedom and large estates, advertised in glowing terms by the Lords Proprietor, who envisioned profits from trade generated by an agricultural colony. By the mid-1700s, dozens of rice plantations, cultivated by enslaved Africans, had been established along the Santee.

In this region, about 50 miles north of Charleston, a town grew up around historic St. Stephen's

Episcopal Church, erected in 1767, now a national landmark. In 1871, the town was incorporated under the parish name of St. Stephens, which was officially changed to St. Stephen in 1952.

Northern Berkeley County has remained rural since the days of the Huguenot planters. Today, St. Stephen and nearby towns are economically depressed and thinly populated. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, the region profited from South Carolina's extensive network of railroads. Sawmills sprang up near rail lines, and Charleston merchants saw opportunities to build shops in towns like Moncks Corner, about 30 miles from Charleston, and Bonneau, another 10 miles farther north. According to Maxwell Clayton Orvin's history of Moncks Corner, the names of Jewish merchants who set up shop in Berkeley County just before the turn of the 20th century include Seligh (Zelig) Behrman (whose nephew was Ben Barron, founder of Barron's Department Store in Moncks Corner), Sol Lurie, Louis Glick, Sol Goldberg, Mendel Dumas, Frank Read, Isaac Read, and Abe Read.

Not until about 1900 did the first known Jewish merchant

settle in St. Stephens. Gus Rittenberg (brother of Sam Rittenberg and my great-great-uncle) arrived in the town with a young wife, Henrietta (Hennie) Behrman, who had emigrated in 1893 from Russia, and three very young children, Anita, Corinne, and Walter. In the 1910 census, Gus was identified as a merchant with a general store, and the number of his children had doubled, now including Morris (Maurice), Arthur, and Rose. Also listed as members of the Rittenberg household and workers in the store were two brothers, Herman and Isadore Sanditen, Russian immigrants related to Gus's sister's husband, Samuel Sanders (Sanditen).

Around 1910, the enterprising Gus Rittenberg built a sawmill on his land not far north of St. Stephens Station, on the west side of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad's track, with a spur that would enable him to ship finished lumber to growing markets. On August 6, 1912, a train of passenger cars running south went dead on the track about 40 feet from the mill, idle at the time. A local train from Florence soon came behind and began to push. Cinders from the laboring engine were churned up by the wind and blown into the lumber yard. Sawdust and waste lumber caught fire and spread to the mill, causing much destruction. Rittenberg prevailed in his lawsuit against the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad and was awarded damages for the destroyed mill, inventory, and machinery.

Disaster from the railroads struck again early on a Sunday afternoon in March 1918. Shortly after a freight train of 36 loaded cars passed through St. Stephens, a fire was discovered on the roof of a house, which jumped to adjoining buildings and burned until most of the row was destroyed, including Gus Rittenberg's store. The railroad company was held liable for damages in the amount of \$69,000, in what was considered to be St. Stephens' worst fire.

By the time of the 1918 fire, the Rittenbergs were maintaining homes in both St. Stephens and Charleston. Corinne graduated with distinction from Ashley Hall that year. Gus and Hennie first appear in the Charleston city directory in 1917 and, over the next few years, some of their children are listed as well, including Edward, born in 1916. The 1917 directory shows Gus is in business—Southern Jute Products, 154 East Bay Street—with his brother Sam, who had served in the state legislature in 1913–1914 and was running Carolina Advertising Agency. A year later, the brothers established another company, Rittenberg Wood Yard, at Meeting Street near Magnolia Crossing. By

1920, Southern Jute and Rittenberg Wood disappear from the city directory, and subsequent listings note that Gus is a general merchandiser and merchant, perhaps a reference to his St. Stephens store. He died in 1924 in a car accident near Moncks Corner.

In February 1920, the U.S. census lists my great-grandparents and their children living in St. Stephens: Rachel (Rae) Rittenberg Sanders (Gus Rittenberg's youngest sibling), her husband, Sam Sanders (listed as a naturalized citizen from Russia, a general merchant, and a former book peddler in Brooklyn, New York), and the children, Sara (Lipman), Hilbert (Bert), Wilfred, Leonard, and Charlotte (Karesh).

Above: Wilfred E. Lipman, the author's father, with his parents, Sara Sanders Lipman and Max David Lipman, ca. 1928. Left: Gus Rittenberg's store ledger, with entries dating to 1916, includes pages tracking purchases from wholesaler Baltimore Bargain House. Special Collections, College of Charleston.

