**Carolina Israelite.** The *Carolina Israelite* newspaper, published in Charlotte, N.C., was entirely the creation of journalist, social critic, and humorist Harry Golden (1902?-1981). Golden, who changed his name from Harry Goldhurst, grew up on New York’s Lower East Side. He moved South for what he thought would be a temporary work assignment, settling permanently in Charlotte in 1941.

The *Carolina Israelite* consisted almost exclusively of essays and writings by Golden,

plus advertisements. Some exceptions included letters to the editor, a column on men in the service, a few guest essays, and in later years occasional columns and book reviews by Golden’s sons. The prototype of the *Carolina Israelite* was the *American Freeman*, a personal journal published by Golden’s friend Emanuel Haldeman-Julius in Kansas, in which the publisher discoursed on atheism, Socialism, literature, and his boyhood. Golden himself would largely adhere to this structure throughout the years of the *Israelite*, which reflected his personal commitment to liberal causes and to civil rights, a lifelong habit of voracious reading, and the Jewish immigrant experience of his boyhood.

The actual date of the first edition of the *Carolina Israelite* is not entirely clear. It is generally considered to be the issue dated February 1944, which Golden himself numbered Vol. 1 No. 1. However, early in 1942 Golden commissioned the Charlotte *News* to print 1,000 copies of the *Israelite*. In his autobiography, *The Right Time*, he reports that he acquired 200 subscribers from this initial effort, and that it would take him another three years to make the paper a paying proposition.

With Vol. 1 No. 1 (Feb. 1944) Golden assumed the publishing and printing duties himself and began issuing the *Israelite* more regularly (initially monthly, later bi-monthly). The front page of this first issue featured a masthead with symbols of a menorah and a Torah, and under the title the statement: “To Break Down the Walls of Misunderstanding – And to Build Bridges of Good Will.” The headline celebrated Brotherhood Week, recently proclaimed by President Roosevelt.

“It wasn’t that it was easier to start a newspaper in Charlotte than it was in New York --

it isn’t easy to start a newspaper anywhere,” Golden later wrote, “…but the big story was in the South.” The “big story” was to be desegregation and the progress of the civil rights movement. It was to the struggle for civil rights that Golden lent his efforts and his newspaper for much of the next twenty years.

Golden often used humor to make his point. In the wake of the Supreme Court school desegregation decisions, Golden used the May-June 1956 issue of the *Israelite* to introduce his Vertical Negro Plan. He pointed out that the South had already all but eliminated “vertical segregation” – that the buying power of more than 12 million blacks in the South was well-accepted. Whites and Negroes stood at the same bank tellers’ windows, walked through the same five-and-dime stores, wheeled carts in the same supermarkets. It seemed to him that integrated sitting bothered people much more than integrated standing. So Golden suggested replacing seats in schools with stand-up desks, and removing seats in lunch counters. With everyone vertical the problem would be solved.

When *Time* magazine picked up the tongue-in-cheek Vertical Negro Plan in 1957, the *Israelite’*s $3 for 12 issues subscription list included 20 senators, 40 members of Congress, William Faulkner, Earl Warren, Ernest Hemingway, Golden’s longtime friend Carl Sandburg, Bertrand Russell, and Harry Truman.

Golden lived and worked in a rented office on Trade Street in Charlotte. Early in 1958 he was lecturing in New Jersey when a disastrous pre-dawn fire caused by a faulty flue destroyed his home, his books, and all material relating to the *Israelite*, including much of the subscription list that took him 15 years to build. Parts of the list were restored with the assistance of the laboratories of the Charlotte Police Department and the remainder was rebuilt by the use of extensive publicity asking subscribers to notify Golden. He announced that due to the fire the next issue would be a little late – but as the *Charlotte Observer* pointed out, issues were always a little late.

Also in 1958 Golden signed a contract with World Publishing to publish a collection of essays from the *Israelite*, which would later become the best-seller *Only in America*. This book made Golden famous and eased his financial burdens. It also led to regular appearances on the *Tonight Show* with Jack Paar, which Golden credited with increasing the circulation of the *Carolina Israelite* to more than 40,000 subscribers at it peak in the late 50’s and early 60’s.

Following the fire Golden moved to a white Victorian home on Elizabeth Avenue, where he remained until the paper folded. The final issue published, Vol. 25 No. 6 of January-February 1968, contained an advertisement from the *Natio*n, lamenting the departure of the *Carolina Israelite*, but containing the promise that “Harry Golden will continue to be heard through our pages.”

Central Piedmont Community College bought the Elizabeth Avenue property, which was eventually torn down in 1973.

# Bibliography

The papers of Harry Lewis Golden are housed at the J. Murrey Atkins Library, University of North Carolina at Charlotte. See also Golden, Harry, “*The Best of Harry Golden*” (1967); “Golden Rule,” *Time*, 1 April 1957; Golden, Harry, *Only in America* (1958), Golden, Harry, *The Right Time* (1969); McCachern, Deborah, “Harry Lewis Golden,” *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography*, vol. 2, D-G (1986); Romine, Dannye, “Activist Writer Harry Golden Dies,” *Charlotte Observer*, 3 October 1981.

Bryna R. Coonin

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