



Jewish Merchants of Downtown Staunton

By Ruth Chodrow and Karen Lynne Johnston

Editor's note. This piece is a carefully researched investigation by Dr. Ruth Chodrow and Karen Lynn Johnson of the large number of Jewish merchants who established their businesses in Staunton in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It will be an excellent reference for anyone seeking information on these individuals and their businesses for years to come. The many newcomers to the Staunton-Augusta community in the past two decades may have no idea that Staunton had a lively Jewish community that played a key role in the commercial life of the town and region. Someone shopping at boutiques on Beverley Street today or enjoying a gourmet meal at one of today's fine restaurants might not understand that this street was once the commercial heart of the entire city and county. In the era before national chain stores in malls or big box stores on the edge of town, mercantile establishments on Beverley Street met nearly all the material needs of the locals. In Staunton, many of those stores were owned and operated by members of the local Jewish community. In this respect, Staunton was typical of hundreds of Southern towns and small cities at that time, and is typical still in experiencing the near disappearance of that Jewish mercantile community once so vital to the commercial life of the town.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, downtown Staunton was a bustling place filled with stores, warehouses, and shops of all kinds. A stroll downtown would show store after store owned and operated by merchants with Jewish names – Loeb, Switzer, Cohen, Weinberg, Strauss. Who were these people, and how did they come to Staunton?

Most Jews who came to America at that time period were escaping from Central and Eastern Europe. Persecutions, discrimination, and lack of economic opportunity all played a role. In many European countries, Jews were not allowed to own land, pursue higher



education, or work at certain trades; they hoped to escape poverty by emigration. Political unrest, such as the failed revolutions of 1848 in many European countries, may have spurred others to leave.

Jews coming to America tended to congregate at centers of trade, mostly large cities. However, some merchants who may have started in Baltimore, Richmond, or Charlottesville found their way down to Staunton at the turn of the century – at that time a busy mini-metropolis with a train line right into town.

Jews started coming to Staunton in the mid-1800s and in 1876 started meeting in each others' homes. By 1886 there were enough Jews to form a congregation, Temple House of Israel, and to purchase a building on Kalorama Street for use as a synagogue. The minutes of the first congregational meeting listed 24 men, almost all of whom were merchants. These merchants were primarily from states in today's Germany, including the part that was then called Prussia. In the minutes of the congregational meeting of February 1, 1885,¹ the members all pledged to close their businesses on Fridays at 7:00 p.m. in order to attend worship services at 7:30 p.m.

Please note that the street addresses are from the records of the times. Over the years, street numbers downtown have changed dramatically, sometimes more than once.

Clothing and Shoe Stores

Barth and Weinberg

Simon Barth opened "Augusta Clothing Hall" in the early 1870s. After he died his brother, Joseph L. Barth, took over the business in 1881. The name was changed to "Barth Clothing Store."² Joseph Barth came to Staunton from Philadelphia, having come there from Wuerttemberg.³ He was one of the original members of the congregation.⁴ Joseph Barth went into partnership with Lamartine G. Strauss from Yorkville, South Carolina. In 1884 he established Jos. L. Barth and Co., Clothiers, specializing in men's and boy's clothes. The store was noted for the excellent quality of its clothing. By 1887 he held a position as a trustee of Temple House of Israel, and was involved in purchasing the Hoover House on Kalorama Street which would become the first temple for the congregation.⁵ Joseph Barth was also the first treasurer of Temple House of Israel. His partner L.G. Strauss married Mr. Barth's sister Regina in 1890. Their daughter Fannie B. Strauss became a noted teacher at Mary Baldwin College.



Photograph of Abraham Weinberg, circa 1940, from the archives of the Staunton Rotary Club, currently housed at Historic Staunton Foundation.

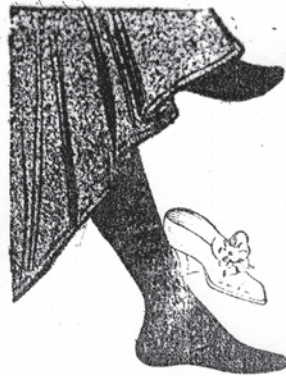
Abraham Weinberg (1868-1943) came to Staunton in 1895. He was listed in the Staunton 1900 census as being born in Germany in 1870. However, his grandson Abram Kronsberg has indicated that he was born in 1868 in Deventer, Holland, and this also the country of origin listed in a 1940 newspaper article. The 1868 date is the one on his tombstone in the Temple House of Israel cemetery.

Mr. Weinberg had already been involved in the clothing business in Baltimore.⁶ As a young man, he stepped off the train at the Staunton station and asked a nearby police officer where might be a good place to open a clothing store. The officer told him that he might as well get back on the train, because Joseph Barth "had all the men's trade tied up throughout this area."⁷ Undeterred, Mr. Weinberg opened up the Weinberg Clothing Company at 5 S. Augusta Street. Unlike Barth's store, he also carried women's clothing.

He later married Johanna Barth, Joseph Barth's half-sister.⁸ In 1911 the two stores consolidated to become Barth, Weinberg and Company. The consolidated store carried clothing for men, women, and boys.

Abraham Weinberg was a strong supporter of the local Jewish community. In 1924, the congregation was still worshipping in the small building on Kalorama street that had been purchased in 1886. One day Mr. Weinberg stood up in temple and proclaimed, "I'm tired of worshipping in something that looks like a warehouse! I'll put up half the money for a real temple if the congregation will raise the other half."⁹ He did and they did. The cornerstone for the current Temple House of Israel was laid the next year.

Abraham Weinberg also supported the community. He was a Mason and a Shriner. Eventually his partners L.G. Strauss and Jo-



Don't Darn Your Stockings Any More

Put your darning basket away in the closet—you won't need it for six months when you buy the first box of Holeproof Hosiery.

Darning is now almost a thing of the past. For with every box of "Holeproof" we give a written guarantee to replace any pair that needs darning in six months. Instead of

taking out your darning basket you merely take out a coupon and get a new pair of hose free—Isn't that simple?

FAMOUS Holeproof Hosiery FOR MEN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

The makers pay an average of 70 cents a pound for the finest Egyptian and Sea Island Cotton Yarn. Common hose are often made from cotton at 12 cents a pound. Yet the common hose sell for the same price as "Holeproof."

"Holeproof" uses 3-ply in the body and 6-ply in the heels and toes. Ordinary hose are made from 2-ply yarn throughout. You pay no more for "Holeproof" but it wears six times longer.

Come in and see this hosiery. Note the style and comfort—see how light and soft it is. Buy one box and try it. Note how it hugs the ankle. Then, if you can, continue using the common hosiery.

We have a complete assortment of sizes and colors. They are very smart. Prices are 6 pairs for \$2, and 6 pairs for \$3—guaranteed six months.

Weinberg Clothing Co.

Exclusive Agents for Staunton, Va.

HEADQUARTERS FOR
MEN'S, BOY'S AND CHILDREN'S

CLOTHING,

HATS, SHIRTS, GLOVES, HANDKERCHIEFS, NECK-
WEAR, COLLARS AND CUFFS, BOOTS AND
SHOES, TRUNKS AND SATCHELS.


JOS. L. BARTH,

9 S. Augusta Street Staunton, Va.



STAUNTON AND AUGUSTA NEWS

Weinberg Clothing Co.



COME to Weinberg's for anything and everything you need in Men's Wear because there are reasons why in everyone of our departments--there is a reason why in everything we sell.

Good reasons in abundance in our Men's Clothing Department. SERGE--There's a difference in blue serge. Half of the men in Staunton and Augusta County right now do not wear blue serge. They would like to no doubt but they are afraid--they are afraid the cloth will fade--they are afraid it will pucker at the seams--they are afraid they won't hold their shape.

About half of our regular customers in warm weather ask at once for Blue Serge. Why? Because they know Weinberg's Blue Serge--they are not afraid. Weinberg's Blue is the kind that will not fade. It is the kind that will hold their shape. Weinberg's Serges are like all the rest of Weinberg's Clothes.

All sorts of Serges are here--Plain, Blue, black and grey, also in distinct stripes.

There is nothing in Staunton like our boys and children's suits. We always have specialized on the dress of boys because we believe in winning our customer's young. Weinberg's Clothes for Boys are made for boys. It will stand up under the roughest of hard wear. It will look well under that hard wear longer than any other Boy's Clothing to be had in Staunton. We guarantee it.

We handle the best of everything, Mother's Friend Wash Suits and Blouses, Holeproof Hosiery, Harves Hats and the best makes in all furnishings.

Weinberg Clothing Co.

A PHANTOM COACH. | DIDN'T GET IT RIGHT. | THE BEST THEY HAD.

Flannel Suits are smart this summer



HEY come in a great variety of new colors; the biscuit shades are especially good--so are the grays-granite and Prince; there are blues galore, too--Antwerp and bottle blue are among the best. You'll not only find the colors you like, but styles and prices, too

Suits For Hot Weather

Now is the time to select your tropical summer suit. They are of light weight wool or worsted fabric--porous for coolness and firm enough for style and tailoring. They come in all the good models and colors and are reasonably priced.

You will find here also a complete stock in jackets, coats, mohairs, palm beachers, flannels, seersuckers and linens.

Everything you desire in the way of summer furnishings is here in plenty of variety.

BARTH-WEINBERG & CO.
STAUNTON'S LEADING CLOTHIERS



seph Barth retired, and then Abraham ran the business with his son, Irving. In addition to being a Mason and a Shriner like his father, Irving was also a member of the Rotary club and American Legion.¹⁰

Abraham and Johanna Weinberg left the temple an endowment, commemorated on a plaque in the sanctuary of the current temple. The family continued to have strong ties to the community, even though later descendants moved away. In 1996, Abraham Weinberg's great-grandson had his Bar Mitzvah ceremony at Temple House of Israel in Staunton.

Palais Royale

Originally located at 23 W. Main Street, the Palais Royale called itself "The House of Fashion" and boasted "Ladies' ready-to-wear and millinery." Morris Summerfield was the proprietor in 1906.¹¹

According to his great-granddaughter, Melanie Summerfield Lee, Morris' wife Anne Davison Summerfield did all the millinery work for the store. They were never listed as being part of the congregation, and preferred not to identify as Jews. Ms. Lee explained that her grandmother, following family custom, wouldn't even say the word "challah" (the braided loaf traditionally served on Friday evenings) because it sounded "too Jewish." She called it egg bread instead.

By 1916 Summerfield had sold to Crowell and Sachs Company (Staunton City Directory, 1916-1917). The store was run by Sy (Simon) Sachs. By the 1920s, it was located at 9 E. Main Street, and was known primarily as a full-service fur store, with all work done on the premises.¹²

A. Loeb & Co.

Adolph Loeb had a clothing store, A. Loeb & Co, listed at 17 S. Augusta Street. His brother Julius was the manager.¹³ The Loeb brothers also had a dry-goods business (see below).

N.Y. Clothing House

In 1884, Bernard Oberdorfer, an immigrant from Wurtemberg, ran a clothing store at 25 S. Augusta Street.¹⁴

Samuel Shultz Shoes

Samuel Shultz was born in Prussia and served in the Prussian army. After living in New York, he moved with his family to Staunton in 1872.¹⁵ He had a shoe business at 7 S. New Street until 1898.¹⁶ He was the father of Albert Shultz (see below).

Walters, Harry

Harry Walters came to Staunton shortly before 1922 and opened a store to sell "Ladies Garments" at 13 East Main Street.¹⁷ He and his wife opened and operated a gift shop in the newly opened Stonewall Jackson Hotel, where they also lived.

Walters and Switzer

Charles F. Switzer, brother of David Switzer (below) went into business about 1904 with Abraham Walters, brother of Moses (Mose) Walters. Abraham Walters was born in Maryland of Russian Polish parents. They had the Walters and Switzer Clothing Store on 2 Court House Street (later called E. Johnson Street) which advertised "Men and Ladies Ready-to-Wear."¹⁸ The building was across the street from the Augusta County courthouse. This building was torn down to make a jail. The jail was then adapted for its present use as the Augusta Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court.



Troops assembled in front of the Walters and Switzer clothing store prior to leaving for the battlefield during World War I. (From the Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz Schwartz CD #849.)



Two views of Bennie Sragowitz's shoe store on Beverley Street. (Courtesy of XXXXXXXXXXXXX)



Scrap and salvage Klotz Brothers

Young Jacob and Amos Klotz, with their parents, came from Russia in 1888, and the family settled in Hanover, MD. In 1900, 19-year old Amos was a junk dealer there.¹⁹ Jacob and Amos were traveling peddlers working out of their horse-drawn wagon. They came down from Maryland, passing through Staunton on their way to Ohio. In Staunton, their horse died, and they couldn't afford a replacement.²⁰

By 1904, Amos had rented an area of land near Lewis Creek and Lewis Street, which was used as a junkyard.²¹ They bought and sold scrap metal, wool, furs, rubber, rags, ginseng, hides – just about anything.²² Amos bought the property in 1917.²³ Eventually two more brothers, Morris and Elie (Alex), joined the business.²⁴ They purchased a giant electromagnet to pick up the loads of scrap iron.²⁵

The Klotz brothers prospered, and in 1929 built a large building at South Lewis Street, currently the location of Sunspots Studios.²⁶ It is assumed that the date 1899, prominently featured on the building, was the date that Amos and Jacob decided to go into business together. The Jewish mezuzah which they affixed on the door when they opened is currently in the historical exhibit case at Temple House of Israel.



This photograph of a Klotz Brothers float, probably for a July Fourth parade about 1907, shows, left to right, Morris Klotz, Amos Klotz, and Jacob (Jake) Klotz. (From the collection of Richard and Thomas Hamrick)

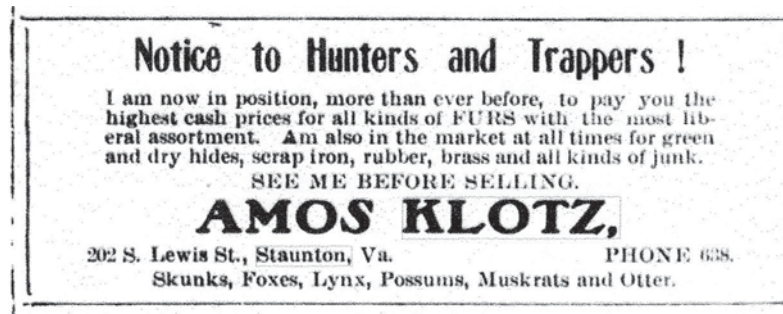


Brothers J.K., left, and Morris G. Klotz, circa 1940. (Photographs from the archives of the Staunton Rotary Club housed at Historic Staunton Foundation)



KLOTZ BROTHERS, Furs, Hides, Wools, Iron, Metals, Waste Materials, Staunton, Virginia, is one of Augusta county's oldest firms, having been established in 1899. Occupying one of the most representative business buildings in the city, and with large storage yards, this company does a large volume of business. G. K. Morris is the owner and manager.

Advertisement showing the Klotz Brothers Building on South Lewis Street at the corner of Middlebrook Avenue. (From the Collection of Richard and Thomas Hamrick)



The brothers were very different. Amos didn't know how to read or write. However, he could sign his name. It was with his characteristic large handwriting that he signed his will, which left generous bequests to multiple Jewish charities and institutions.²⁷ Jacob was described as "crude and swearing", and always wore shirts and khaki trousers. Morris, the youngster of the family, always wore a coat and tie, was a member of Rotary, and was a "gentleman by anyone's standards." However, he always made sure to carry a magnet in his coat pocket, to check on the scrap metal that was brought in.²⁸ Morris also served as a trustee of the temple.

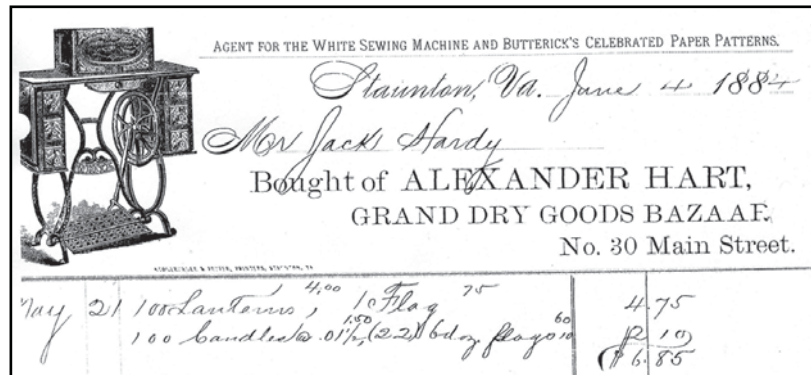
General Stores

Grand Dry Goods Bazaar

Alexander Hart (1839-1915) was born in New Orleans, and started out life as a store clerk. When the Civil War broke out, he enlisted and eventually became part of the brigade known as the Louisiana Tigers. He saw much action in the Civil War, was wounded several times, and achieved the rank of Major. At one point during the war, his regiment was ordered to pass through Staunton – apparently the first time he had been there.

After the war, Major Hart married Leonora Levy and went into business with her family in Richmond. In 1876 he started a branch of the Levy dry goods business in Staunton on West Main Street (now West Beverley Street).²⁹ Major Hart's business failed in 1893 and he had to turn over all the contents of his store to satisfy his creditors. He then relocated to Norfolk.

Although Major Hart was in Staunton for a relatively short time compared with some of the other merchants, he had a lasting influ-



Receipt from the establishment of Alexander Hart, who operated a dry goods store on Beverley Street. (From the collection of Thomas Hamrick)

ence. He founded the congregation Temple House of Israel in Staunton, and was its first president, leading the congregation for 18 years. The congregation still exists today.

Loeb Bros Dry Goods Store

Ferdinand, Adolphus, and Julius Loeb immigrated from Germany in 1865. According to the "Enterprises of the Valley of Virginia", they became proprietors of a business that had been started in 1854 called Hilb and Loeb.³⁰

In 1875 the three brothers purchased a brick store at the corner of Beverley and New Streets, and established the Loeb Brothers Dry Goods Store.³¹ In "Representative Enterprises of the Valley of Virginia", p. 93, it reads, "In the carpet department are to be found carpets, oilcloths and mattings of all styles and qualities, of American and Foreign manufacture...." The store also sold cloth. "The products of the looms of the best manufacturers of the old world and the new, including all the latest styles and patterns of silks, velvets, cashmeres, and other fine dress goods....and all the latest novelties in laces, ribbons, embroideries, insertions and other neckwear..."

By 1885, the two-story building had been remodeled into the three-story building that stands today.³² A relative, William Loeb, opened a shoe store, also on Main Street, about 1904.³³

Witz Dry Goods

Isaac Witz was born in Austria (also listed as Prussia). His parents and siblings settled in Baltimore. In 1865, he married Fannie Heller, who came from Germany and was the daughter of Heiman Heller, a dry-goods merchant in Harrisonburg.³⁴ His younger brother



Moritz, listed as being born in Bohemia, came to Virginia in 1865 and became a citizen in 1876.³⁵

In 1865, Isaac ran a newspaper advertisement that he was selling a variety of items at a store on Beverley Street. He advertised "cheap for cash or in exchange for farm produce." The offerings included "dry goods, groceries, hardware, iron stoves, machine oil, and the best articles of Spanish Sole Leather."³⁶

In 1866 he purchased from Moritz Lowenbeck a three-story brick building on the north side of Beverley Street.³⁷ In the 1870 census he was listed as a dry good merchant.³⁸



Next door to Paul Mix, watchmaker and jeweler, on Beverley Street was the I. Witz and Brother establishment. The Witz sign can be seen to the right of the watchmaker in this photograph. (Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz Schwartz CD#152)



No. 20 East Main Street was the location of the Witz brothers dry goods store, called simply I. Witz and Bro., which included “dress goods of every description, and of the latest styles and patterns, domestic and cheap fabrics of all kinds, and the latest novelties in neckwear, laces, trimmings, &c, ladies fine shoes, suiting to all purposes.” . .³⁹

Isaac was a prominent member of the community. He was on the board of visitors for the School for DD&B (now the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind)⁴⁰ and was elected to city council in 1884.⁴¹

In 1890, the brothers went their separate ways. Moritz moved to Baltimore, where their mother still lived.⁴² The store was still listed at 20 Main Street, but was under the new name of “Witz, Lightner, and Co.” The partners were now Isaac Witz, J.T. Lightner, and Isaac’s son Morris Henry Witz.⁴³ Isaac’s daughter Leila married W.S. Burke. By 1898, the dry goods business was named Witz, Burke and Co. The store advertised, “Dry Goods, Notions, Carpets, and Housefurnishing Goods”⁴⁴ The business had grown rapidly to include two adjacent storefronts. In 1906, the dry goods store’s spaces were rebuilt as the Witz Building.



Fulton, Witz, & Co. can be seen on the side of this building in downtown Staunton.



Religiously, the family went in very different directions. Isaac's brother Moritz was one of the original officers of Temple House of Israel, serving as secretary, and was a trustee in the purchase of the original synagogue. It appears that Isaac was never a member of the temple. At least three of Isaac's children (Julius, Leila, and Rosalie) were baptized in Emmanuel Episcopal Church.⁴⁵ However, even after his baptism at age twenty-two and marriage to an Episcopalian, Julius continued to send generous donations to Temple House of Israel every year.⁴⁶

G. Hirsh and Co.

In 1852, Mason and Gabriel Hirsh, originally of Darmstadt, Germany, bought a store building near the southeast corner of Beverley and Augusta Streets.⁴⁷ Gabriel Hirsh was one of the original members of the congregation, as listed in the minutes.⁴⁸ Gabriel ran the variety store as G. Hirsh and Co. until 1886.⁴⁹ An ad in the *Staunton Spectator* of April 3, 1860 touted his suitability for Governor of the Atlantic Cable Company, of which he was a stockholder.

In his newspaper ads, his wares included everything from gold jewelry to wall paper to hoop skirts. An 1868 ad specified that parasols were from "our own manufacture in Philadelphia."⁵⁰ A burglary report in the paper detailed the theft of "two gold watches, several silver watches, cloth, handkerchiefs, and other articles..." from the store.⁵¹

Mills

In 1869, Isaac Witz and Charles Holt bought land on Lewis Creek near the present Commerce Road. They built a four-story mill, powered by water and later augmented by steam. The mill even boasted a fireproof brick elevator.⁵² In 1881, the newspaper reported that "a telephonic connection has been established between the store of Isaac Witz on Main Street with the mill of Messrs. Witz and Holt." The paper went on to say that "they set an example which should be followed by other enterprising citizens" (i.e., business owners). Presumably the owners could be expected to recoup their expenses by the increased efficiency of using the telephone instead of the more common practice of sending messenger boys. The 1891 perspective map of the city of Staunton showed the location of the Witz and Holt Flouring Mill.

Witz and Holt sold the mill in 1895 and joined with two other



businessmen to form White Star Mills Company. They built a modern steam-powered mill near the train station that remained in production as a mill until 1966.⁵³ The mill now houses a restaurant, the Mill Street Grill.

Jewelry Store

D. L. Switzer Jewelry

The parents of David L. Switzer (1868-1925) came to this country from Wuerttemberg (Germany). Abraham and Babette Switzer had a dry-goods store in Botetort County. In 1880 they retired and came to Staunton. Born in Lexington, Virginia, David Switzer started off in the dry goods business, then worked as a jeweler. He opened the Grubert and Switzer jewelry store in 1898. His first location was in the Marquis building (corner Augusta and Beverley Streets) at 3 East Main Street (now East Beverley Street).⁵⁴ The Historical and Industrial Edition of the *Staunton Dispatch* (January 1906) describes

Condensed Statement Rendered U. S. Government			
THE NATIONAL VALLEY BANK OF STAUNTON, VIRGINIA			
MARCH 4, 1915			
Resources		Liabilities	
Loans and Investments....	\$1,310,727.83	Capital Stock	\$ 200,000.00
United States Bonds.....	110,000.00	Surplus and Profits.....	277,799.79
Overdrafts.....	19.44	Circulation.....	92,000.00
Banking House and Fixtures	60,000.00	Deposits	1,153,498.87
Cash and Due from Banks..	254,551.39	Bond Account.....	12,000.00
	\$1,735,298.66		\$1,735,298.66
Augusta County's Oldest, Largest and Strongest Bank			
Designated by Federal Reserve Board to act as Executor, Trustee, Etc.			
J. H. Worthington, President	Wm. A. Pratt, Vice-President	Chas. S. Hunter, Cashier	
C. K. Hoge, Asst. Cashier	W. B. Miller, Asst. Cashier		
For The Graduate		ARISTA HOGE	W. B. McCHESNEY
are you at loss to know what to give this year?		HOGE & McCHESNEY	
It wont take long to decide if you will come in and look over our stock of fine Jewelry.		Atlas Insurance Agency	
We have just received a shipment of newly designed Class Pins, Brooches, Rings and other goods that would be very appropriate and couldn't be other than appreciated. We would appreciate a call from you.		<u>FIRE AND LIFE</u> <u>INSURANCE</u>	
D. L. SWITZER JEWELER		Surety Bonds Furnished	
19 Main Street STAUNTON, VA.		Office, Opera House	
		STAUNTON - - VIRGINIA	

Ad from the *Bluestocking*, the Mary Baldwin College Yearbook, 1915, page 198



his shop as one which “contains everything of the finest quality. Superb diamonds, watches, clocks, beautiful cut glass and silverware adorn every inch of this spacious emporium.” In 1911 he bought the building at 19 East Beverley Street.⁵⁵ The firm of T.J. Collins was hired to design a new structure there.⁵⁶ The original plans for the building are in the Collins Collection of Architectural Drawings at the Historic Staunton Foundation. The building, which now houses Shenandoah Pizza, has a distinctive façade of glazed white terra-cotta tiles resembling marble.

David Switzer married Minnie Cohen, the daughter of Louis Cohen. He was a long-time member of the Stonewall Brigade Band, playing the kettledrum and acting as vice-president of the organization.⁵⁷



A modern photograph of the façade of the former Switzer jewelry shop. (Photograph by Ruth Chodrow)

Furniture Store

Isaac Witz started Witz Furniture Industries in the 1890s. His son Julius Witz (1868-1936) ran two furniture stores, Basic Furniture in Waynesboro and J.L. Witz Furniture Store in Staunton.⁵⁸ Julius Witz was also the president of Citizens Gas Company.⁵⁹ Julius Witz served as mayor of Staunton from 1928 to 1932.



Cohen's Restaurant (behind the pole) circa 1920. (Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz ID #1049)

Livery Stable

Clarence Witz, son of Isaac, had a livery business on Greenville Avenue near the White Star Mill from about 1904-1918.⁶⁰ He had fine carriages and city-broken horses for hire. A 1908 newspaper ad claims that he had "the swellest turnouts in the city" for hire. He listed "funerals a specialty."⁶¹

Restaurants

Louis Cohen, an immigrant from Prussia, was in Staunton in the early 1880s. Cohen's Restaurant opened on 13 South New Street, and it was thought to be the first "family eating place" in Staunton.⁶² Louis

Cohen was the vice-president of the congregation at its founding. It was noted in the temple minutes that he was "Requested to assist the President in reading prayer in Hebrew."⁶³ Presumably he was one of the few members of the congregation at that time who was able to read Hebrew. When Mose Walters first came to Staunton, he was a clerk in the Cohen restaurant. Mose married Rhea Cohen, a daughter of Louis and Fannie Cohen. Another Cohen daughter, Minnie, married David Switzer.⁶⁴ The restaurant operated until 1939.⁶⁵

Wholesale food

Walters Fruit and Produce; Augusta Fruit and Produce

Moses (Mose) Walters originally came from Baltimore. He started his wholesale fruit and vegetable business about 1915. By 1916 he had established Walters' Produce House at 102 E. Main Street.⁶⁶ In 1926 he went into the business with Morris (Maurice) Cohen and Walter E. Cohen, sons of Louis Cohen. They called their company Augusta Fruit and Produce.⁶⁷ The partners eventually split. Ten years later, Moses Walters operated the Walters Fruit and Produce Company out of the



Building of Augusta Fruit and Produce, 5-7 Middlebrook Avenue. The man at the far left, standing by himself in the doorway, is identified as Maurice Cohen. The third man from the left is Moses Walters. From the Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz Schwartz CD #1406



Underneath this large warehouse was a cold storage room for the produce. Rhea Walters, Moses Walters' wife, used to help out with the business. One day she went into the cold storage room, passed by the bananas, and a chilled but alive tarantula spider fell on her chest. She never went back into the building again.⁶⁹



The banana cold storage room of Augusta Fruit and Produce, where Mrs. Walters had her unfortunate encounter with a tarantula. From the collections of David Schwartz Schwartz CD #1766



American Hotel building at the C&O depot. Mr. Walters supplied fresh produce to small mercantile stores as well as institutions such as Augusta Military Academy, Mary Baldwin College, and the local public schools. He owned a number of local orchards, as well as a banana plantation in the Bahamas.⁶⁸

Entertainment

The Opera House

Albert Shultz was born in Poughkeepsie NY of parents who immigrated from Prussia and Scotland.⁷⁰ His father's occupation was listed as shoe merchant. Albert married Madeline Barth in 1897, which was the first wedding held in the temple on Kalorama Street. In 1909, Albert Shultz and W.H. Barkman gave \$1200 to the city of Staunton for the right use and occupy the Opera House, also known as the Beverley Theater, with the city maintaining janitorial services.⁷¹ The terms of the deed specified that the entertainment must be "moral and in no



The New Theatre Building, before the fire. Note the three stories. (Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz Schwartz CD #1708)



way indecent and subject must not be political or controversial on a matter that may be decided at an election. Licensees must maintain premises and pay taxes, arrange for proper police and fire protection, and shall separate the races as they are at present and no entertainment by colored performers shall be permitted except with the written permission first obtained of the Committee on Public Grounds and Bldgs of the City Council." The Opera House building is now the Cochran Judicial Center, which houses the City Courthouse.

The New Theater Corporation:

Albert Shultz (president), Fielding Olivier (secretary-treasurer) and Julius Witz formed the New Theatre Corporation. The New Theatre building was designed by T.J. Collins and opened in 1913. It showed burlesque and vaudeville shows, as well as silent movies. About 1925, the partners sold a controlling interest in the corporation to the theater corporation of Isaac Weinberg, a Jewish businessman from Lexington. Isaac Weinberg later sold 75 % of his interest to Universal Pictures Corporation. The New Theatre first showed a "talkie," "The Jazz Singer" in 1928.

The Staunton newspaper ran a contest to find a new name for the building in 1934. The contest was won by Mildred Klotz, Jacob Klotz's daughter, who came up with the title of "The Dixie."⁷² A fire in January 1936 destroyed much of the building. The rebuilt building, with only two stories instead of three, looks very different from the original.

The End of Immigration

Laws restricting immigration to the U.S. that were passed in 1921 and 1924 effectively ended the great wave of Jews coming into this country. The Staunton businesses that Jewish merchants owned are gone. But the buildings and pictures are still here to tell the story.

Staunton is the place to get things.

For comfort things...for rest things...

Things to help you look best in....

All these things and many more,

You can get in Staunton stores.⁷³



Bibliography

Abram Kronsberg, grandson of Abraham and Johanna Weinberg

Douglas Degen, grandson of Jacob and Annie Klotz

Thomas and Richard Hamrick, former proprietors of Hamrick Funeral Home, Staunton

David Schwartz, proprietor of Camera and Palette, Staunton, son of Philip Schwartz and grandson of Moses and Rhea Walters

Melanie Summerfield Lee, telephone conversation 1/28/14, great-granddaughter of Morris (also spelled Maurice) Summerfield and Anne Davison Summerfield.



Staunton's Jewish Temple can be on the left at the far side of the Hardy partking lot. The photograph was taken from the corner of Beverley and Market Streets. (Collections of Richard and Thomas Hamrick and David Schwartz Schwartz CD#152)

Endnotes

- ¹ Temple House of Israel archives; cited hereafter as THOI archives.
- ² Fannie B. Strauss, "The Jewish Community in Staunton", *Augusta County Historical Bulletin*, Fall 1972.
- ³ 1870 Philadelphia Census, Ward 20 District 65.
- ⁴ Minutes of the meeting 1 February 1885, THOI Archives.
- ⁵ Staunton City Deed Book 9: 191, December 1887.
- ⁶ *Staunton Dispatch and News Historical and Industrial Edition*, January 1906.
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- ⁸ Marriage records, Staunton January 20 1897 p. 19 line 851.
- ⁹ Abram Kronsberg, personal communication, 1995.
- ¹⁰ *The Crusader and the News-Leader*, (Staunton, 1940).
- ¹¹ *Staunton Dispatch and News Historical and Industrial Edition*, January 1906.
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- ¹³ *Staunton City Directory*, 1895.
- ¹⁴ United States Census, 1870 and 1880
- ¹⁵ Obituary in *Staunton Spectator and Vindicator*, 14 September 1899).
- ¹⁶ Chataigne's *August County Virginia Gazetteer and Classified Business Directory* for 1888)
- ¹⁷ *Staunton City Directory*, 1922.
- ¹⁸ *Staunton City Directory*, 1910-1911.
- ¹⁹ U.S. Census, Hanover, Maryland, 1900.
- ²⁰ Douglas Degen, grandson of Jacob Klotz, personal communication, 1995.
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- ²² *Magazine of Industry and the Daily Leader Review of Augusta County, Virginia; Industrial, Financial, and Commercial Interests* (June 1912): 27.
- ²³ Staunton Deed Book 25: 279.
- ²⁴ *Staunton City Directory*, 1916-17, 1920-21, 1922-23.
- ²⁵ Oral history, Tom and Dick Hamrick.
- ²⁶ Sanborn map 1929 and Staunton City Tax Records, 1930.
- ²⁷ Staunton Will Book 21: 362.
- ²⁸ Personal communication, Thomas and Richard Hamrick, July 2013.
- ²⁹ *Representative Enterprises of the South and Southwest, The Valley of Virginia; Staunton, VA* (Richmond, Va.: Townsend and Cornman, 1884.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.
- ³¹ Staunton Deed Book 6: 554, January 1, 1875.
- ³² Sanborn map, 1886; Staunton City Tax Records, 1885.
- ³³ *Staunton City Directory* 1904-1905.
- ³⁴ *Staunton Spectator*, August 8, 1865).
- ³⁵ Staunton Court of Hustings Records.
- ³⁶ *Staunton Spectator*, 29 August 1865.
- ³⁷ (Staunton Deed Book 4: 490.
- ³⁸ U.S. Census, Staunton 1870.
- ³⁹ *Representative Enterprises of the South* (1884), 20.
- ⁴⁰ *Staunton Spectator*, 13 May 1884
- ⁴¹ *Staunton Spectator* 2 May 1884.
- ⁴² U.S. Census, Baltimore, 1900.
- ⁴³ *Staunton Spectator*, Vol. 67, Number 32, March 1890.
- ⁴⁴ receipt from the collection of Richard and Thomas Hamrick.
- ⁴⁵ Records of Emmanuel Episcopal Church, Staunton.
- ⁴⁶ Personal communication of David Schwartz, son of former THOI treasurer Philip Schwartz.
- ⁴⁷ Staunton Deed Book 3:250.
- ⁴⁸ Temple House of Israel Archives.
- ⁴⁹ Staunton Deed Book 9: 474.
- ⁵⁰ *Staunton Spectator*, 8 December 1868.
- ⁵¹ *The Vindicator*, 24 July 1863, 1: 3.



- ⁵² *Staunton Virginia – Past, Present and Future* (Staunton Development Company, 1890).
- ⁵³ "White Star Mills," *Staunton News Leader*; *Augusta County Bi-Centennial*, 1940).
- ⁵⁴ *Staunton City Directory*, 1904-5.
- ⁵⁵ Staunton Deed Book 21: 536.
- ⁵⁶ Staunton City Tax List, 1912
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- ⁶⁰ *Staunton City Directories* 1904-1905, and others.
- ⁶¹ *Staunton Dispatch and News*, 13 March 1908.
- ⁶² Strauss, "The Jewish Merchants of Staunton."
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- ⁶⁶ *Staunton City Directories*, 1914-17.
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- ⁷¹ Staunton Deed Book 20: 227, 27 August 1909.
- ⁷² Oral history of Douglas Degen.
- ⁷³ *Staunton Dispatch and News*, 15 November 1909, 5.