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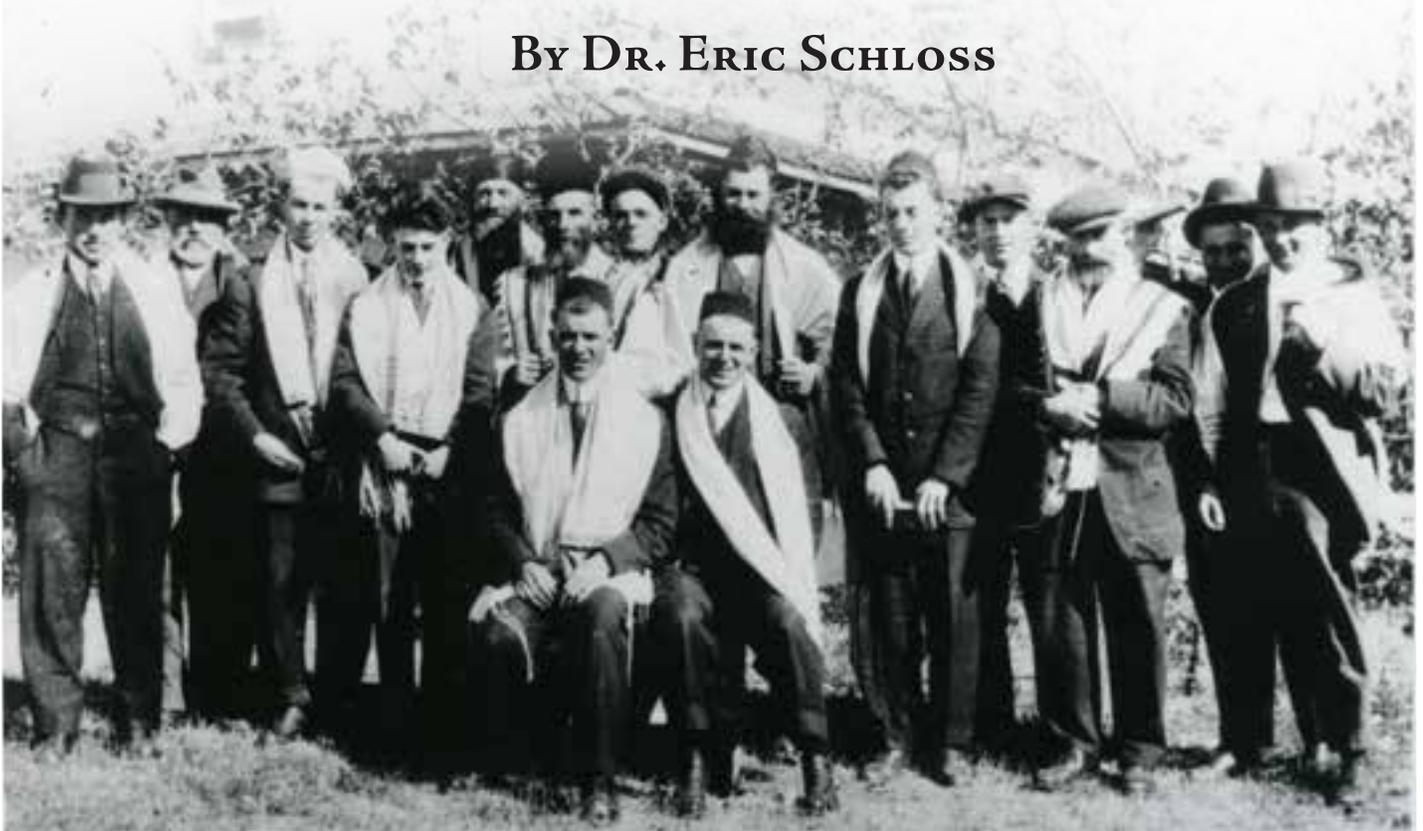
HERITAGE

The Journal of THE JEWISH ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF EDMONTON & NORTHERN ALBERTA

SPECIAL!

A History of Jewish Farming Colonies of Alberta & Saskatchewan

BY DR. ERIC SCHLOSS



Wapella Congregation Rosh Hashanah c. 1911 courtesy of JHCWC



From Your President, Gillian Horwitz

JULY 2022

Dr. Eric Schloss is not only a practising Dermatologist and Pathologist, but he is also a prolific writer as well.

He is a passionate historian whose focus is often directed on the rich history of Jewish life in Edmonton and its surrounds, painting a picture, as it were, of the lives of many of our ancestors who arrived on the shores of Canada in the last century and whose imprints on this part of the world have been indelible and significant.

His deeply researched articles have often appeared in our regular Heritage/Yerusha publications and our membership looks forward with great anticipation to read about the histories of the many founding families in our corner of the world who's lives and contributions have enriched the very fabric of Edmonton and Northern Alberta over the years.

This special edition of our Heritage publication is unique and fascinating. Eric takes us on a comprehensive and fascinating journey of the Jewish farming colonies of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

These brave and enterprising individuals and their families came to this part of Canada in search of a better life, farmed and worked pockets of land and areas that

became known as 'The Jewish Farming Colonies'.

The trials and tribulations, the joys and achievements of these interesting folks, come alive and vivid through Eric's colourful and descriptive writing. We are left with an amazing insight into the lives of those immigrants whose imprint on these parts of Canada can never be erased!

I guarantee you a fascinating read.

The Board and membership of JAHSENA are sincerely grateful to Eric for his dedication to preserving the history of our unique community; for the major contributions he has made over the years to ensuring that our history is documented and preserved for future generations.

Thank you, Eric!

P.S. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the hours that our 'Archivist Emeritus' Debby Shoctor put into editing this special edition and Colleen Paull's professional input towards ensuring the success of this Special Heritage on The Jewish Farming Communities of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

Thank you both.

ירשה HERITAGE

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A History of Jewish Farming Colonies of Alberta & Saskatchewan

BY DR. ERIC SCHLOSS

A. INTRODUCTION

The nine Jewish Farming colonies in Saskatchewan and Alberta have been subsequently referred to as the “lost colonies”, as knowledge of their existence and history has faded, with only some abandoned buildings or shacks, a few Jewish cemeteries, and a rare former synagogue remaining.

The most comprehensive information on the Saskatchewan colonies has been provided by Anna Feldman of Toronto, who was married to a son of a founder of the Sonnenfeld colony in southern Saskatchewan. She spent forty years on research and collected thousands of documents, photos, and

memorabilia, plus numerous recorded original songs of the colonists (in Yiddish) who provided their own entertainment. Mrs. Feldman also collected hundreds of interviews with former colonists and has donated her vast collection to the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec.

B. BACKGROUND

The initial immigration and eventual settlement of Western Canadian farming colonies was a small part of the wave of Jewish immigrants from the Russian empire and eastern Europe following the assassination of Czar Alexander II and the subsequent pogroms of 1882-3. Discrimination, major restrictions, forced military conscription and virulent antisemitism all contributed to the exodus. Famine,

cholera, and other major infectious diseases followed, mainly in 1890-2. Further pogroms and violence, spreading from Bessarabia and Romania from 1899-1903, including the major Kishinev Pogrom in 1903, led to further flight. The 1905-7 Russian revolution and reaction to it led to a further major exodus of Jews, plus those conscripts fleeing the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, who had been pressed into Russian military service for up to 25 years. My own grandfathers fled

their military involvement to reach the U.S. and Canada at this time. There had been an earlier Jewish agricultural movement in the Russian empire prior to the 1880s era of pogroms and violence, but this was then followed by rural impoverishment in Russia and the Pale of Settlement, and extensive confiscation of land. The vast majority of the Jews fleeing were, of course, mainly trying to escape physical danger, poverty, and oppression. Only a small minority were motivated by the



Barney & Toba (Brotman) Levin, Ruby & Dave Levin, Wapella c. 1903

idealized virtues of back-to-the-land and regenerative tilling of the soil, as expressed by famous author Leo Tolstoy. The members of the first Aliyah to then Palestine, who developed kibbutzim, were in this group.

At the Canadian receiving-end, government officials wanted to populate the West and desired a productive agricultural sector to supply the increased European demand for grain and agricultural products. The building of the CPR transcontinental railway was a major factor in populating western Canada and helping agricultural development with shipment of wheat and grains. Concern over hostile takeovers by neighboring U.S. settlers was also a factor, plus the troubles with the Riel Rebellion of 1885. Therefore, immigration to family farms with free enterprise was encouraged. Even as early as 1871, the Dominion Lands Act had included provisions for the opportunity to register for a homestead of 160 acres (quarter section) occupying one square mile, to be occupied for at least three years, including building a home, and



1st log stable with sod roof, Barish Farm c. 1895

cultivating 30 acres, for only a \$10 registration fee! This was increasingly taken up by settlers into the late 1880s. However, the homesteads were often too small and conditions unstable for a productive free market system, and many Jewish potential settlers moved to adjacent villages and towns and sold their farms if they had received title. Canadian immigration policy favored Anglo-Saxons (and some French) and restrictions were placed on the few Jewish settlers accepted, and included as a policy that they would not be settled near fellow Jews, having to be interspersed by gentiles. Surprisingly, some early Jewish settlers were accepted prior to the major Ukrainian and German settlements, and prior to the later Doukhobor arrivals. This was promoted by Canadian Minister of the Interior, Sir Clifford Sifton, in charge of immigration from 1895-1905, who administered an advertising and recruitment program with emissaries abroad as salesmen. Non-Anglo-Saxons were expected to adapt to the majority British culture. Icelandic and Mennonite settlement in Manitoba preceded Jewish farm settlements.

Edmonton's Frank Oliver was later

Federal Minister of the Interior from 1905-1911, and oversaw immigration during this time, heavily favoring Anglo-Saxons and generally trying to restrict Jewish immigration. Later during the Canadian restrictions on Jewish immigration from the early 1930s to 1945, only 5000 total Jews were admitted, and almost all before World War II. These included only 204 Jewish farm families, and no more than 27 settled in Western Canada during this period.

SASKATCHEWAN JEWISH FARM SETTLEMENTS

NEW JERUSALEM

Of the eventual six Saskatchewan settlements the very first was the most unsuccessful. New Jerusalem was located near Moosomin, Saskatchewan, 12-13 miles from the Manitoba border. Sir Alexander Galt, the Canadian High Commissioner in London, after the 1881-2 pogroms, asked Lord Rothschild in London for help in moving "agricultural" (later changed term to "partly agricultural trades people")

Jews to Canada. The assistance of London's Mansion House Committee (Russo-Jewish Committee aiding victims of pogroms) was provided. Sir John A Macdonald, the Canadian Prime Minister, reluctantly accepted the idea after the Jews were re-labelled as trades people, and he said, "The Old Clo move is a good one"! ("Old Clo" was his reference to Jews in the rag or clothing trade).

In 1882, approximately 340 Jews had arrived in Winnipeg, (there were only 30 Jewish families in Manitoba then) but the land was not yet made available, and they had to wait two years to settle there. The original group, by 1884, had shrunk to 27 remaining families, as most had become discouraged or disillusioned. Although many of them did want to go to the land, their primary concern was to earn a living, support their families and to bring over relatives left behind. Roughly 150 of the original group had gone to help in building the CPR, laying track to Medicine Hat. This group contained many religious Jews, including the foreman. The Regina Leader, April 1883, reported that they were attacked by other workers who beat them and stole their Kosher food. Jewish contribution to the building of the trans-Canada CPR is thus finally recorded (with difficulty).

The New Jerusalem project was not successful. Many of the settlers were not adaptable to the harsh conditions, the land was not completely suitable for farming, and most left early. The colony's Rabbi had even lost two feet to frostbite. Crops were very poor, and after four or five years and a final loss of the hay crop, the colony was aban-

doned. Sir Alexander Galt became disillusioned with the settlers, calling them "vagabonds" and was mainly concerned in replenishing the loan for the settlement provided by the Mansion House Committee.

WAPELLA COLONY HOUSE COMMITTEE

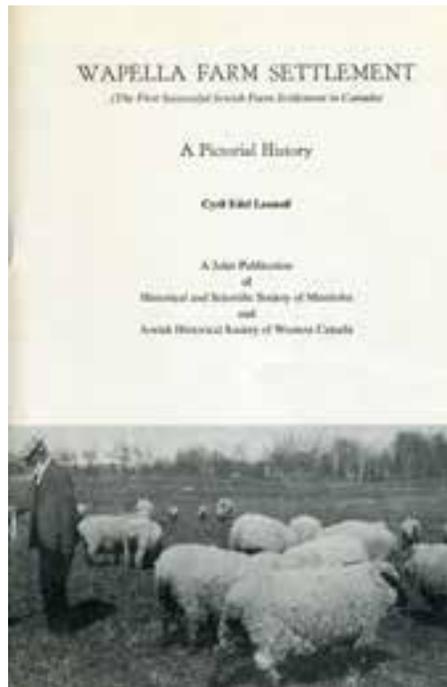
This settlement was located 17 miles northwest of Moosomin, Saskatchewan on Highway #1, 20 miles from the Manitoba border, and helpfully on the CPR line. It is considered the least well-known Saskatchewan colony next to New Jerusalem. The first main description of the colony was by Cyril Leonoff (1925-2016), the well-known Vancouver engineer, author, and historian, and founding president of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia.

He published a major article entitled, "Wapella Farm Settlement: The First Successful Farm Settlement in

Canada", and later stated it was the "most successful." His interest was precipitated by an unplanned encounter with Eli Barish at a Vancouver meeting in 1968.

Barish, on seeing Cyril's daughter, told him she resembled an old flame from Wapella, Rose Brotman, who happened to be Cyril Leonoff's mother (talk about Jewish Geography!) This led to his first visit to the Wapella Colony in 1969 with the three bachelor Barish brothers, leading to the previously untold history of the settlement and subsequent interviews with many former colonists nationally and in the U. S., who were then in their 80's and 90's.

Originally, there were two main founding groups. One was led by John Heppner from Russia in 1886, who, accompanied by four young Jews, was sponsored by Herman Landau, the CPR representative in London. Landau forwarded \$2000 and provisions to assist them in establishing a small



Book Cover Wapella Farm Settlement by Cyril Leonoff



Barney Toba (Brotman) Levin, Ruby Dave Wapella c. 1903-1 JHCWC



Wapella Schoolhouse c. 1915 JHCWC

settlement a few miles from Wapella.

The main colonist, Abraham Klenman, had emigrated with his family from Bessarabia to Montreal in 1888. Travelling West, he settled on bush and treed land with a good water supply and fertile soil. He was able to choose the best site, as in contrast to most Jewish colonists, Klenman had substantial previous experience in agriculture, and farming and had rented land as a young man in the 1860s in Bessarabia and oversaw a rural agricultural estate for an absentee Russian landlord. As Jews were now barred from owning land in the Russian empire, once he arrived in Montreal, he aspired to follow his belief that a return to the land was necessary for regeneration of the Jews as a people. He wanted trees, as he could make and sell logs to help support the colony. It required hard work, and he spent the first winter in a dugout but managed to build a log cabin so he could then bring out his family from Montreal. There were

objections from the surrounding community to Jewish settlement reported in the Regina Leader with an 1887 restrictive public land resolution (and later in 1892 to the Hirsch Colony).

Between the spring of 1889 and the fall of 1892, 28 Jewish families followed Klenman to the Wapella

district. Some of this group had been farming in North Dakota, and some of the Jewish CPR workers also joined the group after the failure of the New Jerusalem settlement. The colony was also fortunate in being granted dispensation from the restriction to have Jewish homesteads adjoining each other.

Klenman's son-in-law, Solomon Barish, also had previous farming experience in the Jewish agrarian colony of Dombroveni, Bessarabia. Initially staying behind in Montreal, he had developed tuberculosis and needed to support the family. Barish soon went to Chicago to study as a *shochet* and *mohel*, which the family required for the colony. In 1892 he used \$100 to obtain rail passage to Winnipeg and purchase a plough and wagon for the Wapella settlement. Restricted from shooting chickens, he therefore trapped and ritually slaughtered them, along with geese and ducks. His *shochet* training did not include cattle.

By approximately 1907, a peak of 50 families had come to Wapella. Most of



Group of Ladies, Rosh Hashanah, Wapella c.1926 JHCWC

the settlers were from Southern Russia and Bessarabia, but some were from Romania, Galicia, and Lithuania. The majority had been tailors, shoemakers, labourers, or pedlars. Klenman paid the homestead registration fee for many of them. The colony, in contrast to many of the other Western Canadian colonies, started without any government or philanthropic organizational assistance. Finally in 1901, after frost destroyed their crops, they were forced to obtain loans from the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society of New York and the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). As Cyril Leonoff stated, Wapella became the first successful Saskatchewan farming colony and the longest surviving. It also was perceived as a training ground for several of the other Jewish colonies.

The Barish sons who grew up in Wapella were interviewed by Leonoff. In their interviews they were asked about furniture. They replied, "Who needs furniture? We were looking for something to eat. You can't eat furniture." Initially they slept on a hay floor. There were three sets of dishes: *fleishik*, *milchik*, and *pesadik*. On one occasion, while baking *matzah* at Passover, the roof caught fire from a spark and burned the house. They did not have a brick chimney, only pipes in the roof over a wood stove. The cabin had coal oil lamps, no water or electricity and, of course, outhouses. The women grew vegetables, prepared chicken, eggs, and baked bread and berries.

In 1889 the well-known Bronfman family, Yechiel and Minda, arrived at Wapella with their oldest sons, including Sam, but they soon left for Brandon, Manitoba. Cyril Leonoff's grandfather, Edel Brotman from Galicia, also came with his family to Wapella in 1889. He was a Rabbi,



Wapella Homestead c. 1920 JHCWC

fluent in seven languages, and became the immigration agent for the district. Kalman Eisman, the great grandfather of Saskatchewan Supreme court Justice Noel Sandomirsky, also came to Wapella colony.

There was no synagogue at the colony, but Rabbi Brotman performed weddings and religious services. The first school opened in 1898, but it was too cold for attendance in the winter. Later, the first English teacher was hired at a salary of \$480 per year. Early equipment was comprised of a single furrow plough and seed drill. Eventually they were able to acquire a steam engine. They used oxen at first, as horses were too expensive, but had horses and cattle by 1910. Gasoline tractors were finally available by the late 1920s and '30s. The settlers grew wheat, barley, oats and flax, and mixed farming was the rule. The price of wheat usually did not exceed 25 to 30 cents per bushel. A 1915 McLaughlin was the first car on the settlement. Abraham Klenman, who had also taught Hebrew in the colony, died in 1910. By the 1930s, yields had

decreased and conditions in the depression years were difficult. Klenman's son Alexander farmed at Wapella until 1955. The Barish brothers finally sold their 1100 acres between 1958 and 1962. Barney Kaplun, grandson of an early colonist, farmed there until the 1970s. He also provided his personal history in, "Wapella", and continued with mixed farming, stating, "You can always sell an animal when you can't sell wheat." Kaplun commented on modern farming being a vast improvement on his fathers' methods. The family had started with a three- or four-furrow gang plow, which was slow and costly. Barney now used big one-way tillers with disc plates, able to cut much wider and deeper soil. The yield of his crops also vastly increased for all grains. He had better varieties of wheat, oats, barley, and flax, which were also rust-resistant, plus chemicals to control weeds, not originally available. Work became faster and better aided by machinery rather than horses or oxen. New and better equipment was constantly being developed. As far as repairs, he said, "We're a Jack-of-all-



Jewish Farmer ploughing in Hirsch Colony c. 1929 photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

trades, but a master of none!"

Extensive fertilizer was later purchased for \$1000 per year, to vastly increase yields, and lead to earlier harvests. In 1969, his farm was able to swath and combine everything in two weeks, and he was able to get his bailing done and stacked early to use as winter feed. Overhead was his big-

gest concern as his combine now cost \$15,000, and the total investment in farm equipment was \$70,000. He tried to limit financing and debt because of the high interest rates, but the farm income was very rewarding and a vast improvement over the early days and the depression.



Ploughing outfit Hirsch photo courtesy of JHCWC

HIRSCH COLONY

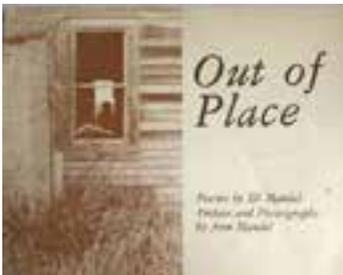
This colony was located 18 miles east of Estevan, Saskatchewan, 96 miles from the Manitoba border and 28 miles north of the U.S. border. It was established first by the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montreal (est. 1863, which became the Baron Hirsch Institute in 1890), with help from the JCA, which soon took over the supervision and financing. The JCA was developed and named after German-Jewish banker and philanthropist Baron de Hirsch (for whom the colony was named). Originally created in 1891, it became the greatest charitable trust in the world. The JCA created many establishments, technical schools, co-op factories, savings and loan banks, model dwellings and aid and financial help for other agencies. A major focus was on helping Jews, particularly refugees, to settle in safe countries, and it survived well, whereas most other colonization companies went broke.

The head office was initially Paris-based. The Canadian branch opened in Montreal in 1906. Baron de Hirsch wanted humble farmers to combat Antisemitism, "not too brainy or pushy", and expected them to work 15-hour days seven days a week. The JCA had much success, but colonists often disliked the red tape it imposed in its rules, values, and policies, and there was often a clash of ideologies and objectives, despite the needed financial help. The first nine Jewish families landed in Regina in 1891, at which time there were no Jews recorded in the census (there were 296 Jews in Regina recorded in 1901). The Hirsch colony then began in 1892 with 49 families who had provisions for three years, including

houses, horses, cattle, implements and seed. Soon 24 additional homesteads, involving many family relatives, were established. Thus, 73 farms of 11,680 acres comprised the original colony. The Colonists signed to repay the initial loans in 12 annual installments. At the end of three years, they had expended the advance money of \$50,000 and most of the colonists sold out and departed, as there had also been crop failures and they couldn't cope with the demands for repayment. Some went to Oxbow Saskatchewan, 25 miles east of Hirsch, which had opened a small settlement in 1891, and eventually was comprised of 14 families by 1900. Five orthodox families from the unsuccessful Blank's Lake colony at Pine Lake, Alberta came to Hirsch in 1895 and, helped by the JCA, did reasonably well initially.

In 1900 there were 28 Jewish families at Hirsch colony, almost all productive. Two schools were in operation, opened in 1899 and 1900. A paid manager by the JCA was now in charge of the colony and responsibility taken away from the original Montreal trustees. There were abundant water wells, and fertile soil of clay and loam mixed with gravel or sand, with a rich vegetable-mold topsoil.

No barren land was apparent, as buffalo-grass, forming nutritious pasture, covered the uncultivated districts. Apart from the main staple of wheat, prairie grass was an important



Out of Place by Eli Mandel written 1977.



Hirsch Community Jewish Cemetery photo courtesy of Larry Lavitt

crop, useful in dairying and stock-raising.

At the founding of the Hirsch colony there was a discussion regarding what the settlers would do in the winter. In the files of the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Montreal there is a proposal that each homestead family be equipped with a sewing machine to produce clothing in the winter months. However, a Hirsch clothing factory

was never formed, but other Jews soon started a major textile and clothing industry in Winnipeg, serving Western Canada.

The Hirsch colonists and their history are not well documented. Perhaps the most familiar colonists were the family of well-known poet and author Eli Mandel (1922-1992), who taught at the University of Alberta from 1957 to 1967. His family had the original



Jewish Settlers at Lipton Colony from Romania photo courtesy of Jewish Genealogical Society of BC

grocery store in Hirsch, and eventually moved to Regina in 1935. His poetry collection, "Idiot Joy" was published by Mel Hurtig in 1967 and received the Governor-General's Award. A subsequent publication in 1977 was, "Out of Place", his poetic memoir of the Hirsch colony where he grew up.

An interview in the Canadian Jewish News, September 10, 2010, related the memoirs of Hirsch colony by two bachelor brothers, Harvey and Jack Kleiman. Their original family log cabin was built in 1905, and the brothers were still living there and had only recently leased their land after farming all their lives. They recalled that there had been three synagogues, two kosher butchers, three stores and a hotel at Hirsch colony. There had been a school for 200 and a total of 250 Jews in Hirsch. The colony had a Rabbi early on, and Jewish teachers. Harvey had his Bar Mitzvah at the colony, but there was no Rabbi nor Bar Mitzvahs



Abram Griesdorf 1874-1948 photo courtesy of Michael Paull



J. Kling & Rachel Brudie's wedding, Lipton Colony c. 1917 photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

by the time of his younger brother Jack. The Kleiman brothers were the last Jewish farmers in Hirsch, eventually selling the farm in 2014 and moving to Calgary in 2016, where Harvey passed away in 2017.

The Kleimans had three sisters who moved away early from the colony to the cities. One sister is Ann Kleiman Eist, who graduated from



Betty Griesdorf c. 1916 photo courtesy of Michael Paull

the University of Alberta and married Dr Harold Eist, the eldest son of well-known Edmontonian Bessie Goldstick. He became a noted psychiatrist and President of the American Psychiatric Association, based in Bethesda, Maryland, and recently passed away.

The Hirsch Jewish Cemetery was restored under the direction of Gertie Lev of Estevan, whose husband and



Sonnenfeld Farm c. early 1930s photo courtesy of Larry Lavitt



Schoolchildren attending the Tiferes Israel School in Lipton Colony, c. 1917 photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

his brother had farmed at Hirsch. In 1979, 100 former colonists came for a reunion to Hirsch and Estevan, hosted by Gertie, and the cemetery was named a Provincial Historic Site. The one surviving synagogue building is now a converted residence.

LIPTON COLONY

The Lipton Jewish farming colony



Young brothers on crop pest control out to trap gophers c. early 1930s photo courtesy of Mottie Feldman

was in the more arid Palliser triangle region in the Qu'Appelle valley, 56 miles northeast of Regina and directly north of Indian Head, Saskatchewan. Captain John Palliser (for whom the Palliser Hotel in Calgary is also named) had explored the wider Palliser Triangle prairie region from 1857 to 1861 and reported that the arid conditions were unsuitable for agriculture.

Professor Theodore Friedgut, of

the Department of Russian and Slavic Studies at Hebrew University, grew up in Regina and his grandfather and father were pioneers in the Lipton colony. His 2007 extensive article entitled, "Jewish Pioneers on Canada's Prairies: The Lipton Jewish Agricultural Colony" is the most complete historical account of its existence from 1901 to 1951.

The original colonists were from Bessarabia, and the project started with the input of the officials of the Canadian High Commissioner to London and the JCA, but the agreement was meant to limit the emigration rather than encourage it. The Canadian government also did not initially approve the agreement, but 100 colonists were already on their way to the site to take up homesteads before the government disapproval was transmitted to London. The JCA was reported to have given a written guarantee for the expenses incurred by each immigrant. They provided transit costs and 40 English pounds currency per family for installment expenses, and paid the salary, up to \$1000 per year,



Graves in Jewish Cemetery, Lipton Colony photo by Larry Lavitt



Eugene Pechet C. 1997 photo courtesy of JAHSENA

of a Canadian government appointed "Superintendent Inspector" to assist the colonists in their settlement on the land. Thus Lipton (initially briefly called Qu'Appelle) colony became the only Jewish farm colony under direct Canadian government supervision. Unfortunately, the paid inspector provided minimal supervision and communication (he obviously did not



Jacob-Baltzan photo courtesy of JAHSENA

speak Yiddish or Romanian) which was a major problem. An early bout of diphtheria also swept the colony. The Jews of Lipton initially were largely on their own. They did receive needed help from Indigenous people on nearby reservations who taught many how to build log houses. Because of the initial difficulties, many colonists left early, but a few years later the JCA took on the supervision of the colony from the government and conditions improved.

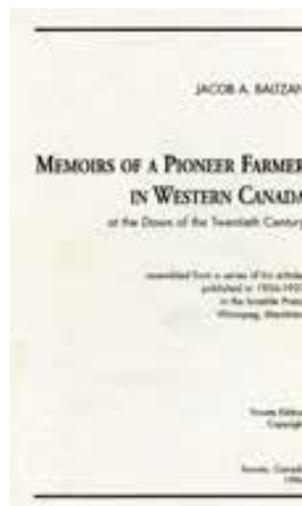
The initial group from Bessarabia were part of the group detailed in Canadian author Jill Culliner's book, "Finding Home in the Footsteps of the Jewish Fusgeyers," referring to the Romanian refugees fleeing Romania on foot (foot sloggers). As more people came to the colony, including many Russians, there were reported conflicts and disagreements among the groups. Many Russians felt that the Bessarabian colonists were not focussed enough on hard work, and they had almost no farming experience. They disapproved of their constant recollections of life in their former homes, and emphasis on better food and playing

dominoes! Many of the Bessarabians were also less religious.

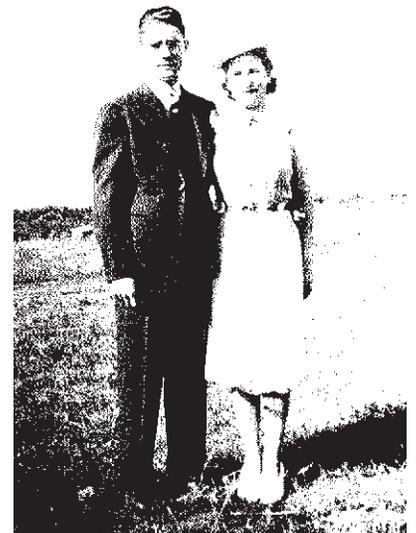
The first settlers had received one pair of horses and one ox for six homesteads. By the end of 1903, only 56 farmers remained, cultivating 500 acres, with a total population of 195 Jews.

Well-known former Edmontonian, Jacob Baltzan, (1873-1939) arrived in the colony from his native Bessarabia in 1904, with his wife Nina (Hinda) and their young daughter Katie (Saslow) He had fled recruitment in the Russo-Japanese War. With his interest in Hebrew education, he asked on arrival if the colony had a Jewish school. The answer was, "What for, who needs it?" Jacob twice barely escaped death from cold while in Lipton.

He learned to plant vegetables with a do-it-yourself guide. His published memoirs are one of the few from the Jewish farming colonies and were initially printed in Yiddish in the Israelite Press of Winnipeg as articles in 1936-7. They were translated into English by Sam Frohlich, entitled, "Memoirs of a Pioneer Farmer in Western



Memoirs of Pioneer Family in Western Canada



Rebecca Frolich and Leon Warhaft wedding on the farm August 18 1940 photo from Penny Hardin

Canada at the Dawn of the Twentieth Century". Jacob also wrote his memoirs of Bessarabia, initially in 1935, and eventually printed in Hertzlia, Israel in 1965, with the Yiddish title, "Undzer Shtub in Leowa". These memoirs were subsequently translated by Sam Frohlich in 1988 as, "Our House in Leowa", to mark the 50th anniversary of Hymie and Celia Baltzan's wedding. This was aided by Jacob's daughter Ida Horwitz of Calgary and her son Joel (*machuten* of Shelly Weinstein).

Mr. Baltzan's dedication was: "To Hinda, My Life's Companion, My partner in life's struggle, Mother of our children with everlasting love and thankfulness." The Baltzans were in Lipton colony until 1908, and, after a period of dealing in northern furs in Saskatchewan, eventually arrived in Edmonton in 1911. Jacob Baltzan was a prominent member of Edmonton's Jewish community, the founder of the Chevra Kadisha, and an early strong advocate for Hebrew education before he passed away in 1939.

A Tiferes school was eventually established on the colony in 1914 with Louis Rosenberg (1893-1987) as principal. He later became well-known to Canadian Jewry as an author, particularly of Canadian Jewish history, and as an official of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Rosenberg also compiled a vast amount of information on the Jewish farming colonies, now residing in the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives. He also wrote several publications, including "Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s", followed in April, 1941 with a review, providing a short history of Jewish colonization in Canada, including detailed farm statistics in Montreal. Subsequently, he published a journal article, "Jewish



Removing stones Sonnenfeld Colony c. late 1920s photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada

Agriculture in Canada".

A further memoir of Lipton was provided by Dr. Sol Sinclair, (1905-1988) "Memories of Early Jewish Settlement in Lipton, Saskatchewan", contained within a history of Lipton and District. His father Yitzok (Isaac) traveled from the Ukraine, arriving at Ellis Island in January of 1905. He then went to Saskatchewan and obtained a site at Hirsch colony from the JCA. However, the soil was poor, and he then worked for the CPR to procure funds to obtain better land and build a house in Lipton colony. His wife Fraida and two sons, including Sol, then joined him. Sol later had a distinguished academic career at the University of Manitoba as Professor and Head of the Dept. of Agricultural Economics and Farm Management. He received many honours and awards including an honorary LLD from the University of Manitoba, and the establishment of the Solomon Sinclair Farm Management Institute. (Could he credit his early farming experiences in Lipton colony for his achievements!?)

Three more children were born in Lipton colony including Reuben

(Rube), in 1911. As the last survivor of the Sinclair family, and still living well in Richmond, BC, he recently had the distinction on Remembrance Day 2021 of receiving recognition as Canada's oldest Second World War veteran (RCAF) at age 110! Rube has fond and clear memories of life on the Lipton homestead. He recalled his family had



Ira Molly (Glassman) Frohlich in front of their home c. 1920s photo courtesy of Penny Hardin

one of the largest farms-16 quarter sections (more than 2500 acres) and they had 42 horses! His father Isaac was a long-time leader in the Lipton community. He said that on Shabbat and Jewish holidays with his brothers, they would sleep in the hayloft so the neighboring Jewish men could stay in the house and not walk home in the freezing Saskatchewan weather.

The Tiferes school was also used as a Synagogue, and the colony had an initial rabbi, Rabbi Molchansky, from 1909-1922. The first High Holiday service had been held in the Fort Qu'Appelle store, but the congregants were soon shoed out by the owner saying, "Enough praying, you can go home now"!

Before leaving Lipton colony, Jacob Baltzan counted 73 graves in the Lipton cemetery, including 10 children under five. Victoria poet and author Isa Millman visited the cemetery in 2003, and was emotionally overcome with the experience, subsequently

writing a poetic memoir in 2008 entitled, "Prairie Kaddish" (a winner of a Canadian Jewish Book Award in 2009). The poet and author considered the subject was so important as a memorial lesson, that she presented it later at a literary conference in Poland, where she had been searching for her family history in the Holocaust. Isa Milman also contributed the story of her visit to Lipton cemetery "Writing History in Poetry: The Making of Prairie Kaddish", to "Kanada de Goldene Medine" e-book (published by former Calgarian, Professor Norman Ravvin of Concordia University in Montreal, who also served as Chair of Canadian Jewish Studies.

Other Lipton colony residents with Edmonton family connections were Abe Griesdorf, with his four children, including daughter Betty Miller (Abe), mother of Mr. Justice Tevie Miller, Helen Paull and Leon Miller; several Jampolsky families (related to Dr. Noel Jampolsky and Connie Zalmanowitz) and the Pechet family. Eugene Pechet, founder of Canadian Western Bank and builder of many hotels along the

Alaska Highway and in Edmonton, was born at Lipton in 1917. The grandfather of Marco Silverman was also in Lipton at one time. Jacob Baltzan's brother Moses and his family, also arriving from Bessarabia, were in the colony from 1905 until 1910, before moving to Saskatoon. Their sons, Dr. David Baltzan of Saskatoon, and Harry Baltzan of Edmonton, who were both born in Bessarabia, grew up as young children in the Lipton colony.

Both Baltzan brothers married Edmonton's Cristall sisters, Rose and Jessie (mother of Mozanne Dower and Ron Baltzan), daughters of Edmonton's first Jewish citizens, Abraham and Rebecca Cristall. Dr. David Baltzan was a prominent medical internist), and his three sons all became noted physicians (two were Canadian pioneers in renal transplants) in Saskatoon.

By 1931 there were only 24 remaining homesteads in the Lipton colony, with few remaining farmers. Only five of the original settlers' children initially retained farms, but virtually everyone was gone by 1951, and all that remained was the barren cemetery.



l-r Amelia, Marco holding Harry and Abe Silverman in front c. 1947 photo courtesy of Abe Silverman



Isaac Blatt & sons, Henry & Jack, stooking wheat sheaves, Sonnenfeld Colony c. 1930 photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada



The Frolich Home c. 1920s photo courtesy Penny Hardin



Summit School class of 1936 Sonnenfeld colony photo courtesy of Mottie Feldman

SONNENFELD COLONY

This colony was located 37 miles south of Weyburn, Saskatchewan (110 miles southeast of Regina, 9-10 miles from the U.S. border, and was named after Dr. Sigmund Sonnenfeld, the first director-general of the JCA. The three founders of the colony were Israel Hoffer in 1905, plus Philip Berger and Majer Feldman in 1906. They were previously students at the Slobodka Lesna Technical Agricultural School in Galicia. The history of the colony has been recorded by descendants of the founders, including Mottie Feldman, son of Majer, and a friend of Edmontonian Abe Silverman. His article in 2002 was entitled, "Sonnenfeld Colony, a Piece of Saskatchewan History." His sister-in-law, Anna Feldman (married to Philip's older brother Keiva), also recorded the history in, "Sonnenfeld -- Elements of Survival and Success of a Jewish Farming Community on the Prairies 1905-1939", She outlined three main phases in the development of the colony:

1. *The early years 1905-11* -- Six Jews received title and by 1909 there were 58 people on 28 farms.
2. *The consolidation period, 1912-25* -- Developing as part of the sur-

rounding community. The peak was 1916, with 147 on 45 farms, and then slowly declined. The Synagogue had been completed in 1912. Additional family names at Sonnenfeld included: Samuel Bronstein, Max Feldman, David Schwartz, Sussman, Kosatzhof, Gorin, Louis Singer, Buchalter, Louis Kessler, Gertner, Kamel, Feur, Gottesfeld, Plotkin, Linden, Portisman, Rachman, Trapper, Rachmer, Kobelnitsky, Litman and Gilman.

3. *The JCA years of more support, initially after 1925-6* -- New land was acquired at this time and more immigrants attracted. However, the 1930s brought drought and depression. Farms were abandoned less than by gentiles during this period, but Anna Feldman reported that the JCA was often late with promised financial help. The JCA did build a facility to train farmers from 1926-30, but only one of these farmers remained (until 1959). The colony benefitted by close access to the CPR railway and the surrounding towns of Hoffer, Oungre, and Ratcliffe. Sonnenfeld also had access to several public schools.

Max Frolich (father of Sam and

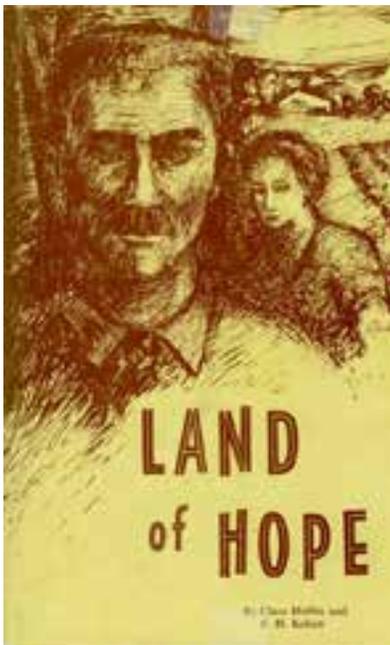
his sisters Sophie Frolich and Becky Warhaft), and M. Zalik (father of Dr Saul Zalik), plus Israel Hoffer, served on the school boards. The Frohlich siblings and Saul Zalik all grew up in the Sonnenfeld colony and. Keiva Feldman and Sophie Frolich taught school there.

The Cohen family, with their sons Harry and Hymie, came to the colony in 1928. Hymie's daughter Cynthia Pertman told me they had originally been bound for Palestine but came back from Turkey to the Sonnenfeld colony and remained until 1947, when Hymie left for university, and Harry had already left for Edmonton.

The Kives family had also come to Sonnenfeld via Turkey in 1927. Their son Philip, who became well-known as the founder of K-Tel, grew up there and was a friend of Abe Silverman on the colony. Marco and Amelia Silverman came to the colony with their children in 1951, previously arriving in Canada from Romania where Marco had endured a labour camp during the Holocaust. Abe said there were approximately 60 families on their arrival, but only eight when his parents left in 1962 for Edmonton.

The colony's peak population had been 225 people, but by 1975 only three farms plus some JCA land remained. One remaining farm

belonged to Nachman Feldman, son of Majer Feldman, plus the additional land of another Feldman family. Nachman moved off the farm in 1969 but still managed it. Philip Kives' brother George still supervised the family farm from a distance after relocating, and Usher Berger, son of the founder Philip Berger, was still actively farming his land. An article in the Regina Leader-Post July 17, 2020, provided an interesting interview with Usher Berger, who was then age 93, entitled, "Poverty and the Past on the Prairies: Farmer Recounts Early Days of Jewish Settlements". He recounted his early days of poverty in the colony, after his father Philip died in 1932, when Usher was five years old. His mother had to relinquish management of the land during the Depression, and they endured poor weather, grasshoppers, and initially poor crops. They did not have a tractor until after World War II. He persevered with great difficulty, but determination, to achieve a successful farming operation living as



Land of Hope by Clara Hoffer-Hoffer Colony, Saskatchewan

a bachelor and farming until moving to Regina in 1999. Although able to eventually sell the farm for approximately \$1 million, he claimed that Sonnenfeld was the poorest colony. Usher also related that there was jealousy between those who did receive aid from the JCA and those who did not, but he eventually managed well without that help.

An important memoir of the colony was published in 1960 by Clara Hoffer, wife of founder Israel Hoffer. Her book, "Land of Hope", was translated from the original Yiddish diary by her daughter Fanny Hoffer Cahan. Fanny was a journalist and author who also supported her well-known brother, Dr. Abram Hoffer's controversial alternative medicine views. He was a psychiatrist, who had earlier collaborated with Dr. Humphrey Osmond at Weyburn Mental Hospital. Dr. Osmond had coined the term "psychedelic" and treated the famous author Aldous Huxley with niacin (and possibly LSD).

Dr. Abram Hoffer (1917-2009) believed strongly in vitamin and nutritional treatments for schizophrenia, and he dabbled in the use of some controversial drugs. His sister collaborated with him on several books regarding treatment of schizophrenia. She also wrote in the Jewish Post on April 6, 1944, an article entitled, "Pioneers of the Plains: A Saga of the Jewish Farming Colony at Sonnenfeld, "a memoir of when she was helping cut a 530-acre wheat crop, during a time when the yields were thriving, and clearing large rocks and boulders. Fanny related prior difficulties at Sonnenfeld with drought, grasshoppers and fires and the unfortunate delayed help for buildings and implements from the JCA. Her father Israel's first shelter had been a grain wagon, and he

suffered a major prairie fire in 1909, which destroyed much of the wheat crop, after which many families on the colony left for the cities or towns.

I was personally familiar with Dr. Abram Hoffer's son Bill, (William) -1944- 1997, who I originally met at his bookstore in Gastown, Vancouver. He had been a radical student at Simon Fraser University when the political science, Sociology and Anthropology department (PSA), headed by former Edmontonian Morton Brown (later Mordecai Briemberg) was controversially ejected for being too radical in 1969, with multiple faculty members in the PSA department (including Mordechai) fired by the SFU administration.

Bill developed a difficult relationship with many Canadian authors, as he had inflexible views on most subjects. However, he did have a good collaborative literary relationship with well-known Canadian author and former Edmonton milkman, William Kinsella (author of "Shoeless Joe", made into



Edenbridge pioneers, c. late 1910s photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Edenbridge Synagogue photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Sam Vickar beside the plaque commemorating the Beth Israel Synagogue in Edenbridge as a Saskatchewan Historical Building (Son Harry Vickar over his right shoulder) c. 1965

the movie, "Field of Dreams".) Bill Hoffer was asked to evaluate my first literary book collection, donated to the University of Alberta Library in 1989, at the time the USSR was collapsing. With the chief U of A librarian, John Charles, we went to meet Bill at the Faculty Club. John Charles' first question to him was, "Bill, why do you look so sad?" He replied, "It's tough to be a communist these days." He soon sold his bookshop in Vancouver and moved to his beloved Russia, where he sold wooden Matryoshka dolls and married a Russian girl. Unfortunately, he soon developed terminal cancer, and despite his father's attempts at unconventional therapy, he passed away.

EDENBRIDGE COLONY

The Edenbridge colony was founded in 1906, 29 miles northeast of Melfort, Saskatchewan and 15 miles north of Star City. The pioneering first 20 settlers were originally from Lithuania but had emigrated to South Africa as small traders. They had read a Canadian government pamphlet in 1905 advertising land for a registration fee for the very attractive sum of \$10 dollars for 160 acres. Three Vickar brothers,

Sam, David, and Louis were pioneers in the original settlement. Sam Vickar (grandfather of retired radiologist Dr. David Vickar of Edmonton) and his brother David worked by hand to build their log cabin homes, and the colony synagogue (1908-1964). Sam and David married the Gelman sisters, and Sam and his wife Gertie had five sons. The eldest son, Ed Vickar (1915-2003), married the daughter of Israel and Clara Hoffer, pioneers of the Sonnenfeld colony, and was very active in Canadian Zionist circles.

I attended national meetings of the Canadian Zionist Federation (CZF) with him in the early 1970s. One son, Norman Vickar (1917-2015) became the mayor of Melfort, and was also a Saskatchewan provincial cabinet minister of Industry and Commerce. He provided research material for a historical publication, in 1980, entitled, "Edenbridge: The memory lives on", edited by David Rosenberg, which details the origins and hardships encountered by the Edenbridge colonists. A copy was loaned to me by Dr.



Bushwhackers of Edenbridge after a hard day's work c. 1942 photo courtesy David Vickar. Top row 2nd from right Margaret Vickar – she married Robert Gitlin, forth from the right. Middle row Standing, fourth from left is Ed Vickar (white overalls). Bottom row 1st on the left Charlie Vickar, three from right Morris Vickar (David Vickar's father).

David Vickar in Edmonton. The other brothers, Morris, Harry, and Joseph were born and grew up on or near the colony. Harry was the last surviving brother and passed away in Winnipeg in 2016. Dr. David Vickar's father, Morris (1921-1984), had moved early to Melfort, and then Winnipeg in 1965. His wife Ann, who passed away in Winnipeg in 2019, was the daughter of Joseph and Freda Freedman, who were also long-time Edenbridge residents.

Louis Rosenberg, of the Canadian Jewish Congress and JCA, who had been the founding principal of the Tiferes Hebrew school in Lipton Colony in 1914, wrote extensively on the Jewish farming colonies, including "The story of Edenbridge, from its Establishment in 1906 to 1934."

Others in the initial pioneer group included: H. Wolfovitch, M. Schweiden (married to the Vickers' sister Fraidl), Herman Katzoff, and Kadish Fenster. A further Vickar sister, Anna, and her husband R.



The Vickar House c. 1956 photo courtesy David Vickar

Rosenberg arrived shortly after. Mr. Rosenberg erected the first store on his quarter in 1910, which served as a shopping centre for settlers and a stopping point for farmers enroute to Star City.

Sam Vickar (1883-1973) also wrote a diary, entitled, "Zimbale to Edenbridge," in February, 1966, in which he described the feelings of he and his brothers on arrival and their surprise and initial disappointment at the small size of Star City when they got off the train. The initial settlers also noted the bridge over the nearby Carrot River which they referred to as the Yidn Bridge, but in choosing the name for the colony thought Edenbridge would be more acceptable! The Vickar brothers also became prominent in the general community. Sam Vickar became a rural municipal councillor, a school board administrator, and was the founder of the Edenbridge public school board. He was very active in the farmers' co-op organization and served 31 years on the Melfort Hospital board. His contributions were recognized by the Saskatchewan government with the naming in his honour of Vickar Bay, north of Prince Albert in the Lac la Ronge area. He spent most of his adult



Edenbridge Hebrew Cemetery established 1906 photo courtesy of JAHSENA

life at Edenbridge before finally moving to Melfort with his wife Gertie before he passed away in 1973. His brother David (1877-1953) was also very active in the community, serving as Reeve, and active in co-op and wheat pool elevator systems. He was also an activist for farmers during the depression and had initially served as the first postmaster for the colony and region until 1917. The third brother, Louis, was also a prominent active member of the colony, before and after spending some years away in the U.S. The Edenbridge school opened in 1913, with the Vickar's brother-in-law R. Rosenberg (Anna Vickar's husband) as the first chairman of the newly instituted school board. David and Louis Vickar were the first trustees. David Vickar worked in a regional dairy from 1908 to 1910 and in neighboring general stores in villages such as Gronlid, Brooksby and Ratner, for a few years with his brother Sam, before they resumed farming. Several of their sons also later worked in these stores. David and his wife Sophie, (Gelman 1890-1949), also had five sons and a daughter who grew up in the colony. Sophie died at Edenbridge.

The other early major group com-



Back Rose, Leon, Jacob Front Minnie, Sarah, Sophie Ratner Edenbridge SK c. 1920 photo courtesy Mel Comisarow

ing to Edenbridge was led by the Springman brothers, the Broudys, Philip and Max Gordon, Harry Frazis, and the Usiskins (1911). The Tabacks arrived in 1913. Most had been working in clothing and fur sweatshops in London and had a more socialist view of labour. They believed productive farm work would lead to personal freedom and independence and contribute to a solution for social ills. Michael Usiskin (1876-1950) and his brother David initially came to Edenbridge colony in 1911. Dr. Sid Usiskin, David's son, a retired long-time medical physicist at the Cross Cancer Institute, gave me some family history.

David left Edenbridge early for Winnipeg, where Sid and his sister Marsha Usiskin Basman grew up. She translated her Uncle Mike's book "Uncle Mike's Edenbridge: Memoirs of a Jewish Pioneer" from the original Yiddish in 1983. The Yiddish edition in 1945 was "*Oksn un Motoren*" (from oxen to tractors) Uncle Mike spent over 38 years in Edenbridge colony. Well-known Canadian novelist Gabrielle Roy (author of the Canadian classic, "The Tin Flute"), included Michael in another of her novels and in a further book on Saskatchewan women visited Edenbridge colony and commented, "To tell the truth I saw books in all the houses in Edenbridge. I think the people buy them in preference to food!"

Those Edenbridge colonists with more socialist views were featured in articles indicating, in the 1930s, that they were principal Canadian supporters of ICOR, the Organization for Jewish Colonization in Russia, initially founded in the U.S. in 1924; an organization helping Russia in promoting a Jewish socialist republic in the Birobidzhan region of the USSR. Their interest faded by the 1950s after



Interior of Beth Israel c. 1965 photo courtesy of David Vickar

Stalinist anti-Jewish policies.

The early colonists all worked hard, displaying courage, enterprise, and adaptability with their own resources. With their own hands, they built their log houses and stables using clay and a whitewash cover. They generally travelled by horseback, oxen or sleigh, and there were no initial roads. Bedding was composed of cloth sacks filled with straw. There was no electricity until 1949! Other familiar names of early colonists included: Bricker, Buckwold, Plotkin, Nasofsky, and Cramer. The original Rabbi, Max Shalit, arrived in 1909. Most of the colony was developed without major financial aid, but eventually the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA) did provide some assistance.

The Vickars and the initial settlers were joined by 30 more families by 1913. 50 families were there in the 1920s. In 1931, at the time of the 25th anniversary of the colony, more than 170 Jewish people (90 families)

resided at Edenbridge colony, cultivating 7500 acres of the occupied 13,500 total acres. Over a thousand people were said to have participated in the celebration, which included a parade two miles long headed by the original pioneers riding in ox-drawn carts.

Winnipeg historian A.J. (Abe) Arnold wrote a history of the colony for the Manitoba Historical Society. In 1968, when Abe Arnold visited Edenbridge, 200 people had made a pilgrimage to the colony, to unveil a cairn and historic plaque marking the site of the Edenbridge Synagogue. It was unveiled at the ceremony by Sam Vickar, the last of the original settlers of 1906. Other former residents in attendance included the Tabacks (then in Vegreville), Cecil Gordon, Abe Wagner, and Ben Siegal. Roy Taback came to Edenbridge as a young boy with his parents in 1913. Those honoured at the ceremony were Sam Vickar, Roy Taback, Max Gordon, (blacksmith and farmer) and Fanny

Wolfovitch. However, by 1968 only five families were left on the Edenbridge colony.

On a personal note, I visited the still intact and restored Beth Israel Synagogue at Edenbridge in 1974, (the synagogue had held services there until 1964), when I volunteered to drive a group of Young Judea dancers to perform in several places in Saskatchewan, including Edenbridge. The dancers included Billie Laskin, Suzanne Kredentser, and Carla Nolan.

On the 70th anniversary of the colony, in 1976, John Diefenbaker sent a telegram of congratulations and said that his brother, Elmer, had taught school there in the 1920s and, “always enthused over the people there.” The restored synagogue and the remaining Jewish cemetery were named, at this time, a provincial historic site, along with the 40 acres of forested land on which they are located. The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation maintains the historic site.

Many other visitations and reunions have continued to be held at Edenbridge. Dr. Mel Comisarow,

initially of Viking and Edmonton (U of A honours chemistry graduate 1963), now a retired UBC chemistry professor in Vancouver, made a recording of speeches and greetings at a reunion he attended in Edenbridge, June 7-8, 1997. His mother Sophie (maiden name Ratner), grew up on the colony with her parents Yankle (1870-1953) and Sura (died 1952). Yankle (Jake) was from Zhitomir, Ukraine, where he was a cheder classmate and friend of the famous Jewish poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. He and Sura came to Edenbridge in 1911, after a few years in Winnipeg, where they had emigrated in 1905. Tragically, their young daughter Doris died of diphtheria, and a younger daughter, Laya, died shortly after of scarlet fever or diphtheria, while also in Winnipeg. The Ratners came to Edenbridge with their six remaining children. They included Rose, born in Zhitomir, who later became well-known in Edmonton, and married Abe Fratkin, the first conductor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra; Minnie (Barish); Morris, who unfortunately died from

the Spanish Flu in 1918 and is buried in the Edenbridge Jewish cemetery; Sophie (Mel and Ricky Comisarow’s mother), who married William Comisarow in Edmonton in 1938. She had moved to Edmonton in 1921 as a teenager to live with her sister and brother-in-law, the Fratkins; Benny, who passed away early in 1920; and the youngest son Leon. Their parents, Yankle and Sura, left Edenbridge circa 1950, and both passed away shortly after in Vancouver, as did eventually their surviving children.

Francie Ratner (Dolgoy) also told me her grandfather, Sam Ratner, and his brother Frank, lived in a small village, Norquay, not far from Edenbridge. A book entitled, “Our Courageous Pioneers-History of Gronlid and Surrounding Districts” includes Edenbridge and the names of many Jewish people and their relatives in the region.

At the 100th anniversary of the Edenbridge colony in 2006, 65 descendants of early settlers gathered in Winnipeg. Freda (Fenster) Baron, a second-generation resident of



Wolf Cohen’s farmhouse, Edenbridge Colony c. 1931-35 photo courtesy of Library and Archives Canada



Sandy Binsky and Auntie Margaret in front of Beth Israel Syngagogue, Edenbridge c. 1968 photo from Sandra Binsky

Edenbridge, read excerpts from her "Memoirs of a Farmer's Daughter". She then attended a further anniversary celebration in Edenbridge in 2008. Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. K. Fenster, and older sister came to the colony in 1908, and her brother Harry Fenster was born there shortly after in 1909, followed by her brother Phil in 1912, and sister Ida in 1915. Freda's account related her birth at home in the colony in 1921, with the only aid of only a neighboring Polish "midwife". At the Edenbridge celebration in 2008, Norman and Harry Vickar, and their cousin Ike Vickar, were still present, along with Freda (Fenster) Baron and many other former colonists, including members of the Reiss family, later settlers. They had come to Edenbridge after fleeing Poland in 1939. Another later arrival in Edenbridge had been the Loeffler family, after escaping from Nazi Germany.

A close friend of Karen Hering, Sandra Bensky of Seattle (who was born in Winnipeg and grew up in Vancouver), provided her extensive Edenbridge family history. Sandy's great grandparents, Nathan (1864-1955) and Rebecca (1873-1940) Freedman, were married in Kiev in 1892, then left for London, England. They sailed to Canada in 1912 with their six children, arriving by train at Star City. The Freedmans lived as colonists in Edenbridge for many years until they passed away and are buried in the Edenbridge Jewish cemetery. Most of their children eventually married and moved away. One son, Joe (1895-1949) remained farming in the colony and passed away there in 1949. Another son, Ben, Sandra Bensky's grandfather, and his wife Annie (Cramer), stayed in Edenbridge until 1956, when they moved to North

Surrey, BC. Their daughter Sylvia Markell (Sandra Bensky's mother), and her siblings Morris, Teddy, and Esther were all born in Edenbridge colony, as were most of their cousins. Sylvia eventually moved to Winnipeg in the late 1940s and finally to Vancouver.

Some of the Freedman family still reside at Edenbridge, and according to Sandy Bensky, they are proud of their Jewish heritage but do not practice Judaism. They include the wife and children of Teddy Freedman, Sylvia's brother. The children and several grandsons are continuing to farm the same land, in the possession of the Freedman family for well over a century! Sandy Bensky and her husband Jonathan have enjoyed visiting the colony, and their daughter Miriam accompanied her grandmother, Sylvia in 2012, attending the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Freedman homestead at Edenbridge in 1912.

ALBERTA COLONIES

BLANK'S LAKE COLONY

The first Jewish agricultural settlement in Alberta was established in 1893 in a remote and isolated area at the southwest corner of Pine Lake (not too far from the eventual Camp B'Nai Brith.) The origins of this colony remain largely obscure, but the prospective colonists were observant orthodox Russian Jews and may have desired a settlement avoiding close contact with any possible antagonism or persecution. Most of them apparently arrived from Chicago, and the original group was composed of 15 families (70 men, women, and children). Their leader was Rabbi Blank, who built a small log cabin on the edge of the lake (eventually labelled

Blank's Lake). The other settlers lived in close-by dugouts or shacks. They had extremely limited resources, only small amounts of potatoes and seed, little grain, and the soil was very poor. Initially Rabbi Blank, unfortunately, used up almost all the money of the colony in buying a horse and gun in Red Deer, but soon, while hunting, he tripped, and his gun accidentally shot and killed the horse. With almost no farming experience, severe weather, and dry soil conditions, the colonists had trouble surviving, and the vast majority left over the next few years. Although a few nearby settlers offered help, there was also some Antisemitism from government officials and nearby settlers, who even tried to provide the Blank colonists with pork, telling them it was deer meat! Antisemitic editorials also appeared in southern Alberta newspapers, including the Calgary Herald, opposing public help for the colonists.



Pine Lake photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Haying in Trochu Bertha Dattner, Esther Miller, Esther (Guttman) Silver c. 1917 photo from Goldie (Silver) Osten photo courtesy JHSSA

Some aid (\$400) was received from the Russo-Jewish Relief Committee in London for some grain and sacks of flour, but it proved of little help, and before any further limited aid arrived, the colony was down to only six families by 1896. The previous oat crop had frozen, and the potato crop was poor. Thus, the last remaining few colonists abandoned the colony in the spring of 1896. The Rabbi's cabin was eventually sold by the Dominion Land Agent for \$5! Five Families, including Rabbi Blank, were helped by the JCA to settle at the new Hirsch Colony, where they apparently fared much better, at least initially. Rabbi Blank eventually settled in Winnipeg, but the ultimate history of the other Blank colonists is largely unknown.

TROCHU AND RUMSEY COLONIES

The main history of these colonies was provided by Cyril Leonoff. These colonies were in the Red Deer River Valley near Three Hills, Alberta, approximately 120 miles northeast of Calgary. Trochu, on the west bank of the river, was more accessible and closer to a rail connection. Rumsey, on the east bank, did not have a rail connection until 1911.

Early settlers walked or rode horses from Olds or Innisfail, west of the river, for 60 miles, and had to swim or ford across the water. A ferry crossing operated from 1907 to 1925. The trip from Calgary originally took up to a week by horse or team.

The first Trochu Jewish settlers arrived around 1905, approximately 8-10 miles southeast of Trochu. They

included Charles and Max Waterman; Morris Katzin (father of the Edmonton and Calgary Katzin brothers); Leib Kramer and Max Silver. Charles Waterman (1879-1970) was originally from Bucharest, Romania, coming to Canada in 1901, and was soon homesteading in Trochu from 1904 -5, until 1921, when he and his family moved to Calgary. Charles then became a very active and respected member of the Calgary Jewish community. An ardent Zionist, he also had a major interest in Jewish education, and was a main fundraiser for the Calgary Hebrew School, which was later renamed the Charles Waterman Talmud Torah. He married his wife Ethel (Guttman, 1886-1959), the daughter of a neighboring Rumsey colonist family, in 1912.

While in the Trochu colony, he drove his young children to school by horse and buggy. In the Alberta Roundup article there is a picture of him and his wife Ethel on a horse-drawn wagon, with others, including his sister Esther (Miller), mother of Ruth Nolan, Stan Miller, Mona Witten, and Ethel Allman, plus a further relative, Bertha Waterman (Dattner), sister of Max Waterman and mother of Sylvia Chetner and Lillian Podersky.

The much larger Rumsey colony opened for homesteads between 1905 and 1907. Brothers Raphael and Louis Gurevitch left the Russian army in 1902 and met Elias Sengaus (1878-1956) in Eastern Canada. They travelled west, working in construction and lumber camps, and arrived by train in Calgary in 1904. Intent on homesteading, they went by horse and wagon to explore parkland on the East bank of the Red Deer River. At first, they shared a sod shack within eight miles of Rumsey village, and news soon spread quickly to Calgary's

new Jewish immigrants about the possibility of acquiring farmland. Many of these immigrants had fled the Russo-Japanese war and forced recruitment by Russia. 75 Jewish men soon filed for homesteads, and almost all had no prior farming experience. A public school opened in 1908 with 30 pupils, almost all Jewish. After school the Jewish children had Hebrew and Yiddish classes taught by hired teachers. Elias Sengaus served as *mohel*, *shochet*, and teacher until he died in 1956, still living on the colony. A synagogue near the school was built in 1917 by carpenter John Gelfond and his brother Nathan (father of Blanche Mozeson), and initially 60 families attended high holiday services.

As the Trochu colony was more isolated from Rumsey, they held their own religious services, meeting in private homes. Initially many Rumsey colonists commuted back and forth to Calgary, where a lot of the wives preferred to stay. These included members of the original Shumiatcher family, who had initially filed for homesteads in the colony.

Rumsey colony had a warm social life centred on the synagogue. There was much music, gramophone, and many vinyl records. Samuel Davis served as



Sam Raskin, left, with Curly Gurevitch, the "Jewish Cowboy" from Rumsey-Trochu colonies, 1930 photo credit "Exhibit Celebrates Jewish Canadians"

a dance teacher and Ben Gurevitch played the fiddle (and later violin with the Calgary Symphony). Sports were very popular, and the colony had a baseball team. Football and wrestling were also popular, and Harold Raskin eventually became the middleweight boxing champion at the U of A.

Many of the colonists also had trades, such as carpenter J. Cohen; Jacob Wolfson the blacksmith; shoe cobbler Harry Baron; and leather and harness maker Mr. Kurtzberg. I

have fond memories of he and his wife, who lived in my hometown of Camrose during my childhood. I still recall the pleasant pungent odor in his harness shop and the great *latkes* and *kugel* Mrs. Kurtzberg would serve on our frequent visits to their home. Mr. Kurtzberg (I never knew his first name) would announce the visit of myself and my brother Barry by shouting, "Here comes Eric and Barick!" Their daughter Bertha worked in my dad's store and always preferred the



front Charles Waterman, Ethel Waterman holding Frede Lil back Esther (Guttman) Silver Dattner, Esther (Waterman) Miller c. 1917 photo courtesy JHSSA



Jewish Farm Rumsey c. early 1900's photo courtesy of JAHSENA

Men's department, measuring them for their pants and suits. The eldest daughter Minnie, and her husband Norman Loomer (an uncle of former Edmontonian Neil Loomer), were close friends of my parents.

My uncle Izzy Engle, of Calgary, (1902-1975) father of my cousin, Calgary pianist Marilyn Engle, grew up in Rumsey colony. His father, Rudolph Engle, was a watchmaker, initially from Lemberg, Galitzia (now Lviv, Ukraine) who had come to Rumsey circa 1907 from England and briefly Montreal. Uncle Izzy recalled coming west across Canada in a freight car with his legs dangling out the side. Rudolph designed and constructed the Calgary City Hall clock in 1910. Tragically he was killed in a hunting accident at Rumsey in 1912, leaving his wife Clara (nee Greenberg) and their children; Izzy, Eli, Sylvia (born in England), Anita (Born in Montreal), and William, who was born in Rumsey shortly after his father was killed. Uncle Izzy had to leave school in 1915 to help his mother provide the family support at their Rumsey store. Clara

Engle's sister Rose also lived with the Engles at Rumsey and eventually married and had a son, Arnold Belkin, (1930-1992) who was born in Calgary in 1930. He initially grew up in Vancouver but became an internationally famous artist based mainly in Mexico and was known as the "Canadian Son of Mexican Muralism." His voluminous impressive artistry also included drawings, sculptures, canvas works, and metal engraving and lithography, in addition to his famous and varied murals. As his parents were socialist-oriented in Vancouver, much of his artistic work reflected his concern with social issues and the rights of the underprivileged, class struggle and oppression.

Many of the Rumsey Engle family eventually moved to Vancouver and New Westminster, including Clara, Eli, and Sylvia (Wallach) plus the Belkins. The youngest Engle, William, made early *Aliyah* to then Palestine, and was followed by his sister Anita (Berkoff) who had become a journalist. In Israel she became a well-known author, publishing the first major history of

the Nili Spies, the famous Aaronsohn siblings of then Jewish Palestine, who provided critical intelligence for the allies in the Middle East during World War I. Her Book, "The Nili Spies" was published by the Hogarth Press in 1959. The publisher, Leonard Woolf, (husband of Virginia Woolf) made a special trip from England to Israel to convince Anita Engle to publish with his Press, as he became extremely interested in the manuscript. Anita Engle also later published several articles and books on glassblowing.

The Rumsey colony for many years had bountiful crops, benefitting from fertile soil and adequate precipitation. Hailstorms were frequently a problem. The decade 1910-20 was very fruitful. The colony at this time had a population of 238, cultivating 10,000 acres, and was considered one of the wealthiest Jewish colonies in Canada. However, particularly after World War



Ben, Harold, Tom Willie Sengaus c.1928 photo from Allan (Curly) Gurevitch



Wash Day in Trochu, Ida Katzin daughter Lil c.early 1920s from Bev (Katzin) Walker photo courtesy JHSSA



Rumsey Hockey Team Willie Sengaus, Ted Houghton, Tom Gibson, Elly Raskin c.1936 photo courtesy of JHSSA

I, large loans, for inflated land values, brought more hardship and the abandonment of many holdings. Initially the colonists were entirely independent, but there was later help from the JCA and the more affluent colonists remained. The last Jewish farmer at Trochu, Jack Cramer, left in the 1960s.

Other families in the Rumsey colony, well-known in Edmonton and Calgary, included the Horodetzky, described in a further article in Alberta Roundup,

entitled, "Farming the Canadian Prairies", by Dr. Arthur Hayes (Horedetzky), a Vancouver dentist, originally from Calgary and a dental graduate of the U of A in Edmonton.

Other names included: Hackman, Hanen, Baron, Moses, Applebaum, Fagan, Babavnik, Curly Gurevitch (son of the founder Raphael Gurevitch), Srolovitz (Sanders), including Helen Dlin (Srolovitz), who grew up there, plus her sister Shirley (Corenblum)



Nate, Jack, Sarah, Fred Horodezky Threshing near Rumsey, c.1919 photo from David Spindel



Clara and children Izzy, Eli, Sylvis Bill Engle c.1912 photo from Fred Engle

and brothers Morris Sanders (father of Harry Sanders, the historian in Calgary) and Ralph. Morris recollected his time in public school in Rumsey where most students were Jewish. In 1941 his parents became the proprietors of the Red and White store in Rumsey, joined in 1946 by Morris and Ralph for a few years. A further Rumsey family were the Blackermans, parents of Sally Promislow (Levant) who grew up there. She was the mother of Dr. Marvin Levant and grandmother of Ezra Levant.

Also at Rumsey were the Gelfonds, including Blanche (Mozeson) and her parents, Nathan and Annie, the mother and grandparents of Barbara Neville, Zena Drabinsky and Chuck Mozeson. Blanche came to Calgary in 1927 to complete her high school education, but her parents continued to farm at Rumsey, living in their original home, until 1947 when they moved to Calgary.

The Hackman family came early to Canada after their home was destroyed in a pogrom in the Russian empire (Bessarabia) in 1906. Jack Hackman (born 1888) related his family saga



Schoolhouse Eli Engle bottom row, 3rd from right, Izzy Engle 4th from right c. 1912 Photo courtesy Marilyn Engle

entitled, "A Jewish Homesteader in the West". After a year in Montreal, they moved to Calgary in 1907. Jack and several young companions first took a train to Olds, then went by a team of horses with a livery driver to the Rumsey area and the open, not yet well-settled prairie, where he arranged for his family to settle. His brother Samuel died in September, 1916 from wounds sustained in the Canadian Army's Battle of the Somme. Jack Hackman's memoirs of Rumsey are also contained in "From Pogrom to Prairie", Central Alberta Museums, by A.J. Armstrong. He quotes Jack Hackman's poignant initial recollections of the Rumsey area: "We are walking the half-mile to our location, and are making plans as to where the house shall stand, where the barn is to be, chicken house, etc. We are walking, walking on our own soil. Our own piece of ground. Something inside you is glowing. This is all yours. The brushes around the sloughs, all these hills and valleys, as far as your eye can

see. Oh! What a grand feeling! A feeling of independence, of self-respect, of equality".

A prominent Calgary family, the Hanens, pioneered in Rumsey. It was comprised of Moshe and Eusa, with their children Sam, Mike, Harry, Frank, and Sylvia. They eventually moved to Calgary in 1920. Sam (1896-

1972) and Lena Smolensky Hanens' (1908-1979) daughter Zahava (Goldie) (1928-2015) even named her cattle ranch in the Alberta foothills the Rumsey Ranch. A committed environmentalist, she sued Imperial Oil and the Energy Resources Conservation Board of Alberta for severe pollution of her property in 1991, eventually reaching a settlement. Her memoirs of this encounter were recorded in "Heading for Home. She also wrote, "Alberta Bestiary: Animals of the Rolling Hills". Zahava had founded the Samuel Hanen Society of Resource Conservation, which was particularly concerned with conservation of native grasslands in the Southern Foothills region. Her many published writings also included poetry and photography.

Some pioneer Rumsey colonists created long-time farming dynasties which endured. These included the Sam Raskin family, cultivating 7600 acres, (also encompassing the Gurevitch farms); the Sengaus families; and Harry and Sam Silberstein. Some eventually developed very successful ranches in other parts of Alberta,



Sol, Abraham (father), Jack Sam Hackmen, Rumsey c.1912 photo from Miriam (Hackman) Bloomberg photo courtesy JHSSA

such as Fred Horodetzky and his wife Fanny. They operated the beautiful 2 Bar F Ranch, 30 miles north of Pincher Creek. Sam Rosenthal, son of Rumsey pioneer William Rosenthal, operated three ranches in Alberta, including one near Wetaskiwin.

MONTEFIORE COLONY

In 1910, Morris Manolson and Louis Schacter filed homesteads just north of Sibbald, Alberta, in a rather bleak, dry area approximately six miles from the Saskatchewan border. This was 96 miles northeast of Medicine Hat and a few miles north of the main rail line from Calgary to Saskatoon. An adjacent, much smaller Alsask (Eyre) colony, just across the Saskatchewan border, also opened in 1910.

After advising Jewish Calgarians of the land, by 1915 there were 30 farms with approximately 100 people, and they had decided to name the colony after Sir Moses Montefiore (1784-1885), the famous British financier, philanthropist, and Jewish activist. Almost all the colonists had no prior

farming experience, apart from a few who had come from North Dakota. The Manolson's eldest child, Charna Manolson (Shapiro) of Calgary was the first baby born in the colony. The other Manolson children were born in Calgary after their parents had left the colony. These included Dr. Frank Manolson, who became a prominent veterinarian in England and was the author of many books on animals. His brother Will, was one of the Calgary Mahal volunteers to Israel during the 1948 war. The Manolson brothers married the Hanen sisters; environmental advocate and author Zahava (Goldie) Hanen eventually divorced Frank, and Ayala Manolson was a noted speech therapist and author who created the Calgary Hanen Centre for Learning and Speech difficulties.

Morris Manolson was also the grandfather of Francie Nobleman of Edmonton, whose mother, Esther Manolson Robbins, was the young-

est Manolson child. Esther was a nurse, and after being diagnosed with cancer in 1976, developed the program CanSurmount to help those dealing with the disease, becoming the Alberta and national coordinator of the program. She volunteered her time, making many national visits, presentations, and seminars plus workshops, and developed two videotape training and information films. Esther was awarded the Canadian Medical Association Medal of Honour in 1982, the first non-physician to receive the award. She and her husband Murray were Calgary Negev Dinner honorees in 1981. Esther was invested as a Member of the Order of Canada in 1985 and received the Alberta Order of Excellence in 1986, plus also receiving an Honourary Doctor of Laws degree (LLD) from the University of Calgary (1985).

Other Montefiore colonists included the Ullmans, Siegels, Bercoviches and Chetners. Shelly Bercovich of Calgary



Jack Hackmans Family, Anne, Lena (wife), Ruby Miriam c.1928 photo from Miriam (Hackman) Bloomberg photo courtesy JHSSA



Mr & Mrs Abe Bercovich Montefiore c. 1930 photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Picnic at Montefiore c. 1915 photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Montefiore Jewish Cemetery, photo courtesy of JAHSENA

has provided his family history at Montefiore colony. They pioneered there circa 1910 and their farms were in a bloc comprising two adjacent sections. The family included Saul and Mariam (Shelly's grandparents), his uncles Abe, Morris and Jacob, and his father Max. His two aunts in the colony were Bertha Rose, who subsequently married my wife Elexis's uncle, Louis Conn; and Sarah Bercovich Ullman and her husband, Abe, who left for the U.S. in 1926 with their three children. The rest of the Bercovich family had left their farms at Montefiore between 1923 and 1926.

A picture of the family at Montefiore, circa 1914, appeared in the JHSSA journal of February 2009. In the same issue there is a reprinted article from 1916 entitled, "Prosperous Jewish farmers in Alberta: Montefiore Colony". The article states that when the colonists started on the land, "not one of the homesteaders knew what a plow was." They suffered terrible hardships, but persevered and at this time (1916) there were 15 extended families, and a total population of 75 (30 farmers), becoming a more "prosperous" group. They had formed a credit union and could receive loans at 5% interest

per annum from the JCA. The synagogue building had just been built and the families could obtain meat from a Calgary Kosher butcher once a week.

Former Calgarian and long-time Edmontonian Alec Gorasht, originally from Romania and husband of Eva Shoctor Gorasht, was briefly on the colony. In addition to their parents, many teenagers and young unmarried men operated their own small homesteads, usually close to their parents: one mile away for Israel Chetner from his parents, Jacob and Fanny (Dov, Jack and Dave Chetner's grandparents), and four miles east of his brother Abe (the



l-r Bertha Rose, Miriam, Max, Saul, Abe, Jacob, Morris Bercovich Missing Sarah Bercovich Ullman c. 1914 photo courtesy Shel Bercovich



Montefiore Synagogue c.1915 photo courtesy of JAHSENA

Chetner brothers' father). Many of the colonists were originally from Russia, but quite a few, including the Chetners (originally Chetnerer), had originally come from Bessarabia.

The colony synagogue was built in 1916 by Mr. Rootman of Calgary. It was approximately 40 by 22 feet with a 12-foot ceiling. The building had no balcony, and women sat on the sides. The cost was \$1500 with \$300 provided by the JCA. It was also extensively used as a social hall, and there were dances, plus meetings, lectures, films, and theatrical presentations. Zionism was a strong feature for most of the colonists. There was also a cheder in the building a few days a week, and they were proud of their library, containing over 1000 books, in Yiddish, Hebrew and English. Behind the synagogue there was a two-room building for use by a rabbi or Hebrew teacher, containing a mikveh. This was located on the corner of the farm of Jacob and Fanny Chetner.

The colony had three Rabbis briefly, who also served as *schochet*, *mohel* and teacher, but they all soon left. The colonists were joined at High Holidays by the few colonists at the Alsask (Eyre) colony.



Talmud Torah School at Montefiore Colony c. 1924 photo courtesy of JAHSENA

After World War I, there was recession and drought and the colonists began to leave the colony in the early 1920s, many going to Calgary, but a large group settled in California as chicken farmers and continued to have reunions recalling the Montefiore colony.

Loans were defaulted in the early 1920s and the drought, plus much lower wheat prices, left the colony with only a few settlers. The synagogue was last used in 1925. The Zuckermans

from Alsask (Eyre) transferred to the Montefiore colony in 1927, and Dave Zuckerman stayed until 1951. The bachelor Harry Himmelfarb also remained until the early 1950s. In 1937 the synagogue was sold for a few hundred dollars and moved to Hanna, Alberta for use as a family home. The colony cemetery was disinterred, and the remains (16, half adults) were transferred to the Edmonton Jewish Cemetery in May, 1938.

Jacob Baltzan of the Edmonton



Moving the Synagogue to Calgary Heritage Park Historical Village c.2008 photo courtesy of JAHSENA



Montefiore Synagogue at Calgary Heritage Park c. 2019 photo courtesy of JAHSENA

Chevra Kadisha wrote an account in the Winnipeg Israelite Press (originally in Yiddish) June 7, 1938. He attributed the success of the project to original Montefiore pioneer Sam Ullman, then of Los Angeles, with the assistance of his uncle Saul Ullman of Edmonton and the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha. After the six bodies were disinterred at the former Montefiore site under the direction of Sam Ullman and Alec Gorasht, they were transferred to Edmonton in four coffins. One of the bodies was that of Sam Ullman's father, Eliazar (Lazar) Ullman, a pioneer of Montefiore who had come from Bessarabia, close to Kishinev. His five sons and their families eventually moved to Los Angeles. The other male bodies were Ullman relatives Chaim Siegler (Siegel) and Moses Sterling

The Jewish funeral for those re-interred in Edmonton was held May 29, 1938 with almost the entire Jewish population of Edmonton attending and the funeral procession included 100 automobiles.

Reevan Dolgoy interviewed and photographed many former Montefiore colonists in 1977, including those who had gone to chicken farms in California, and he also interviewed Rose Chetner (1899-1997) in Calgary. The article was published by the JHSSA in Calgary, entitled "Memories of Montefiore". She had married Israel Chetner (1895-1973), uncle of Jack, in Calgary in 1919 and moved with him to his 320-acre homestead at Montefiore. Israel had made, by hand, the Magen David for the synagogue and the cemetery. The couple brought their newborn daughter (Belle Chetner Viner) to the farm in 1920. Rose recalled many events at Montefiore, including a fire in which she struggled to save her home and child. She tried

to keep *kosher*, but it was very hard to keep meat preserved. Her husband Israel taught her to milk cows and churn butter, and she made clothing and sheets and pillowcases out of flour sacks. Rose liked the farm and was sorry they couldn't make it successful, but retained many fond memories.

The Little Synagogue on the Prairie Project, chaired by Calgarian Irena Karshenbaum, instituted the recovery and restoration of the synagogue and the history and commemoration of the Montefiore colony. After 70 years in Hanna, AB, they were able to recover and restore the synagogue building and move it to Heritage Park in Calgary in 2008. At its commemoration, in 2009, 2000 people attended the ceremony. It now functions as a major historical and Jewish educational resource.

CONCLUSION

The demise of the Saskatchewan and Alberta Jewish farm colonies can be attributed to many factors. These included: inexperience and lack of

commitment; adverse weather and soil conditions; the 'Dirty Thirties'; economic depression; lack of proper financial aid; difficulties following JCA mandates and policies; increased costs of mechanization; need for larger tracts of land; insect and grasshopper plagues and crop diseases; the need and desire for general and Jewish education; and a general trend to urbanization, with a desire to live in larger Jewish communities. In most of the colonies, the restriction to the Jewish homesteads, to be separated by gentiles, meant Sabbath services were often difficult to maintain because of the travel distance, on foot or horseback, for many colonists. Who knew Jewish law restricted riding a horse to one mile on Shabbat?! It is also not insignificant that many of the longer-term farmers were bachelors, as Jewish girls most often preferred to move to the bigger centres. Despite this, many of the colonists were reasonably successful and have fond memories of their homesteading and farming experiences.



Rumsey Synagogue c. early 1900's photo courtesy of JAHSENA

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