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Grid Showing Decades of Families Included in Text  
1939 Congregation Beth Israel Religious School List\*  
Confirmation Class

1922	1931	1940	1950	1961	1970	1983
1923	1932	1941	1951	1962	1971	1985
1929	1934	1943	1952	1963	1972	1988
	1935	1944	1953	1964	1973	
	1937	1946	1955	1965	1974	
	1938	1949	1957	1966	1979	
	1939			1967		
				1968		
				1969		

TABLE: 1923 Congregation Beth Israel Membership

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

THE AUTHOR

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Photos of the class were added to some of the Confirmation lists, but photos were not taken not of the years.

## PREFACE

Why didn't I ask? A visit to the cemetery and seeing all the names of people I can cover in this book created the reason I did this research. Why didn't someone record the story when the individuals lived? We think we'll never forget the information until no one is alive to remember. Each story, a disconnected puzzle piece, needs to be added to the next one to see the total picture.

These families stories show the following:

**COTTON** symbolizes daily activities related to productivity.

**FAMILY** works together as the mainstay of life, and

**RELIGION** glues all parts together.

This historical documentation includes a cultural and economic view by using government records, newspaper articles, and other secondary references plus oral interviews of those who can say, "Lived there, know this."

Previously, the website Issaquena Avenue maintained on-going data. I removed it because the author can no longer pay the fees, and no one volunteered to continue it. Thanks to all the families who participated in providing data. Several of their great grandchildren used the website over the years and expressed gratitude for the work done.

This unpublished manuscript and digitized copy will be available at the following institutions in about a year or two, because it is still presently a work in progress:

Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, Mississippi,

Temple Israel, Memphis, Tennessee (includes raw data records)

American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio

The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life, Jackson, Mississippi

This historical and genealogical information was found in government documents and city directories between 1880 and 2003. The assistance of the library staff including Missy Craig, Past Director of Library, and Joanne Blue, Acting Director, is greatly appreciated.

To you who feel dates and stories aren't the same as you remember, keep in mind I am not an academic historian, so the raw data in this book may not always be exact facts authenticated by two sources of data. Nor did I analyze the data given, this presentation is pure raw data collected because of the time it takes to find each fragmented piece.

Hearty thanks to those who supported me in this endeavor. I do not remember all the people who contributed such information, be it small or large. I failed to keep a list of contributors in the twenty-five years to accumulate and record what I've written. I truly believe and understand it takes a village to get a job done.

This historical perspective starting in 1868 chronicles the Jewish story of Coahoma County. The Goldring/Woldenberg Institute of Southern Jewish Life ISJL website features the history of the local Congregation Beth Israel. See the 1939 Religious School photo on ISJL's website (Appendix), and the list(s) identifying names possible in the photo.

Although the first chapter includes 1868 and 1869, each remaining chapter represents a decade between 1968 and 1940. The last chapter covers information during and since World War II and other data from news articles and oral interviews between 1941 and 2000.

Within each chapter, the yearly subsection gives general data, such as both Mississippi's and Clarksdale events occurring during the year. The rest of the chapter lists alphabetically the Jewish family names. All data coming from newspaper articles and oral memories is quoted. Paraphrasing is used for US Census and other governmental documents plus secondary resources; names; State of Mississippi; Memphis, Tennessee; and Helena, Arkansas.

Because this may be helpful to genealogical research, its purpose is not genealogical even though some genealogical data is included, primarily marriage dates and children names and obituaries. Copies of obituaries can be found in the Appendix.

Because this type of history is more folklore than accurate documentation, if you believe it is wrong and have evidence to improve the accuracy, notify the Librarian or whomever is in charge of the institution.

Rabbi Wax of Temple Israel in Memphis, Tennessee, was asked how Jews had survived in America. He answered to Marion Solomon, "Jews learned to assimilate without becoming assimilated."

## WHERE THE SOUTH BEGINS

When you come to a land  
Where everybody is a friend  
Where, when you get off your train  
Cordially, you are invited to remain.  
There's where the South begins

When you come to a land where cotton is king  
Where Negroes in the field, work while they sing  
Where folks walk slowly, dragging their feet  
Where folks hang out on each corner of the street  
There's where the south begins

When you come to a land where you can settle on a farm  
Where you can share the crop, on the strength of your arm  
Where, if you never cropped, they will let you learn  
Where, they furnish grub and money before you earn  
There's where the South begins

When you come to a land, where you can settle in town  
Where, if you are broke, they won't turn you down  
Where you can start in business on a shoestring or two  
Where in the course of a few years, you will be well to do  
There's where the South begins

When you come to a land, where girls are fair  
Where in virtue and charm have more than their share  
Where a stranger is met with a smiling eye  
Where your heart goes throbbing, Oh my, my  
There's where the South begins

When you come to a land, where they vote democratic  
Where men are brave, their features aristocratic  
Where capital is always at peace with labor  
Where people regard each other as neighbor  
There's where the South begins

If you are dissatisfied elsewhere, come to the fair south  
To the Delta, where we have no storm, cloudburst or drought  
Where the Levees are safe, where we are cozy and dry  
Where we have everything in the world that money can buy.

(Abraham Isaacson, New Yorker, October, 1950, CPLCC)

# INTRODUCTION

## JEWES IMMIGRATING TO THE SOUTH

According to an unpublished manuscript *Jewish Traditions Among Delta Riches* by Judy Tucker:

Since Joachim Gaunze walked down the gangplank and stepped on American soil at Roanoke Island in 1585, Jews have taken part in the settlement of the South and have worked to build it into the power that it is today. Wherever there was an influx of immigrants, wherever there was the founding of cities, wherever western civilization flourished, there were Jews. From the earliest days, there were Jews in the cities of the South helping to establish governments and trade and the arts and religious institutions in this raw, new land.

[Although Jews lived in the South prior to the Civil War], after the great upheaval of the Civil War Jewish peddlers, young men from the ages of thirteen to eighteen, came south and traveled throughout the upper Mississippi Delta selling their wares from packs they carried on their backs. Here in this strange land, as they sought to provide a livelihood for themselves, they discovered the word "rich" had special meanings. They found untold riches generated by the loamy, black soil deposited in the Yazoo Basin over the centuries by the flooding of the mighty Mississippi River and its tributaries, the Yazoo and the Sunflower.

[Because many of the peddlers stayed, raised their families and became Southern Jews.] many people today believe that Jewish families in the Mississippi Delta acquired a particularly southern Jewish identity as a result of assimilation; however, this is not an accurate appraisal. It is certainly true that the Jewish peddlers realized that their clothing and their Old World speech set them apart from the people they had chosen to live among. They adopted their Christian neighbor's style of dress and they diligently studied their diction and tried to remove traces of the Old World from their speech. But even as they absorbed the customs and the mannerisms of the South, they clung fiercely to the values passed down to them from their forebearers. Peter Applebaume, a journalist for the New York Times, described it as "a hybrid culture of matzo ball gumbo and kosher grit. distinct among Jews, because we are Southerners and distinct among the Southerners because we are Jews.

[This unpublished manuscript, *Jewish Families Of Coahoma County 1868-1990*, will establish that the core of the Jewish identity not only survived but flourished in this Mississippi Delta community in the past one hundred and thirty years. It will show how their Jewish heritage and the practice of their religion remained an integral part of the daily life of the Jews in the Delta. These profile of Jewish families who settled in Coahoma, Quitman, Bolivar, and Tallahatchie Counties in Mississippi in the last thirty—two years of the nineteenth century and tell their stories as they began new lives in a new land.. From 1868 through the 1890's the pioneer Jewish families (Richberger, Marks, Friedman, Kerstine, Cohen, Jacobson, Brenner, Sack, Kaufman, and others) were no less... influential than their Christian neighbor...in the financial, cultural, political and religious life of the small towns of Delta, Friars Point, Jonestown, Duncan, and Beulah' s Landing.<sup>1</sup>

## MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND THE DELTA

At the time Mississippi became a state in 1817 and for a couple of decades after the Civil War, the Mississippians called the Mississippi-Yazoo Delta—"The Bottoms" or "The Mississippi Swamps"<sup>2</sup>This lush Yazoo River Basin of black alluvial soil extends 200 miles long and seventy miles wide. Lying between Memphis, Tennessee, and Vicksburg, Mississippi. It grew as a result of torrid weather and floodwaters depositing silt from the Upper Mississippi valleys. In the northwest corner of the basin and within Coahoma County, the Yazoo Pass converges into the Coldwater River. This flows south to the Tallahatchie, to join the Yalobusha River to form the Yazoo River. The Yazoo flows southwest and empties into the Mississippi at Vicksburg. Boatman roamed the bayous and rivers, such as the Sunflower and Hushpuckena, looking for the calmest clearings and the best plots to settle.

Most pioneers preferred to build their plantations and towns along the riverbanks since the bald eagles, panthers, wolves, plus the wild cats, possums, rats, as well as snakes, alligators and bears occupied the swampy wilderness. Many settlers knew about the Delta's tremendous wealth-producing potential, but few had capital, credit, and the labor force of slaves to tame the area included within the Choctaw Cession.

On the 400th anniversary (5/22/1941) of the discovery of the Mississippi River the National Society of Colonial Dames erected a handsome marker at the intersection of Highway 49 and Highway 61 confirming DeSoto's visit. It is identical to the marker standing at the mouth of the Manatee River in Florida, where the conquistador landed in 1539. The latter commemorates the explorers 4,000 mile march into the wilderness of the southern part of the United States. The marker at Clarksdale commemorates DeSoto's discovery of the Mississippi River in Coahoma County<sup>3</sup>

The grueling, fast-paced farming followed the production schedule of cotton:

1. Land preparation: From late January to mid-March, the families clear, ditch and repair large acres of land to prepare for planting.
2. Planting: In April and May they plow and plant regardless of the heavy rains.
3. Cultivation/Irrigation then hoeing followed during the severe hot summer days.
4. Insect control/ Mature Cotton/ Open cotton fields/Hand/ mechanical picking/Gins. Bales/Winter.
5. Although they pick some early cotton in August, the picking season starts in September. The harvesting and ginning continue through the freezing rain, ice and snow of November, December and early January.<sup>4</sup>

## COTTON FACTORS

The cotton factor served a significant financial role in cotton production:

Chronic money shortages created the need for credit from the factor serving as a middleman. Between planting and harvesting, storekeepers and large planters—who were called plantation owners—used financial notes from factors for supplies, for financing the crop, and for selling it in the market towns. The factors borrowed money from the cotton wholesalers and repaid them in cotton. The wholesaler received money from New York bankers who loaned out 90 days notes. They financed only the sale of cotton in the marketplace, not the year-round production. At harvest time, the banker's notes forced the wholesaler to push the factor who pushed the planter to ship cotton as soon as possible. Because the factor could not finance year-round production schedules or the small cotton grower's debt, a country merchant acted as the factor. The storekeeper consented to one year's credit for supplies and assisted in various types of arrangements for negotiating with many factors. In addition, the merchant agreed to other barter-type transactions. Thus, his customers thought of him as more than storekeeper, because he resolved the trading needs for both large and small cotton producing families.<sup>5</sup>

The cycle of the cotton plant:

1. Seedling Cotton
2. White bloom
3. Red bloom
4. Green boll
5. Cracked boll
6. Open boll
7. Defoliation



Cotton Clock (Harris Barnes)

*The Commercial Appeal* article (6/30/2006) gives credit to cotton as the link between the Delta, the national economy and the world during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

January 3: Two French vessels arrived at Ship Island with 300 settlers for Pascagoula and Bay St. Louis. (Date not available)

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1811 TO 1867 EARLIEST GROWTH OF CLARKSDALE**

#### **1811**

December 11: The greatest earthquake in American history caused a stretch of the Mississippi River from North Mississippi to Madrid, Missouri, to flow backwards. Today, New Madrid, Missouri, replaced Madrid, because the latter became submerged.

#### **1817**

McLemore wrote:

Another religious group that has become an integral part of Mississippi life is the Jewish community. At the time of statehood in 1817, there were possibly one hundred Jews in Mississippi. The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia gave the following account of further migration of Jews into Mississippi: a number of migrants to the United States from Eastern Europe settled in Mississippi, particularly in the cities and towns between the Mississippi and Yazoo rivers in what is known as the Delta section. Here many became not only merchants and professional men but owners of farms and plantations. About fifty communities of Mississippi had ten Jews or more in 1942 Mississippi admitted to Union.<sup>6</sup>

#### **1820**

First signs of community life in this region: either William Oldham or John Chism were the first to settle Port Royal, seven miles west of Friars Point.<sup>7</sup>

#### **1830**

September 27: The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek was signed with [the] Choctaw Indians.<sup>8</sup> The diminution [cessions] of the Choctaw estate in Mississippi began in 1801 with Fort Adams being the first...The Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek liquidated the Choctaws Nation in Mississippi. They surrendered their remaining Mississippi lands, [i.e.] ten and one-half million acres or 10,428,130 acres.<sup>9</sup>

Selma Lewis writes: "The first known Jewish settlers in Tennessee were probably peddlers who in the late 1830s and 1840s moved north from New Orleans, from the river towns of Mississippi, south from St. Louis, and west from Cincinnati and Louisville."<sup>10</sup>

#### **1836**

Following the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit Creek, the Coahoma County is established by act of the State Legislature.<sup>11</sup> On February 9, 1836, the state legislature mapped out the thirteen counties acquired from the Choctaw Cession of 1830.

Mississippi River south to Vicksburg, a distance of approximately 175 miles and a breadth up to about sixty miles. It is located in the very center of an alluvial empire.

## **1838**

Robert Friar, John Clark and other woodchoppers came to clear out the swamps of Coahoma for the few plantation owners who yearned to reap mighty-fine cotton crops.<sup>12</sup>

## **1839**

John Clark ventured up river for timber and for exploring the inland waterways. He began to use the east bank of the Little Sunflower River in Coahoma.

In a meeting with Alvin Labens, Burt Jaegar, and Irwin Kaufman, Labens pointed out where the Mississippi River ran through Clarksdale: when you drive into Lyon, the low place is the riverbed where John Clark got his first logs out of town. Clark pulled out his logs and sold them at Delta Avenue where the road goes to the Country Club on the old Friars Point Road. He used his money to buy the land.<sup>13</sup>

## **1840**

From 1840 when Russians segregated Russian Jews into Pale Of Settlement, special groups were selected by financial or educational qualifications for purpose of best to win rights and privileges (merchants of first guild-university graduates, incorporated artisans).

1840 Census reports 763 whites/524 black slaves.

Delta post office opened.

McLemore wrote: “No evidence of Jewish immigration or organized Jewish life in Mississippi before the 1840s. Most of the early Jews in the state were immigrants from Germany, with a few from England. Late arrivals in the antebellum period emigrated from Russia and Poland. They supported themselves as peddlers and small merchants. Hard-working, enterprising men, more often than not they started out with no more than could be carried on their backs.”<sup>14</sup>

Cemeteries usually preceded the organization of Jewish congregations. The Jews of Natchez bought a cemetery in 1840, and they organized as the Congregation B'nai Israel in 1843. Memphis started the Jewish cemetery in 1847, but the congregation did not become chartered until 1857. Clarksdale started with the congregation, and the cemetery was purchased in 1916.

## **1841**

Friars Point begins to be used as a store port.

Port Royal [was] venue for circuit court; however, Port Royal and Old Delta did not survive the high-water years. In 1841, the Mississippi [outgrew] its banks at Port Royal. From the earliest legends, the

ever-changing course of the Mississippi created the need for major family decisions. With alarming regularity, the riverbanks caved in due to massive mudslides, gullies and avalanches.<sup>15</sup>

An organized Jewish congregation was established in Vicksburg in 1841. Initially known as the Hebrew Benevolent Congregation of the Men of Mercy, it assumed the name Congregation Anshe Chesed when it was formally incorporated in 1862. At the time of its organization, there were between twenty-five and thirty Jewish families living in Vicksburg. Religious services were conducted in various private homes or in a warehouse on Levee Street. The latter was owned by one of the more prosperous members, Barnard Yoste, who acted as their president and conducted the Orthodox services. It was not until 1868 when ground was broken for a temple. At the outbreak of the Civil War, about fifty families belonged to the congregation. Although occupying a minority position in the community, they were apparently well accepted. M.A. Levy served as a selectman in 1832 and again in 1833, while L. M. Lowenberg held the office of Justice of the Peace in Warren County.<sup>16</sup>

## **1842**

The boundary of Coahoma County changed due to releasing a large portion to Bolivar. An election is held for the selection of the county seat, Delta, at the mouth of Yazoo Pass, winning over Port Royal and Friar's Point. Delta was selected as county seat.<sup>17</sup>

## **1844**

February 24: The University of Mississippi was chartered.

This major flood of 1844 happened only months after James Alcorn arrived from Kentucky. Coahoma County voters sent him to the state legislature to propose his levee bill. The state legislature passed his two bills to approve the levee.<sup>18</sup>

Andrew Jackson, a one-time property holder in Coahoma County, is reputed to have constructed a private levee running from near what is known at Rescue Landing, a point prominent in Coahoma's history.<sup>19</sup>

## **1846**

During the Mexican-American War (1846-1848), two citizen in Coahoma County participated: "Benjamin Saunders and Isaac N. Brown."<sup>20</sup>

## **1848**

Clark bought 101 acres to send logs easier along the Sunflower to the Mississippi to avoid fierce competition; however, most settlers carved out prosperity at the river landings, such as Union (commonly called Friars Point), Port Royal, and Old Delta.<sup>21</sup>

Delta is incorporated.<sup>22</sup>

Old Delta's streets turned into canals as floodwaters forced high ridges to crumble. Although some families rebuilt New Delta, most picked up and shifted downstream seven miles southwest to Union where the river lowed at the J-shaped bend. Because everyone thought of Union as Robert Friar's town, the local citizens always said Friars Point. Families moved close, because the cotton crop yield kept doubling, and they owed the commission agent or factor.

## **1850**

“Nearly one million pounds of cotton to send to market every year was produced and was ginned by 2,780 black and white settlers with their factors produced and ginned nearly one million pounds of cotton to send to market every year.”<sup>23</sup>

Levees: The first whites established their wood yards and small clearings on the higher spots of the river bank, the problem of protection from overflows remained a significant issue. Prior to 1850, little progress made in levee building, but in this year the work greatly stimulated by a generous grant of lands from Congress.<sup>24</sup>

## **1851**

Sewing machine invented by Eli Whitney was improved upon by Singer between 1851 and 1856. Many immigrants had gained knowledge and experience in Europe in the manufacture of clothing. Trained in the old country, they came to America at a time when ready-made clothing was developing popularity and their skills were timely assets in this industry.<sup>25</sup>

## **1852**

Friars Point is incorporated under the name of "Union", and in the same year, the name is changed to read "Point Friar".<sup>26</sup>

## **1854**

“Officially, Temple Israel [formerly Children of Israel Congregation] came into being on March 2, 1854.”<sup>27</sup> Originally, the congregation followed Orthodox law. Word spread by word of mouth and southern Jewish publications. Many Jewish immigrants throughout Arkansas, Mississippi, and Tennessee went to Memphis for weddings, births, bar mitzvahs, deaths, or any major life cycle events as no other synagogue existed nearby.

## **1856**

June 1856 to 1863: From 1840 when Russians segregated Russian Jews into Pale Of Settlement: special groups were selected by financial or educational qualifications for purpose of best to win rights and privileges (merchants of first guild-university graduates, incorporated artisans).

## 1858

Another flood: legislature created a general level district for the entire Delta. Even though the major flood of 1858 initiated the start of the 262-mile levee; the state had not borrowed the full amount (estimated \$6.25 million) to complete it.<sup>28</sup>

## 1859

John Clark, founder, begins building his home near Sunflower River.<sup>29</sup>

## 1860

- January 9: Mississippi, the second state, seceded from the Union.
- January 23: Rabbi Tuska, Congregation of Children of Israel, Memphis, Tennessee, publishes an editorial on anti-defamation issues in the Commercial Appeal about the Jews accused of theft. The accusation led to the infamous Order #11 by General Grant.<sup>30</sup>
- February 18: Jefferson Davis inaugurated President of the Confederate States of America.
- March 4: Abraham Lincoln inaugurated as President of the United States.
- April 14: (Civil War began): The most able-bodied men, like Major General Nathaniel Bradford Forrest, left to fight for the Confederacy. Prior to the war, Forrest had lived in southwest Coahoma County at Green Grove, a 1,000-acre plantation.<sup>31</sup>
- May 4: First volunteers from Coahoma County leave for the War Between the States. The Coahoma Invincibles became Company B of the “Eleventh Mississippi Regiment.”<sup>32</sup>

Prior to the Civil War, there were many Jewish immigrants in Tennessee, Arkansas, and lower Mississippi. They traveled by packet boat(s) to the Delta river towns. Coahoma County 1860 census does not list Jewish settlers.

Selma Lewis described the early Jewish peddlers: “the immigrants wore backpacks filled with farm items and walked to each farmhouse. The farmers liked the peddlers, because the farmers rarely saw strangers. The peddler would unpack in the middle of the room near the fireplace. They unfastened the pack to roll back the awning striped cover [to expose] brightly colored clothes in his first bag.”<sup>33</sup> The smells came after opening the canvas: “sachets cheap perfumes, soaps, leather goods and spices filled the room with tantalizing fragrances.”<sup>34</sup>

“When peddlers saved enough money, they bought horses and buggies.”<sup>35</sup> When they put together a little more capital, they stopped traveling to buy inventories of bankruptcy stores to start their stores or “became wholesale dealers for other retailers.”<sup>36</sup> Many were successful from these small beginnings: Macy's, Lowenstein, Goldsmith, and Julius Lewis in larger towns like New York and Memphis; however, even smaller towns eventually had a Jewish department store.

The primary icon is the Jewish immigrant in the clothing business; however, immigrant Jews found diverse opportunities. Thus, for many the dry goods and general merchandise were a beginning. In addition, they became cotton brokers and factors, real estate brokers, barbers, auctioneers, wholesalers, grocers, liquor and wine dealers, tobacco and candy merchants, purveyors of leather goods, tailors, boots and shoes repair, cattle brokers, hatters, and dry cleaners.

McLemore wrote, “Thus, on the eve of the Civil War, the few Jews who were in Mississippi resided for the most part in the towns and villages. Organized religious life existed at five different points: Vicksburg, Natchez, Columbus, Port Gibson, and Jackson. But none of the congregations owned an official house of worship nor did any enjoy the services of a resident rabbi. Although no official census figures are available, one might safely place the number of Jews in the state in 1860 at approximately 600.”<sup>37</sup>

Coahoma County population was 6,606 with thirteen churches; land averaged \$30,000.<sup>38</sup>

## 1861

January 6: When Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860 the die was cast: Mississippi seceded from the Union on January 9, 1861. The same day rebels in South Carolina fired on the Union supply ship *Star of the West* as it steamed toward Fort Sumter in the Charleston harbor. Every bit as vengeful, as powerful as the floods had ever been, this new enemy the Union Army—advanced toward the South.<sup>39</sup>

The men from Friars Point in Coahoma County quickly raised a company called the Coahoma Invincibles to fight for the homeland. By this time, Coahoma County had a population of 6,606. Of these, 5,085 were slaves, almost four slaves for every white man, woman and child. When the men marched off to war, the women and children and the slaves were left to make the crops and protect the home front.<sup>40</sup>

According to Judy Tucker’s research,

With the rise to power of King Wilhelm I in Prussia (1861) and his appointment of Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck, there came a new threat to the Jews of Germany. The powerful German military machine needed young men to carry out its mission of expansion.” Some historians believe that the first wave of Jewish immigrants came to America to escape the economic hardships and religious persecution in their native Germany. However, the young men who came to the Mississippi Delta told a different story. Often no older than children, they told of leaving their native land in order to avoid conscription into Prussia's army. Bismarck commanded the army that gobbled up many smaller, weaker nations and consolidated them into a massive German Empire. Bismarck's army needed a constant supply of fresh soldiers and he conscripted Jewish boys at fourteen to march on the front row.

These lads had no military training, were poorly equipped to fight and were poorly fed and clothed. Jewish parents lived in fear of hearing horses' hooves in the streets of the ghetto. They dreaded opening the door and seeing the hussars in their pointed steel helmets. They knew that the soldiers had come for their sons. They also knew from the experience of their neighbors that, once the sons left with the hussars, they might never be heard from again. The parents were frantic to hide their sons from conscription into Bismarck's army. They saved their pennies to send the boys to America.

Historians like Carolyn LeMasters and Howard Sacher, mentioned German-Jewish newspapers that published articles and editorials advocating immigration. Travel agents in America circulated guidebooks and pamphlets telling of the opportunities available in the States. Southern states were actively trying to recruit labor from abroad. Jewish parents encouraged their sons to disappear: to go to America... Ashkenazi reported that R. G. Dun & Co (later Dun & Bradstreet) referred to Jewish peddlers as "birds of passage. " A few of the peddlers, who came through the Swamp" looked around, liked what they saw and stayed in the Delta."<sup>41</sup>

John Clark stops building home due to Civil War, and he stopped increasing his holdings to become the tax collector for the district.<sup>42</sup> First volunteers from Coahoma County leave for the War between the States.<sup>43</sup>

Plantations and cotton crops, especially the large crop of 1861, remained exposed to attacks by Yankee soldiers.

The women fought by protecting the family property. This included growing cotton, maintaining control of the slaves and dealing with the unwelcome Yankee visitors.

## **1862**

April: The Union forces occupied...Fort Penny (Helena, Arkansas). General Buford used James Robinson house as Union headquarters in Friars Point.<sup>44</sup>

James Alcorn, who became governor of the state in 1870, described the Union forces occupied New Orleans and the Confederates, fearing the might of that military machine...Union commanders ordered that the cotton be confiscated and declared cotton trading forbidden. The Delta planters faced perverse decisions: they could smuggle the cotton to Mexican traders, or have it confiscated by the Federals or let the Confederates burn it in order to keep it out of Yankee hands. The planters, loathed surrendering their wealth, hid the cotton in sheds or hauled it to remote warehouses to keep it safe until they could sell it on the black-market.

[Governor James Alcorn described the smuggling business:] "I was at Delta a few nights since when near 400 bales of cotton were openly sold, and full fifty men were on the bank participating." The Rebels justified their illegal activities by claiming that it was the only way to save their land and feed their families. Besides they were already acknowledged outlaws since they no longer swore allegiance to the United States or its laws.<sup>45</sup>

June 6: Confederate forces abandoned Memphis 6.

December 17: Order #11 by General Grant prohibited Jewish merchants from engaging in trade with the Treasury Department of the Union, especially soldiers' supplies.<sup>46</sup> The order was issued in Kentucky. Because a Jewish friend of President Lincoln's wrote him about the order, Lincoln rescinded as soon as he read the letter.

Trading conditions in Memphis had a rippling affect throughout the Delta. Selma Lewis wrote, "Memphis became a major center of illegal trading after falling to Union forces because of its location on the Mississippi River, and because it was the nearest city to St. Louis, the source of badly-needed pharmaceuticals."<sup>47</sup>

Rabbi Bertram Korn wrote about the tensions in Memphis, “The outbreak of the war had created an impasse. Supplies from the North were cut off and a Union blockade of southern ports prevented importation of products from Europe. Shortages of all manufactured goods resulted in rapid inflation and the beginning of illegal traffic between the North and South. Union commanders ordered the cotton to be confiscated and declared cotton trading forbidden. The Delta planters faced perverse decisions: smuggling the cotton illegally to Mexican traders, having it confiscated by the Federals or letting the Confederates burn it. The families used remote warehouses or hidden sheds to protect themselves and the crops from Yankee searches.”<sup>48</sup>

## **1863**

May-June: Delta burned by Sherman. Gen. Sherman's army of 32,000 men with a fleet of transports and gunboats, on their way to Vicksburg, rendezvous at Friars Point. Union forces by order of General Sherman open a way through Yazoo Pass in seeking a route to Vicksburg down the Yazoo River Confederate army's booby traps. Blocked these troops. Coahoma rebels joined the hundreds of their slaves who lined up along the bayous shores and threw rocks, spears and bullets. It delayed the Union troops a month, and it provided the time for the Confederates to prepare for Grant at the Yazoo River. But this valiant effort did not save Vicksburg or the mighty Mississippi from total Union control in July 1863. In Coahoma County, cotton remained king, but their beloved land belonged to the enemy who set the labor forces free.<sup>49</sup>

## **1865**

April 9: Civil War ends officially with the surrender of General Robert E. Lee to General Grant at Appomattox, Virginia.

## **1866**

April 25: The nation's first Declaration Day is held (currently called Memorial Day) at Columbus. The town's women placed flowers on the graves of both Confederate and Union soldiers.

According to Cobb during his description of this year, investors leasing the land did not survive long. Short crops of 1866 and 1867 created severe problems leading to heavy losses. The cotton-growing schedule had required more workers than they could hire. The freed slaves left to search for their children and relatives separated by slave trading before the war. They believed this new freedom meant, not only working when they wanted to but owning land, a piece of the action. They insisted on negotiating for land, not wages, for their work, but the families refused.<sup>50</sup>

## 1867

According to Baucom and Sage, “The Negroes exercise the right of the ballot for the first time, in the election held for or against a State Constitutional Convention.”<sup>51</sup>

### CHAPTER 1: MISSISSIPPI AND THE DELTA ENDNOTES

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