

Heritage



ירשה

THE JOURNAL OF *The Jewish Archives & Historical Society of Edmonton & Northern Alberta*

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Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta

Edmonton Pioneer Women (Circa 1938)

Above are the members of the Pioneer Women (Na'amat), the Esther Kramer Chapter. The photo was donated to JAHSENA, but unfortunately not all the women were identified. If you can help, please call the Na'amat office at 487-7191. *(See story...page 2)*

Important JAHSENA Projects Undertaken

Uri Rosenzweig, president of JAHSENA, has announced a number of projects undertaken by the Society to develop a comprehensive "Finders Guide" for future reference: genealogical information; material for historians; and documentation for publications.

These projects are in addition to ongoing efforts to gather historic material from the Jewish community in Edmonton and Northern Alberta as well as conduct oral taped interviews with elders of the community and to publish its quarterly newsletter/journal, *Yerusha/Heritage*.

The first project, undertaken by Dr. Theodore Shnitka, has been completed and involved a search of the city of Edmonton Archives, of holdings related to Jews in the Capital Region. This has yielded early photos and valuable information

about Jewish owned businesses, professional and community leaders. The second phase of Dr. Shnitka's research is at the University of Alberta archives and includes information on contributions and profiles of Jewish academics including department chairs, deans, university presidents and others who have contributed so much to this institution and the wider community. This material, plus material already deposited in the Provincial Archives is being recorded by Patti Kagan on a computer.

The second major project has been completed by Cory Felber involving recording information of all the headstones in the Jewish cemetery in Edmonton which will also serve the Chevra Kadisha in developing a location map of these stones so they can be easily found.

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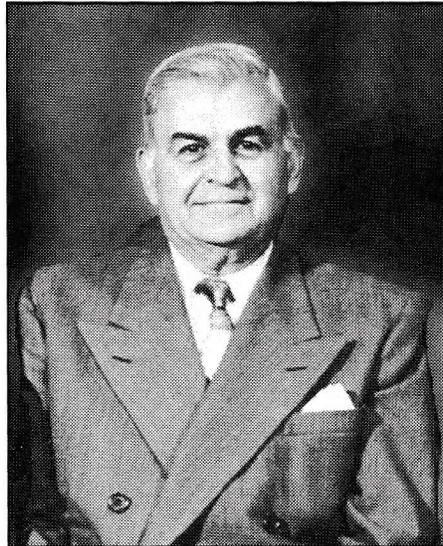
Ben Leibovitz (Part II)

by Ed Mickelson

(Editor's Note: In Part I we followed Ben's life from his home in Dorohay, Roumania to New York where he started his first business venture and then onto his relatives in Calgary, Alberta, where he worked in the family's bakery. Later he settled in Edmonton and established his well-known "Uncle Ben's" sporting goods store.)

Participating in the Jewish community was a high priority in all of Ben's endeavours. He was instrumental in promoting the Talmud Torah school from its beginnings in the basement of the Beth Israel Synagogue on 95th Street, to the buying of lots and building the second school on 103rd Street, and finally helping with the establishment of the school at its 135th Street site. Ben fondly remembered the fund-raising affairs connected with the Talmud Torah. He recalled helping to decorate for a Barn Dance using lanterns and plenty of straw. "We dressed up as hobos or farmers and we worked hard at tapping beer from barrels and providing tubs of ice. Julius Hurtig and I were bartenders and we worked for many, many hours - often getting soaked from top to bottom. We had lots of fun."

In addition to his involvement with Hebrew education, Ben was active in the B'nai Brith Lodge, serving four terms as its President. Ben proudly proclaimed: "I was one of the boys that was doing things. There wasn't a community event that I wasn't interested in. I was always ready to help out." As a member of Beth Israel Synagogue he remembered Mr. H.B. Kline as a "very reliable man." Mr. Kline served as Vice-President of Beth Israel and Ben said that, in that capacity, he had to try constantly to keep the peace among members who would squabble



Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta

about who was to daven and who was to get an aliyah. Although he eventually left Beth Israel to join Beth Shalom, Ben said that he never neglected Beth Israel and continued to pay dues there. When stained glass windows were installed in Beth Shalom, Ben contributed the Sukkot window in memory of his wife Ghizella.

When Ben was asked about other people in the community he said fondly: "I miss them all." Some of the names he recalled were: Moshe, Charles and Earl Lyons, Boss Diamond, Ben, Sam and Louis Lauer, Julius Hurtig, Eddie Kramer, Jacob Baltzan, Harry Weinlos and Rabbis Pinsky and Eisen.

Ben donated to many worthy causes, as he said: "To donating - there's no end to it."

Source: Leibovitz, Ben.

Interview conducted by: David Nelson.

Phonotape: 1973, Edmonton, Provincial Archives of Alberta. Acc. No. 73.451.

Pioneer Women (Na'amat - founded in Palestine)

by Carol Zuckerman

Na'amat Canada, a women's Zionist organization, was founded in Palestine in 1921. Originally named Moetzet Hapoalot (Council of Working Women), it was a movement initiated by idealistic women, imbued with the concept of Labour Zionism, to deal with women's issues within pioneer society.

In 1927 Rachel Yanait was the first *shlichah* to the fledgling organization in North America. She was followed by many distinguished *slichot*, including Golda Myerson, Bebe Idelson, Elisheva Eshkol, Nava Arad, Ora Namir and Lea Rabin.

In Edmonton, the founders of the Esther Kramer club of Pioneer Women met with Golda Myerson (who was later to become Prime Minister), and she was one of their inspirations.

By 1939, Pioneer women was proclaimed the only women's organization in the Labour

Zionist movement. Their work included a child Rescue fund for the maintenance of Youth Aliyah (established in 1943) followed by a postwar Building Fund for children's homes in 1944.

By 1945, under the name Pioneer Women, groups had been organized in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Windsor, Winnipeg, Regina, Saskatoon, North Battleford, Calgary, Edmonton and Vancouver. In 1966 Pioneer women in Canada elected their first Canadian President and became autonomous.

Across Canada funds were raised for schools, training, farms and day care centres in Israel. As a movement with a Labour Zionist agenda, Pioneer Women stood for social justice, cooperative living, equality of opportunity and shared responsibility. Over time there have been name changes and Pioneer Women is now called Na'amat Canada Inc. (Na'amat=Nashim Ovdot U'mitnadvot/Working and Volunteer Women).

Eddie Zipperstein

In the Spring 1997 issue of Heritage/Yerusha, we published a short excerpt from a recent oral history taped interview conducted by Joy-Ruth Mickelson with one of Edmonton's well-known and respected Jewish elders and Pioneers.

We planned to begin publication of more detailed extracts in this issue, but while a transcript was being worked on, the interviewee, Mr. Eddie Zipperstein, Zecher Tzadik, passed away.

In deference to the Zipperstein, Superstein family, these extracts will not be published at this time, but in due course the tape will be deposited in the Jewish Archives and Historical Society files located in the Provincial Archives of Alberta.

JAHSENA has embarked on a major oral history program of interviewing elders of the community to record for posterity their thoughts and recollections of their early life in Edmonton and Northern Alberta.

Some 65 such tapes are already deposited in the Provincial Archives and may be heard there by the public. For any information contact Dan Kauffman, chair, at 487-0877.

Has Your Organization Joined The Society?

Membership outside Israel numbers about 100,000 and there are groups in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Belgium, Hungary, Mexico, Peru, Uruguay and the United States. In Israel, Na'amat has the single largest membership of any women's organization at approximately 750,000 housewives and working women. Na'amat Israel is active in 68 Arab and Druze villages and prides itself on representing all women.

In Edmonton, following the first chapter, Esther Kramer, other groups were formed: Chanita; Kanot; B'not Shalom; Rae Sorokin and Tikvah. Esther Kramer members merged with Chanita and members of the Rae Sorokin chapter joined with B'not Shalom.

Na'amat Edmonton has 80 members in the five remaining active groups and their fund-raising continues to support Na'amat projects in Israel. These include the latest Canadian undertaking - the Tel Aviv Shelter and Counselling Centre.

Edmonton Jewish Cemetery Photographed and Documented

by Cory Felber

Initiated by the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta and sanctioned by the Edmonton Chevra Kadisha, our Jewish Cemetery Project began during the summer of 1997. Our goal is to unveil the multimedia project by April, 1998. When completed, the Cemetery Project will encompass a multifaceted access vehicle and will have not only archival and historical meaning for us all, but also will have significant benefits for our Jewish community.

Our first task was to photograph all the existing tombstones with a digital camera. Almost 1400 grave sites were photographed over a three day period and those images were downloaded immediately to a portable computer. We then inputted both the photographs and the information from the tombstones into a data base within a computer program. This would not have been possible without the help of Peter Marquis who spent a great deal of time building this unique program.

The project will enable the cemetery to be accessible in both a high tech and basic fashion and one aspect of the project is to include a full map with names and locations of each and every grave site.

Sharon Abbott, a member of JAHSENA, is a graphic artist and she is designing a multidimensional map. The map will be housed at the cemetery along with an all-weather access book. The information booklet will allow you to locate a grave site by name or date, by row or section. In addition to specific information you will



also be able to read about the history of the cemetery and interesting stories about some of the sites. For example, there will be information about the first tombstone that our community placed at this location, and about the unique architecture found within various cemetery rows.

**If you would like to participate in this project or if you have information that may enhance the documentation, please contact Cory Felber at 486-5654.*



If the mail strike continues, please bring your membership envelopes and cheques to the Jewish Community Centre on 156th Street.

Heritage ירשה

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Mission

The Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta was founded in 1996 and a year later became a registered not-for-profit Society under the Societies Act of Alberta.

The aims and purposes of the Society are to gather, sort, catalogue, preserve and present the history and the religious and cultural heritage of the Jewish people of Edmonton and Northern Alberta. To this end we have embarked on an ongoing program of acquiring documents, photographs, memorabilia and artifacts as well as recording oral histories of elders of the community.

By special Permanent Loan arrangements with the Provincial Archives of Alberta, material deposited by the Society will be available for research, genealogical study, publications and periodic exhibits and serve as a central resource for students, teachers, authors, historians and others.

Until such time that we are able to engage in fund-raising activities, membership fees are our only source of income and are tax deductible.

Editorial

by Ed & Joy-Ruth Mickelson

Should editorials be exhortations? Should we be reiterating how much we need researchers and writers? Will we 'turn readers off' if we do this? We didn't know the answers and, as we have never been joint editors before and consider ourselves novices in the fields of archives and history, we reached for our Webster to review the definition of the verb 'to edit'. We were happy to discover that the definition allows us "to set forth" our position or opinions and that we are able "to inject" our personal interpretations. According to Webster, editing may also have "policy-making responsibility" as well as being a "device for examining and splicing". As we do not wish to alter writers' words or splice their sequences we prefer the first definitions. Positions, opinions and personal interpretations we do have, and in this, the third issue of Yerusha, we're happy to share them.

As well as articles from JAHSENA's tried and trusty President, Uri Rosenzweig, and indefatigable researcher Dr. Theodore Shnitka, we are most happy to include in

this issue writing from Dr. Leone Jackson and from Cory Felber, both of whom are active members and researchers in JAHSENA. Their individual research took them to the Alberta Provincial Archives and to the Edmonton Jewish Cemetery. Once the 'research bug' takes hold it becomes hard to shake and the article about John Koch's book, detailing the life of Martin Nordegg (né Cohn), attests to that and reinforces the power of the 'bug'. John travelled to many countries researching Martin Nordegg's life, and his research journey of three years began in Nordegg, Alberta. John's book is a fine example of the uncovering of a life history and its connections to Martin Nordegg's Jewish roots will be of interest to us all.

The British paper, The Guardian, recently reported a project for the Millennium Dome, acknowledging that: "with a little help from Steven Spielberg and a collective pause for reflection, the memoirs of millions of Britons are to be recorded on film for a monumental national archive..." Of interest to us was the quotation from one of the spokespersons of the project: "This is about the secret history of Britain's population...their everyday

experiences and impressions...they will be the stories of ordinary people that don't get written in any other way" (Oct. 7, 1997). In welcoming another writer, Ruth Nolan, we are able to share her experiences of celebrating Chanukah in rural Alberta.

The great Jewish psychiatrist, neurologist and neurosurgeon, Victor Frankl, died on September 2, 1997. He lived 92 years. His influence on us has been profound. Frankl emphasized that the search for meaning was the primary motivational force for us all and that "meaning can be found in any circumstance and that we all have the capacity to find that meaning" (Bulka, 1997). Frankl also believed that every human being is unique and valuable and that "history stands as a storage house filled with monuments to one's life deeds" (Heisel, 1997). We all struggle to find meaning in our lives and in presenting our stories we share our uniqueness and our values and contribute to our history.

References:

- Bulka, R. Remembering Victor Frankl, Canadian Jewish News, Nov. 1997
Heisel, M. Recognize Meaning in our Lives. Canadian Jewish News, Nov. 1997

Small Town Alberta Part of Our History

Thoughts of Chanukah Traditions & Additions

by Ruth Nolan

I grew up on a farm near the village of Alliance, Alberta. Although we were the only Jewish people for miles around that didn't dampen our enjoyment of Chanukah, thanks to Dad's resourcefulness. Following Dad's instructions, the town tinsmith made our chanukiah (chanukah menorah). It looked beautiful when all the candles were lit.

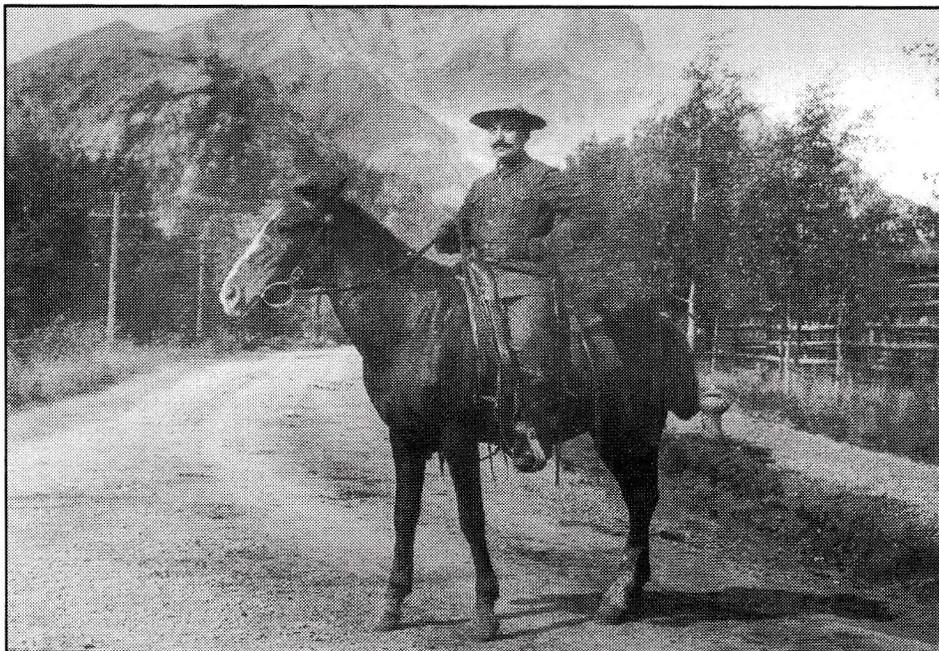
We six children were young when Mother died, so Dad prepared the holiday foods. We could hardly wait as he transformed that simple mix of eggs, flour, grated onions and potatoes into golden brown latkes. Oh! That tantalizing aroma!

We often had two or three non-Jewish people staying with us and when Chanukah and Christmas overlapped so did some of the customs. The chanukiah sat high atop the piano; below hung a row of stockings, held in place by the piano lid. These were not bright red Christmas stockings, but, for the 'ladies', a very practical new brown lisle stocking (with its mate pinned behind), and socks for the 'men'. What treasures there were to discover in those rare, exotic, once-a-year treats inside each stocking: a mandarin orange; nuts in the shell - walnuts, Brazil nuts and hazel nuts; and fancy, brightly-coloured candies. Chanukah gelt was there for the children - I doubt it was more than pennies, maybe a nickel for the older ones, but in the 1920's and '30's these were also exciting treats.

The people who lived with us were far from their homes and families and each received a small gift. Anne, who clerked in Dad's General Store in town and boarded with us was Anglican and our various girls, hired over the years, belonged either to the Pentacostal, United or Catholic churches. The occasional hired men who helped with the farm seemed to have no religious affiliation.

I think that everyone sharing our home gained also from sharing this rainbow of beliefs. It's an experience I treasure, thanks to the Maccabees - and to Dad.

**What are your memories of growing up in rural Alberta?
Please let us know.**



Courtesy of W. John Koch

Book Review

Martin Nordegg: The Uncommon Immigrant by W. John Koch - Reviewed by: Ed & Joy-Ruth Mickelson

Nordegg, Alberta, once a thriving coal-mining town, home of Brazeau Collieries, was named after Martin (né Cohn) Nordegg. The enigma of a man who was both gregarious yet "intensely private", specifically in the domain of his personal life history, is brilliantly documented in this absorbing biography of Martin Nordegg, written by Edmonton resident John Koch. Koch grew up in the coal mining area of lower Silesia, a stones throw from the town where Nordegg was born. Koch's interest in mining and Western Canadian pioneers, as well as his reading and experience of the historical complexities of the European context, all contribute to the textual richness of this life history.

Martin Cohn was born in 1868 in Reichenbach, his father was Moritz Cohn and his mother Auguste Cohn (Née Teplitz). An anonymous chronicler reported in the annals of the Jewish congregation: *In 1859 Mr. Moritz Cohn from Rawitsch was called to Reichenbach as preacher, teacher of religion, shochet (slaughterer) and cantor. During his long years of service, the congregation grew considerably in numbers, strength and wealth...* (A, p.22)

Martin's childhood and youth in Germany, that of an intelligent, well-educated youth who grew up in a 'happy family of modest wealth', paved the way to his becoming a manager at the Photochemigraphical Institute in Berlin. There he met Colonel Talbot, the Canadian MP who told him: *"Come to Canada!... You will never regret it!... In Canada a man like you would*

have great chances! Canada needs men of your type!" (A. p.15)

Within six months Cohn arrived in Ottawa. As an energetic entrepreneur he: *recognized opportunities and responded to the challenges Canada offered to a man of his intelligence, energy and sense of adventure. He readily succeeded in capturing the interest and support of Sir Wilfred Laurier and other political figures in Ottawa.* (B. p.8)

Later, he became friendly with Prime Minister R.B. Bennett and W.L. Mackenzie King, and they would often be entertained at Martin's home. The challenges and Martin's subsequent entrepreneurial successes provide a riveting insight into this enigmatic man whose actions and achievements played a pivotal role in the development of mining in Alberta.

Even though the town he built is no more, Martin's idealism and humanity left a great legacy - the human spirit of kindness and community that has remained so strong among the people who used to call Nordegg home - the town that to this day bears Martin Nordegg's name. (A. p.388)

We highly recommend this book.

References:

- A. Martin Nordegg: The Uncommon Immigrant by W. John Koch. Brightest Pebble Publishing Co.
- B. To The Town That Bears Your Name by Martin Nordegg. Trans. Maria Koch. Commentary W. John Koch. Brightest Pebble Publishing Co. Edmonton, AB 1995

Moonlight Walk Near Spedden

by Moses Jampolsky

(Editors' Note: Doreen Jampolsky has kindly submitted the following article, taken from her father-in-law's papers and diaries which are housed in the Alberta Provincial Archives. She stated that Moses Jampolsky worked hard for the Alberta Teachers' Association, persuading teachers to join the Association. He loved books and people and, as a writer, he composed in Yiddish, English, German and French. Playing the violin and taking long walks to commune with nature were part of his recreations. Moses taught for many years in Spedden, Alberta, where he and his family raised their children. The following excerpt is taken from an article in an unidentified newspaper dated June 8, 1922.)

"My homeward path winds through the bush. Midnight. Seeing in front of me at a distance the dark wall of mystic uncertainty, I am seized by a feeling of awe and adventurous determination. Encouraged by the friendly smile of the moon I drive into the panorama of a stage made by nature in its extravagant variety of creation of millions of years. I am perhaps the first civilized visitor of this mysterious theatre.

Drawn out are the long shadow of the mysterious trees, witnesses of a chain of continuous creation, play and growth. In serious contrast stand the long, black shadows - bands to the masses of silvery whiteness of moonlight, which transition from lightness to darkness plunges the lonely wanderer from a feeling of divine purity and enthusiasm into emotions of respectfulness, admiration and awe.

A deep longing takes a hold of me. The longing gives rise to a thought and the thought weaves a net of fine moonlight around the heart. For whom, you moon, did you shine all these myriad of years? What is your light, moon? What is your romance, forest, when there is none to appreciate your beauties? Further my thought continued to roam through the labyrinth of its own yarn: What shall happen this very minute when I shall have left you and what happened in here the very minute before I appeared on the scene? Is it possible that my appearance and disappearance is a matter of indifference to you, dreams of nature? I remain there in a state of momentary rigidity, cold, like a statue become part of eternal existence, a tree among trees, my little shadow a newborn, insolent infant amongst these broad giant-ancient shades."

— Northern Alberta, 1922

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ARCHIVES SCRAPBOOK

Football Greats

With the 1997 Grey Cup over and forgotten it's time to remember some Eskimo greats of the past. Johnny Bright, Normie Kwong and Jackie Parker, flanking Eskimo President Moses I. Lieberman, as they celebrate Grey Cup Championships for 1954, 1955 and 1956. Mr. Lieberman, a former quarterback of the U of A football team, played an active role in Jewish communal affairs and within the broader community.



From Grey Cup Rings to Arbiter Rings



Arbiter Founders

Courtesy of Provincial Archives of Alberta

The founders of the Arbiter Ring School in Edmonton, circa 1938, were active in establishing a Yiddish Day School, theatre and an interest-free loan society. Founded in 1921 in Edmonton as part of the American Workman's circle, the group contributed greatly to the cultural life of the Jewish community but was less active after the late 1930's.