



South Carolina's Jewish Merchants

Rock Hill, SC

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A Brief History of Rock Hill's Jewish Merchants

The importance of the Jewish community in Rock Hill dates back to shortly after the first train stopped at the settlement's new depot in 1852. The first of the Friedheim brothers, Arnold, settled in the small town in 1866, founding a department store that would operate for close to 100 years at 113-115 East Main Street. Arnold's success in the small town encouraged brothers August, Julius, Samuel, and Harry to join him. The Friedheims were instrumental in the founding of many local businesses other than retail, serving on the Board of Directors for the city's Electric Plant, Manchester Mill, Standard Cotton Mill, Rock Hill Real Estate and Loan Company, Globe Mill, and Rock Hill Buggy Company which later became the Anderson Motor Company.

By the mid-1930s, a number of Jewish families established successful retail businesses operating in the downtown area. Benjamin "Ben" Frank Kurtz and wife Margaret "Peggy" Bogen Kurtz opened The Smart Shop at 148 East Main Street in 1934, then opened King's Men's Shop at 120 East Main Street in 1938. Ben's brother and sister-in-law, Albert Leon and Sylvia Frankel Kurtz, moved to Rock Hill in 1937 and co-managed King's Men's Shop. Both shops were fixtures in the downtown area until the Rock Hill Mall opened on Cherry Road. King's Men's Shop moved to the new mall in 1968, followed in 1973 by The Smart Shop.

In 1946, Charles Leroy Kartus partnered with his sister, Ester Pauline Kartus, and Ben Kurtz to open the Kartus Shoe Company on the second floor of The Smart Shop after running that store's shoe department. By 1948, Kartus renamed his company Craft Fine Shoes and moved across the street to 145 East Main Street where it remained until 1959. Craft's then moved to 141 East Main until 1963, when it relocated to 147 East Main Street, remaining there until 1968.

Marie Heilbron Gouled opened her self-named shop at 200 East Main Street in the mid-1930s, with the tagline "A Bit of New York In Rock Hill." In 1941, Morris Segal and Abraham Robert Surtiz partnered to open Barry's Credit Jewelers at 101 East Main Street. In 1946, Barnet "Ben" Leader and wife Miriam Posner Leader purchased Melville's at 117 East Main Street, which had been in operation since 1939. Known as Leader's by 1971, the store was a fixture in its downtown location until 1993 when it moved to Beaty Mall on Cherry Road.

Continued page 3

Baker's moved to 123 Caldwell Street in 1963 until purchased by a new owner in 1979. Baker's remained in business at this location until 1989. Across the street at 132 Caldwell Street, Nathan's Men's Wear, owned and managed by Nathan Arculis operated from approximately 1950 until 1952.

Meyers Goodman owned the Goodman Liquor Store at 110a S Trade Street from ca 1942 to 1946. The People's Bargain Store at 105 South Trade Street was owned and managed by Kalmen Rosoff from 1940 to 1959, then 107 South Trade from 1959 to 1962. Harold Dresner and partner Arthur Frank opened the O.K. Pawn Shop in 1940 at 114 North Trade Street, operating in that location until 1973. Dresner opened a second shop, the O.K. Men's & Boy's Wear at 112 North Trade Street. The longest to remain in the downtown area, O.K. Pawn Shop moved into 116-118 East Main Street in 1979 when urban renewal incentives allowed for the demolition of the buildings along Trade Street and the creation of the Town Center Mall with the placement of a roof structure to enclose East Main Street. O.K. Pawn Shop outlasted the Town Center Mall when the mall roof was removed in 1993, remaining in business at the East Main Street location until 1999.



1 - A. Friedheim & Brother 113-115 E Main Street – 1866-1965

Arnold Friedheim (1836-1915) - German immigrant, arrived in New York and settled in Baltimore MD in 1857. After serving in the Confederate army during the Civil War, moved to Rock Hill in 1866. He opened a small shop on East Main Street across the street from his brother August's (1849-1932) shop, which specialized in women's ready-to-wear. Most of the stock for this store was made locally in a manufacturing plant owned and controlled by August. The brothers' stores merged shortly after Arnold relocated to a much larger location across the street in 1869. The brothers were joined by brother Julius (1852-1931) in 1872. The partnership of A. Friedheim & Brother was established in 1876. A two-room brick building replaced the wooden structure in 1881. In 1895, the Rock Hill Herald reported that August severed ties with A. Friedheim & Brother and opened his own general merchandise store. The two-story brick building burned down in 1898; the current building was constructed and occupied by February 1899. The Friedheim's department store closed in 1965. The Friedheim brothers were involved in a number of business concerns throughout Rock Hill. Julius was listed on the Board of Directors for the city's Electric Plant, organized in 1890, and the Manchester Mill, operational in 1896. Arnold held Board of Director positions with Standard Cotton Mill, organized 1888; the Rock Hill Real Estate and Loan Company, organized 1890; and the Globe Mill, chartered in 1889 and in operation by 1890. Samuel (1846-1927), who owned a store outside the city limits between Rock Hill and Fort Lawn, joined the Board of Directors for the Rock Hill Buggy Company when chartered in 1896. He was still a director when the company was organized as the Anderson Buggy Company in 1892, which later became the Anderson Motor Company.

**2 - The Smart Shop 148 E Main Street – 1934-1973
(moved to Rock Hill Mall 1973)**

**3 - King's Men's Shop 120 E Main Street – 1938-1968
(moved to Rock Hill Mall 1968)**

Benjamin "Ben" Frank Kurtz (1908-1980) – owner The Smart Shop, ladies' ready-to-wear clothing, in 1934. First store to install fluorescent lighting and air conditioning system. Opened King's Men's Shop in 1938. Ben Kurtz partnered with Charles Leroy Kartus in opening Craft Fine Shoes. Charter member and president of The Rock Hill Hebrew Congregation Inc "to establish and maintain a place for religious worship." Installed as secretary of Jac Feinberg Lodge B'Nai B'Rith of Rock Hill. Margaret "Peggy" Bogen Kurtz (1909-1981) – co-owner The Smart Shop, founding member of Rock Hill Chapter of Hadassah, president in 1952.

Albert Leon Kurtz (1903-1973) – born in Opelika AL, moved to Rock Hill 1937; manager of King's Men Shop aka The Men's Shop for 35 years. Veteran of WWI and member of the VFW and the Elks Club. Brother of Benjamin Frank Kurtz.

Sylvia Frankel Kurtz (1912-1999) – operated King's Men Shop with husband, Albert.

Continued page 7

4 - Marie H Gouled Shop 200 E Main Street – 1936-1941

Marie Heilbron Gouled (1880-1943) – born and raised in Chicago with sister, Fannie (Mrs. Louis) Friedheim; buried in Friedheim section of Laurelwood Cemetery. Established “Marie H Gouled: A Bit of New York in Rock Hill” in the mid-1930s. Shop housed the Women’s National Defense headquarters in 1941. Manager of professional pianist, Winifred Byrd. Vice President of the Rock Hill Business and Professional Women’s Club.

**5 - Melville’s/Leader’s 117 E Main Street – 1939-1993
(moved to Beaty Mall 1993)**

Barnet “Ben” Leader (1908-1974) – co-owner and manager of Melville’s, opened in 1939. Leader purchased business in 1946. Remodeled building in 1949 and added air conditioning. Renamed Leader’s in 1970s. Charter member and secretary of The Rock Hill Hebrew Congregation Inc “to establish and maintain a place for religious worship.”

Miriam Posner Leader (1908-1982) – co-owner Melville’s/Leader’s, founding member and past president of the Rock Hill Chapter of Hadassah.

6 - Barry’s Credit Jewelers 101 E Main Street – 1941-1959

Morris Segal (unknown) & Abraham Robert Suritz (1906-1991) established Barry’s Credit Jewelers in 1941 – named for Segal’s son, Barry, born a few months before opening. Abraham Suritz, Rev Mr. Robinson and Father Maurice approached Rock Hill City Council to establish a human relations council; Morris Segal appointed as member of Rock Hill Council on Human Relations in 1955. Both named trustees of Jac Feinberg Lodge B’Nai B’Rith of Rock Hill. Abraham Suritz listed as chairman of the Social Service Workers Club of Rock Hill; vice chairman of the South Carolina Council on Human Relations; Assistant National Service Fund Director of the B’nai B’rith international organization. Sylvia Suritz (1907-2002) – served as past president Rock Hill Chapter of Hadassah.

**7 - Baker’s Shoe Service 1 Record Place—1922-1933
135 E Main Street—1933-1939
120A E Main Street—1940-1958
128 Caldwell Street—1959-1962
123 Caldwell—1963-1989 (new owner 1979)**

Samuel Jackson “Uncle Jack” Bell (1862-1935) established Bell’s Shoe in 1881 and partnered with Roy Gladstone Baker (1898-1995) in 1922. In 1923, Baker purchased the business from Bell. A proficient golfer, Baker supported the City’s first golf course and recreational facility built on Saluda Street, south of the city limits. He was also a charter member of the Rock Hill Elks Club.

8 - O.K. Pawn Shop**114 N Trade Street – 1940-1973****116 E Main Street – 1973-1999****(part of Town Center Mall 1973-1993)**

Harold Dresner (1913-1983) – O.K. Pawn Shop opened 1940 with partner Arthur Frank; also sold men’s and boy’s clothes. Installed as vice-president of Jac Feinberg Lodge B’Nai B’Rith of Rock Hill in 1948; charter member and treasurer of The Rock Hill Hebrew Congregation Inc “to establish and maintain a place for religious worship.” Elected to Rock Hill Optimist Club board of directors in 1951.

Pearl Frank Dresner (1921-1983) – served as president of the Rock Hill Chapter of Hadassah.

9 - Kartus Shoe Company**148 E Main Street – 1946-1948****10 - Craft Fine Shoes****145 E Main Street – 1948-1959****141 E Main Street – 1959-1963****147 E Main Street – 1963-1968**

Charles Leroy Kartus (1912-1969) – co-owner with sister, Esther Pauline Kartus (1906-1991), and Benjamin Frank Kurtz. Owned several shoe stores in Hickory, Morganton, and Lenoir NC. Worked in the shoe department of The Smart Shop (owned by Kurtz), then purchased to open Kartus Shoe Company at 148 E Main Street above The Smart Shop; opened Craft Fine Shoes at 145 E Main on March 19, 1948. Served in the Army, rising from private to staff sergeant, becoming personal driver to General Maxwell D Taylor of the 101 Airborne Division. Present during Battle of the Bulge (1944-1945). Kartus & Kurtz Inc. chartered December 1947 with Charles listed as president. Kartus named as member of the board of directors of Rock Hill Chamber of Commerce in 1962.

11 - Nathan’s Men’s Wear**132 Caldwell Street – 1950-1952**

Nathan Benjamin Arculis (1901-1955) – born near Odessa, Russia and came to US ca1925; member Beth-El Temple of Rock Hill, monitor of Jac Feinberg B’nai B’rith Lodge of Rock Hill, Rock Hill Elks Club, Rock Hill Country Club; employed by Rock Hill Printing & Finishing in 1946, becoming foreman; opened menswear shop in 1950.

Faina “Fanny” Krasnov Arculis (1900-1945) - vice-president of the Rock Hill Chapter of Hadassah 1952.

12 - Goodman Liquor Store**116 S Trade Street – 1942-1946**

Meyers or Myer Goodman (1897-1950)

Mildred Surasky Goodman (1899-1954) – father, Abram (Abraham) Surasky (1873-1903); stepfather, Samuel Surasky (1879-1949); mother, Mary Levy Surasky (1874-1958)

Continued Page 9

13 - People's Bargain Store

105 S Trade Street – 1940-1959

107 S Trade Street – 1959-1962

Kalman/Kalmen Rosoff (1900-1982) – Ratterree Building along Trade Street – discount clothing store.

14 - Tiny Town Toy Store

134-A Caldwell Street – 1953

100 East Main Street – 1954-1957

David Fine (1914-1988) came to Rock Hill with his wife, Annie Orenstein Fine (1915), from New Orleans to open the Tiny Town children's store at 134 Caldwell Street. Within a year, the business moved to 100 East Main Street. Unfortunately, the business declared bankruptcy and was forced to close in early 1957.

Carver Theater (not mapped)

415 W Main Street

Segal and Suritz, along with Suritz' brother, H. (Hy or Hyman) and Jesse Cox purchased a Quonset hut to open the Carver Movie Theater for Black citizens in 1947. By 1948, Segal and his wife had purchased all rights to the business from the other partners and Mrs. Segal became the president and manager. The business filed a \$2.225 million lawsuit against 13 major Hollywood film studios and subsidiaries alleging that the film companies were in violation of the Sherman anti-trust laws, refusing to allow the theater to show films for as long as two years past the original release date and charging higher fees for rental.



Photo: CinemaTreasures.org

If you have any additional information about these or other Jewish businesses located in downtown Rock Hill, please contact Janice E Miller, janice.miller@cityofrockhill.com.

Historic Jewish Business Locations



Sources

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