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HISTORY IN PRINT

This section seeks to identify publication of books and articles on topics in accounting history which are not published by the Academy of Accounting Historians. Knowledge of this historical research should be useful to the members of the Academy. The editor appreciates your help in locating these items:

Hiroshi, Okano, "Archaeology and Genealogy: The Significance of M. Foucault in the Studies of Accounting and Accounting History," *Osaka City University, Business Review*, n6, (1995), pp.1-9.

Atsuo Tsuji and Paul Garner, Editors, *Studies in Accounting History: Tradition and Innovation for the Twenty-First Century*

(Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1995).

Year Book of Accounting History Association, Accounting History Association, Osaka, Japan, 1994, (Selected Items):

Akiko Fujita, "Materialistische Theory in France: A Study of the Positive Theory of Dumarchey."

Hideo Hisano, "After PACIOLI—DOUBLE ENTRY BOOKKEEPING: What it was—."

Katsumi Isutani, "The Practice of Capital Account—The Pathway to 'Summa.'"

Takemi Ono, "The Introduction of Consolidated Financial Statements and Firms' Accounting Policy for Consolidation in Japan."



THE SEIDMANS OF SEIDMAN & SEIDMAN

by

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Philip K. Seidman (P.K.), at 88, is the last of the four Seidman brothers who founded the firm Seidman & Seidman (now BDO Seidman—the seventh largest accounting firm in the world). P.K. is still practicing as an attorney in Memphis, and we had the opportunity to meet there on June 16, 1995 to discuss the founders and the founding of the firm. To prepare for this interview, I studied (1) *75 Years of Total Involvement: A History of Seidman & Seidman*, (2) *A Time for Building: The Third Migration, 1880-1920* in the series *The Jewish People in America*, and (3) the *Accountants' Index* from 1920.

P.K. is the last of the second family of Louis Seidman, who had six children in Russia by his first wife and eight more after his first wife died, with his second wife, Fanny Goldfarb. Of these eight, five were born in Russia and three in the U.S., after

their arrival in 1899. All of the children of the first family ultimately came to the U.S. Louis and Fanny Seidman left the city of Kamenez-Podolsk in the "Pale of Settlement," in which Jewish people were compelled to live in Russia. The programs and the strict economic limitations placed on Jewish people were "push" factors for emigration; the "pull" factor of the golden shores of the U.S. was also a factor. P.K. said his oldest half-brother, Israel (born 1873), had preceded the second family to the U.S.

Louis Seidman had lost a leg and, hence, was unable to do the hard, physical labor expected from immigrants. Louis had been an instructor at a Hebrew Academy and was a noted discussant of the Talmud. "There seemed always to be a group of people around him to listen and discuss different issues," P.K. remembered. While his father

was a strict "Prussian" as far as discipline was concerned, P.K. considered his mother, Fanny, a warm and calming influence for the family.

The firm of Seidman & Seidman was founded in New York City in 1910 by Maximilian L. Seidman (M.L.) (born 1811). M.L. represented the Horatio Alger story come true. M.L. attended high school at night while working during the day at many different jobs in the garment industry. After graduating from high school, he attended Cooper Union at night to study architecture. Cooper Union was founded in 1859 by Peter Cooper as a free night school for the working class. However, M.L.'s success in a bookkeeping job (he had taken a bookkeeping course at night school) led him in 1906 to study accounting at New York University's School of Commerce at night. In 1910, two years before his graduation from N.Y.U., he opened the firm Seidman & Seidman with some clients in the fur industry from his father's contacts in that industry. M.L. was forward looking in assuming others in the Seidman family would follow him in the firm. M.L. retained his interest in the fur and garment industries and was well positioned for the 1913 enactment of the federal income tax. He became a CPA in 1914. M.L. had tax columns in both the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald*, for which he contributed his expertise to establish a strong relationship with the press. M.L.'s son, Richard, worked as a firm administrator and M.L.'s daughter, Grace, became a secretary with the firm after graduating from college. She later married Bob Spencer, who became a partner with the firm.

In 1913, Lewis (born 1893) joined the firm as a practice developer. Lewis, unfortunately, died in 1921 in an automobile accident. In 1919, Frank E. Seidman (F.E.) (born 1890) opened the Grand Rapids branch of the firm. Like M.L. he attended high school, Cooper Union (as an engineering student), and N.Y.U. (earning a B.C.S. degree in 1913), all at night. He also earned in 1917 a Master of Commercial Science degree at

night at N.Y.U. with expertise in both accounting and economics and became a CPA also in 1917. F.E. had a strong training and work experience in economics and banking. He was an economist for the prestigious firm of Eastman-Dillon from 1915 through 1917. F.E. had been with the rate-making staff of the New York Public Service Commission in 1914. He went to Grand Rapids in 1917 as a civilian employee with the Federal Aircraft Production Board to work on the feasibility of the mass production of airplanes from wood and canvas. His work so impressed the furniture manufacturers in Grand Rapids that they urged him to stay and practice there. F.E. developed a strong expertise in cost accounting as well. P.K. remembered him as an ebullient man. F.E.'s son, L. William (Bill) Seidman, became the managing partner of Seidman & Seidman before leaving the firm in 1973 to join the management team of President Gerald Ford. Bill Seidman's accomplishments since then are part of public record.

In 1918, Jacob S. Seidman (J.S.) (born 1901) joined the firm. Like M.L. and F.E. he attended N.Y.U. at night and received his B.C.S. in 1921. He became a CPA in 1922. He went on to earn an LL.B. in 1924 and an LM.M. in 1925 from Fordham and then a B.S. degree from N.Y.U. in 1929. Altogether, he attended night school for eleven years, J.S. achieved so much in his career that he truly is deserving of a place in the Accounting Hall of Fame. J.S. was an expert on fraud, the author of the four-volume pioneer study on the *Legislative History of the Income Tax Laws*, president of the New York State Society of CPAs in 1955, and the president of the AICPA in 1959. Like M.L., he wrote a tax column. He also served as an accounting consultant to the Hoover Commission. J.S. was a noted "Broadway Angel" as he sponsored many Broadway plays and musicals. J.S. also was an early internationalist in accounting and had noted war service during World War II.

P.K. Seidman (born 1907) started to work in the firm as an unpaid office boy from

1919 through 1926. He received an accounting degree from Columbia in 1928, studying with R.H. Montgomery and Roy Kester. P.K. received his law degree in 1936 from the Memphis Law School (now the University of Memphis). He worked with F.E. in Grand Rapids before opening the Memphis office in 1933. P.K. was sent there to complement the expertise the firm had in the lumber and furniture industries. Memphis was the "hardwood center" of the country and there was a need for developing good statistics for the accounting code for the industry under the National Recovery Administration.

P.K. made the point that while all the brothers were different and their own men, they tried to complement each other. For instance, P.K. became president of the Association of Certified Public Accountant Examiners in 1959, when J.S. was president of the AICPA. P.K. founded and taught at the Memphis College in Accounting in 1946, which later became a part of the University of Memphis. He has memorialized his brother M.L. with the M.L. Seidman Town Hall Lecture Series, starting in 1967, at Rhodes College in Memphis. He did the same with the Frank E. Seidman Distinguished Award in Political Economy, starting in 1974 with Gunnar Karl Myrdal. This award is also administered by Rhodes College.

The story of the Seidmans does not stop here. The son of Lizzie (born 1876 and daughter of Louis and his first wife), Henry Rosen, was a marketing expert for the firm in New York and his sister, Grace, worked in the mailing room of the firm. The son of Samuel (born 1877), Larry J. Seidman, joined the firm in 1928 and stayed to be a senior partner. His daughter, Edis Beth Seidman-Smetama, is also a CPA. The son of Minnie (born 1882), Abraham Weinbaum, started with the firm, became a CPA, and then formed his own firm. Sally (born 1895) was the head of the comptometer section of the firm. Her husband, Jim Lasser, was the managing partner of the Jamestown, New

York office. Their son, Miles, also was the managing partner at Jamestown and the author of the book on the firm. Etta (born 1899) became a financial executive in both the building and meat packing industries, after a brief experience in teaching and before her marriage. Henry R. (born 1905) also studied accounting at N.Y.U. and was briefly an administrator with the firm before becoming a stockbroker. He has just celebrated his 90th birthday in Florida with P.K.

In these days of generally-felt declining family values, the Seidman story is a reminder of the importance of the family. J.S. is an accountant truly deserving of an extended study as a dissertation and of a nomination to the Accounting Hall of Fame. There is probably a need to catalog the "tax talk" articles for subsequent research. Miles Lasser's book, *75 Years of Total Involvement: A History of Seidman & Seidman*, deserves a wider academic circulation. As I have discovered in a previous work on Lena Mendelsohn, there is a need for some notation of the success of American Jewish people in accounting. There apparently is no such telling of the accounting heritages of Jewish people like: Abraham Briloff; David Himmelblau; Joseph J. Klein; J.K. Lasser; Lewis J. Laventhol; S.D. Leidesdorf; Simon Loeb; Max Rolniz; and Morris C. Troper.



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