

## **Saul Alexander**

Saul Alexander was born in Dnepropetrovsk, Russia (modern day Ukraine) on February 25, 1884. Little is known of his early life. He had Jewish parents, and the family suffered persecution. At age 16, he decided to leave home.

He caught a ship and came to New York City. We're not sure what his parents named him, but at that point he took the name of Saul Alexander. Saul had no money, and could not speak English, but he got himself a job in a delicatessen there. The year was 1900. While working he met a couple from Summerville. They told Saul that Summerville was a very nice place, a place he would like to live. They also told him of a job that was open at Mirmow Dry Goods Store. So, Saul decided to move to Summerville, South Carolina. He had worked 4 years at the New York City delicatessen. The year was 1904 and Saul was 20 years old. Saul still did not have much money and he spoke in broken English, as he would for the rest of his life. He took the job at Mirmow Dry Goods Store. The store was located right beside the location he would buy in the future. He worked at Mirmow Dry Goods Store for 10 years.

In 1914 Saul Alexander, took the opportunity and opened his own store. The store was located where today we see the name Saul Alexander inscribed in the tile at the entrance to Cuppa Manna coffee shop. It was called "Saul Alexander Dry Goods Store." In 1917, Saul hired Miss Sarah E. Chinnners. While Summerville knew Saul Alexander by sight, there were few who knew him intimately, for he was a modest man, an unassuming citizen and shy to the point of avoiding anything which might appear ostentatious. Along the way, this Russian immigrant built a reputation as a man of unquestionable integrity and remarkable generosity. Alex Karesh, a Charleston merchant and best friend, remembers Saul Alexander coming down to his store every Thursday and talking, "not about himself but usually we would talk about ancient Hebrew philosophy and religion". According to Mr. Karesh, one of Mr. Alexander's favorite quotations was from the Old Testament in the book of Ecclesiastes. "What profit have a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun. One generation passes away and another generation cometh, but the earth abideth forever". He used to tell his friends with a twinkle in his eye "when I was a younger man, I liked to go to Charleston for some real parties" but to the end, his tastes were for the basic things of life: work, friends and food. Snowball, a small white Spitz, was his constant companion for 13 years, dying six weeks before his master. Saul Alexander was respected by customers and employees alike in for his integrity, kindness and humility. He was known to be generous, especially to the poor during the Depression years in the 1930s.

Saul Alexander, Older years: On Wednesday December 10, 1952, Saul Alexander unexpectedly passed away. He had lived in Summerville 43 years. Everyone knew and respected him. The Summerville businesses even closed their doors for one day, in honor of Saul Alexander. Few around him were prepared however, for the stunning generosity revealed in his will. Headlines across the state read, "Saul Alexander leaves thousands". Over the years Saul Alexander had been saving his money! At the time of his death, he had close to a million dollars. To Miss Chinnners, who still worked for him in 1952, he bequeathed \$250 a month for the rest of her life. He also gave her the store. To Mrs. Etta Buzard, proprietor of the boardinghouse he had stayed in for many years, \$175 a month for life. In his will, Alexander returned to the people most of the wealth he accumulated through the American free enterprise system. The remainder of his wealth, slightly over \$500,000 was put into trust, as the "Saul Alexander Foundation" with the stipulation that annual income from the trust be distributed to religious,

educational and charitable organizations. Summerville receives 15% of the income annually. Organizations like Timrod library and Sculptures in the South, just to name a couple, benefit each year. In addition, two playgrounds were built in Summerville.