

The identity of Jews in the Southern United States is multidimensional, encompassing the complex history of the South mixed with the varied histories and the diverse groups of Jews who live there. This project, entitled “Jewish Planters, Jewish Identity, and Jewish Community in the Pre-Civil War Mississippi Delta Region,” will examine Jewish planters in the Mississippi Delta and their Jewish communities. This project is unique in its framework; whereas other histories examine the Jewish South by state or territory, this project sees the influence of the Mississippi River as a key factor in the Southern Jewish experience and seeks to understand how this river influenced the Jewish community, and more specifically, Jewish planters.

This project will use Lloyd’s map of the Lower Mississippi River, which illustrates the Mississippi River and its abutting plantations from St. Louis to New Orleans, as a geographic framework in order to understand the Jewish community of the Mississippi Delta Region. As an expert in historical GIS, I plan to georectify¹ Lloyd’s map in order to create a clear picture of the Jewish plantations, Jewish communities, and Jewish landmarks along this part Mississippi River.

Currently, I am taking a history class entitled *Water and World History*. In this class we specifically examine history through the lens of water. With this background, I am inspired to ask: How did the Mississippi River (River) shape Jewish communities in the Mississippi Delta region? How did the society along the River affect and influence the assimilation of Jews into the larger Mississippi Delta Society and, specifically, the

¹¹ Georectification is a process whereby a scanned old map is warped on top of a modern map in order to put the old map in a known coordinate system.

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planter elite? Did proximity to the River foster a larger concentration of Jewish owned plantations?

I hope to develop this project throughout this summer and continue my writing, research, and mapping on this topic as part of my senior religion thesis. Though traveling for this project may be necessary at some point, I have extensively researched the resources that I would use this summer and have found extensive, readily accessible primary and secondary resources online and through the Haverford library. I plan to work at Haverford this summer. This project will require use of my GIS skills, expand my research, writing and analytical skills, and will require me to apply my research findings to historical and cultural data, illuminating the intersection of geography, culture, religion, and history in the Mississippi Delta Region.