Senator Lehman And His Attacks On South

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THE question has been asked: "Is Senator Lehman, of New York, a native of Montgomery?"

The answer is "no."

Senator Lehman is one of the most severe critics of the South and most ardent defenders of the Supreme Court's school desegregation decision.

Though he was not born in Alabama, it is somewhat surprising that the New York Democratic senator should take this position in view of his southern background. Observers of the Washington scene have felt that politics and political connections with New York City's Democratic machine may have influenced him in being so intense in his anti-Southern position on desegregation in the Senate.

HIS speech a few days ago in criticism of the "Declaration of Constitutional Principles," signed by more than a hundred United States senators and representatives in Congress, was the most intemperate attack yet made by a responsible official upon that epochal document. The Lehman speech, however, has been fully and completely answered by defenders of the declaration, including Senator Robertson of Virginia.

For years after the Civil War the Lehman family occupied a prominent place in the business and financial life of Montgomery.

A group of old Montgomery photographs presented to me some years ago by the late Algermon Blair recalls the Lehman place in business life. One of the photographs is taken from Court Square looking northward out Court Street where the tower of the Old First Baptist Church on Bibb Street looms up.

Buildings facing Court Square itself and occupying the site now occupied by the First National Bank building in this 1874 photograph. On the ground floor of the three-story building is a huge sign "J. J. Cox & Company." Across the second floor is another large sign "Lehman, Durr & Company." The third floor sign reads: "Odd Fellows Hall."

Another of the photographs in the Blair collection is what is labeled "The home of Joseph Goetter on South Court Street, as of 1894." This is the home later known as the M. P. LeGrande place and was located where the Walter Bragg Smith Apartment building now stands. It was occupied by the Lehman family at the time of their residence in Montgomery and later became the home of Joseph Goetter a prominent Montgomery merchant on Dexter Avenue in the early days.

An Alabama State Gazetteer and business directory of 1887-88 in my library contains the following listing:

"Lehman, Durr & Company (Emanuel Lehman, Meyer Lehman, John W. Durr, Joseph-Golker) bankers, cotton factors and commission merchants, 17 Court Square." No Lehman is listed as resident of Montgomery in that volume. Mr. Durr is also listed as president of the Talladega Falls Manufacturing Company.

In Powell's City Directory of Montgomery in my library dated 1938 under the heading "Bankers," Lehman, Durr & Company are listed as being located at 17 Court Square. Mr. Durr's residence is given as 237 Molton Street.

The Montgomery banks listed in the old 1888 Powell directory are three: First National, Merchants and Planters and The State National.

In the same volume is a list of "bankers" in Montgomery in 1888. The list includes:

- Adams & Company, 16 Commerce Street.
- Commercial Fire Insurance Company, 12 Commerce Street.
- Farley, Spear & Company, 12 Commerce Street.
- Lehman, Durr & Company, 17 Court Square.
- Moses Brothers, 10 North Court Street.
- Joseph Morris & Company, 10 Commerce Street.
- W. S. Reese and Company, 17½ Commerce Street.

What has all this to do with Senator Herbert H. Lehman, the man who entertains such intense bitterness toward the South? The New York senator is a son of Mayer and Babette Newgass Lehman, and Mayer Lehman was one of the partners in the Montgomery firm of Lehman, Durr & Company. Senator Lehman was born in New York City, March 25, 1878. He was married April 26, 1910 to Edith Altschul. Their children are: Peter G. Lehman (deceased), John B. Lehman, Hilda Lehman and Paul Lehman.

He began his business life with J. Spencer Turner Company, textile manufacturers, and advanced to vice president and treasurer. In 1908 he became a partner in Lehman Brothers, bankers in New York, and retired in 1929 after being elected lieutenant governor of New York in 1928, the year that Gov. Alfred E. Smith ran for the presidency on the Democratic ticket and was defeated by Herbert Hoover. In that contest, incidentally, Alabama went for Hoover for president, voting Republican for the first time after reconstruction days.

Mr. Lehman served as lieutenant governor of New York from 1928 to 1932 and in the memorable Franklin D. Roosevelt year of 1932, he was elected governor and served in that office until 1942. After serving as director of foreign relief and rehabilitation operations in the Department of State, and director general of the United Nations Rehabilitation Administration until 1946, he was elected United States senator from New York in 1949 and has been there ever since.

The senator has an imposing list of honorary degrees from various institutions of learning, one of them from Oglethorpe University, a southern institution. He is also an official and director in many welfare and promotional organizations, being a director of the Welfare Council of New York City and of the National Association for the Advancement of the Colored People. He was awarded the war department's Distinguished service medal for his work during the war where he became a colonel on the general staff and was assistant director of purchase, storage and traffic.

The senator is a member of many clubs in New York, Albany and Washington. His residence is 620 Park Avenue, New York, and his office, 41 East 57th Street, New York, in addition to his offices in the senate office building in Washington.