

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

VOLUME 16, No. 2

MAY 2006

More Memories & Mementoes; stories from our AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta was held on February 6, 2006 at the Calgary JCC. The meeting had been postponed from our usual October date due to the November opening of our 2005 centennial exhibit, *A Joyful Harvest*. At the AGM, Zena Drabinsky presented a report on the exhibit to the members

after president Jay Joffe's introductory remarks. Harriet Libin and Emanuel Cohen presented certificates to our 80 year olds. Short elections for the Board of Directors resulted in two new members, Trudy Cowan and Leo Friedman, joining the Board. In addition, Hy Belzberg was named an honorary director and Mel Polsky was made an honorary director

after his many active years on the Board. Therese Nagler paid tribute to Dave Waterman and Ida Horwitz, two JHSSA directors who have passed away in the last year.

The following articles feature the stories that were presented in our AGM program, "More Memories and Mementoes" which was moderated by Sheldon Smithens.



Bar Mitzvah boy Joshua Aknin, Aron and Ida Eichler's grandson, carrying the Eichler Family Torah, 2000. The blue Torah mantle commemorates Aron's parents, Marcus and Lea Eicher. Photo: Aron Eichler

Eichler Family Torah Scroll

Ida Eichler displayed a white embossed Torah mantle, a gift from Aron Eichler's family on the occasion of the couple's 60th birthdays. It was used to cover the "Eichler traveling Torah" during part of its long history. Ida recounted the Torah's travels.

The Torah scroll was purchased in 1930 by Yosef Eichler of Cieczanow (near Lvov, Poland; now Ukraine) in honour of the birth of his first grandson, Aharon, the son of Morechai HaKohen Eichler. It stayed in the local synagogue until the German invasion of Poland in 1939.

With the oncoming German onslaught and the Russians just across the river, the Eichler family decided to escape and could not take the Torah with them as they fled. They asked the non-Jewish caretaker of the synagogue to bury it for safekeeping until their return.

The war saw the grandfather deported to the Lvov Ghetto and his fate was never known. Aron's family was reunited in 1945 in their hometown, having survived the camps. They wanted to learn what was left of their home and business (a small shoe factory). Their home was occupied by Poles who were surprised to learn that they had survived. The factory had been severely damaged. The synagogue was destroyed.

The caretaker dug up their Torah which was somewhat damaged from the damp soil. The family was informed that there was a threat to their lives if they attempted to reclaim their business. The

parents decided to leave. Since Aron and his brother planned to make their way to Palestine, the family members went to different displaced persons camps in 1947. The parents went to Austria and the boys to Germany via Czechoslovakia and Austria.

Eventually, with the help of the Zionist *Bricha* organization, the family was reunited at the Bad Reichenhal DP camp in Germany. The parents had kept the Torah with them through all their travels. In the camp, the Torah was

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Your membership and continuing support help us to publish Discovery. Thank you.

Sam Muskovitch – A Czech Officer Serves Israel

Eva Muskovitch displayed a Czech army uniform and service medals that belonged to her late husband. She told the story of his special army service.

Sam Muskovitch was born in Slovakia in 1917. He survived forced labour in the Holocaust and joined the Czech army after the war, becoming an officer training specialist. In 1948 he met and married 18 year-old Eva Rappaport, who had spent her teen years in Auschwitz.

Just after their marriage in August of 1948, Sam was sent by the Czech government to train soldiers in Israel with the fledgling Israeli army. Eva was also to undergo military training in Israel. (Czechoslovakia was a major arms supplier during the Independence war.)

To the couple's dismay, they were posted in separate training camps and Eva had no idea where her new husband's camp was. He later learned her location and set out to find her, hitchhiking. On his way he spotted a woman with a familiar scarf waving from a passing truck. Fearing that he had missed Eva, he quickly followed the truck until he could overtake it. To his surprise, he found that the scarf was on the neck of Eva's sister – and soon he was reunited with his wife.

Eva and Sam decided they would not return to their homeland because of the Communist takeover there. They stayed in Israel and helped to found the settlement Kerem Maharal.

Eva found living in the turbulent situ-

ation in Israel very traumatic after her war years in Europe, and in 1950 the Muskovitch family immigrated to Cupar, Saskatchewan, to join Sam's brother. Eva was pregnant at the time and they went on to raise their family there. Sam ran the general store and they were well respected in the small community (pop. 500) during their 12 years there.

They left Cupar to get better medical care for two ill children. Soon after they left, neighbours informed Eva that the new town hospital had been named the Cupar Municipal Shalom Hospital, even though the Muskovitch family had been the only Jewish family there.

The family moved to Calgary in 1962 and operated Bungalow Grocers, near the Colonel Belcher Hospital. In 1967, they moved to Nanton to operate a hotel there, and in 1968 they bought the Corona Hotel in Medicine Hat. They moved back to Calgary in 1983, but Sam had been ill for a while by then and he passed away in 1984. Eva and her daughter, Vyetta Sunderland, live in Calgary.



Sam & Eva Muskovitch, August 1948. Photo: Eva Muskovitch



Sam with Eva (right) and her sister in Israel. Photo: Eva Muskovitch

Eichler Family Torah Scroll

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repaired by a *sofer* (scribe). In 1949 the entire family immigrated to Montreal to join an uncle there.

The Torah was housed in whichever synagogue the family attended. Since then, it has been part of every Eichler *simcha*, no matter where, and is referred to as the "Eichler traveling Torah". After the passing of Mordechai Eichler, it was under the care of his daughter. When she moved to Miami, the Torah came to Aron in Calgary and it was housed in the Shaarey Tzedec and the Beth Tzedec. In 2003 it was used for Aron's nephew's bar mitzvah in Florida and is now used on Shabbat regularly. There are plans for its use there for an upcoming family celebration.

Ida recounted an interesting adden-

dum to the story of the Eichler Torah. After Aron's father arrived in Montreal he had difficulty finding a job in the shoe-making industry. After going from factory to factory, one receptionist informed him that while there were no openings, she was willing to take his details in case a position became available. As she spoke, the owner came out and upon seeing Mr. Eichler, told the receptionist to hire him on the spot. When she protested that there were no positions to be filled, he explained, "This is Mr. Eichler, I used to work in his factory in Poland, how can I not hire him now, when he needs help?"

For the Eichler family, this surviving remnant from their past is a living connection to their roots and to each other.

Treasured Artwork Reveals Family Connections

By Michele Doctoroff

Michele Doctoroff originally prepared the following notes for the 2003 Peretz School reunion in Winnipeg. She displayed a large painting created by Shimshon Heilik at our AGM. After her presentation, Jack Switzer gave an illustrated talk about Mr. Heilik's life and work.

MR. HEILIK WAS MY PRINCIPAL...

And my father-in-law's principal
And my husband's Baba's friend
And he has decorated our home

Mr. Heilik was my school principal from 1973 to 1976 at the Peretz School in Winnipeg. I recall he would often walk into our classroom and there was a seriousness that the principal was here and we better be on our best behavior. Yet I also recall the warmth and passion for Yiddish he shared with us when he told us many of his interesting stories. I remember reading the *geshichte* (history) book that he wrote. It seemed so foreign and strange to me at that time that Jewish people lived in almost all parts of the world.

As life has since blessed me with travel to different parts of the world, this curiosity that was rooted in my youth has blossomed into a passion that has led me to various synagogues, Jewish cemeteries, and other Jewish people from around the world.

Years later, far removed from my Peretz school days, I moved to Calgary and married Ted Switzer. My husband's father, Jack Switzer, and I shared the fact that Mr. Heilik had been a Peretz School principal to both of us, for me in Winnipeg, for him in Calgary.

I learned that Ted's Baba, Rifka Switzer,

was a good friend of Mr. Heilik, such a friend that she commissioned him to paint a stunning picture of the shtetle (Drzewica) in Poland where she grew up. Rifka was a big supporter of the Peretz School in Calgary, and this commonality quickly brought us together.

Well, the years have passed. Rifka and Mendle Switzer passed on, and the painting came into our home, where we cherish its beauty and its meanings. It transports you back to the old country and a feeling that you are a part of this former time and life.

And now I am reminded through Mr. Heilik's picture, Baba Rivka's picture and now our family picture – reminded of family history, honoring our elders, sharing memories and creating the warmth of a home filled with Yiddishkeit and love.

Shimshon (Samson) Heilik (1917 – 2005) was born in Poland and in 1938 immigrated to Argentina, where he became a Jewish educator. He moved to Calgary in 1946, serving as principal of the I.L. Peretz School



Michele Doctoroff and Sheldon Smithens with the Shimshon Heilik painting that was commissioned by Rifka Switzer. Photo: Jack Switzer.

until he took up a similar position in Winnipeg in 1962. He continued to write and to paint when he returned again to Calgary in 1978. Samson and Ida Heilik had five children. He was a prolific author of Yiddish textbooks and essays, but is best known as an artist. His paintings hang in galleries and private collections all around the world. The JHSSA library has a number of his books, including the 2004 album containing a collection of his artwork.

Herzl Bust – Albertans Honor Zionist Hero

Helen Walker described the story of her family's much-esteemed bust of Theodore Herzl, which was a central feature of her childhood home.

This 17 cm. (6.5 in.) white porcelain bust of Theodore Herzl was given to Helen's mother, Passie (Bessie) Riskin, by her brother Jake (J.H.) Samuels. Helen thinks it was likely purchased in pre-Israel Palestine. Herzl's name is etched in the front in Hebrew. It has the number 900 etched in the back so it may be a limited, numbered edition.

Helen Walker's statuette of Herzl, which she has donated to the JHSSA, appears to be modeled on a famous Herzl bust done in Paris in 1894 by Frederich Beer, a famous Austrian-born sculptor. This image of Herzl in his prime has appeared on Israeli postage stamps and many other memorials to Zionism's greatest figure.

Jake Samuels was involved in Zionist activity in Edmonton. He made frequent visits to Israel. The bust stood on the mantle in the

family home in Edmonton for as long as Helen can remember (well over 70 years, she thinks). Her mother did not have many knick-knacks on display, so this gift from her brother must have been very special to her. It was always treated with much respect.

Bessie Riskin passed away in 1974 at the age of 92. Jake Samuels' daughter Trudy now lives in Israel.

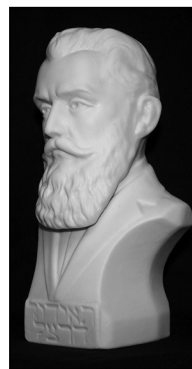
That a statuette of Theodore Herzl occupied a place of honor in Bessie Riskin's home is not unusual for Alberta Jews, who adopted Herzl and his Zionist movement with great enthusiasm.

At the AGM Jack Switzer added some historical notes to Helen's memories of the Herzl bust. He talked about some of the items from the JHSSA archives that reflect the importance Herzl's memory had for the local Jewish community after his death in 1904.

For further information about Herzl and Zionism in Calgary see *Theodore Herzl Remembered*, *Discovery*, September, 2004.



S. Heilik Self Portrait. Source: Samson Heilik; a collection of his paintings, 2004



Many Prominent Jewish People have Lived in Cliff Bungalow-Mission

*This article appeared in the January/February 2006 issue of **The Mission Statement**, the newsletter of the Cliff Bungalow-Mission Community Association. It is reprinted with their permission. Thank you to writer Bob Long and editor Sharon Thomson.*

By Bob Long

In November and December, the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta hosted an Alberta Centennial exhibit celebrating the Jewish contribution to southern Alberta. Of course, Calgary played a major role in the exhibit. But how many people know that many members of Calgary's Jewish community have called Cliff Bungalow-Mission home?

The first synagogue was built in 1911 downtown, and because Cliff Bungalow-Mission was within walking distance, it was a favoured place to live, as most Orthodox Jewish people walked to services on the Sabbath.

The first Jewish community centre in Calgary, known as the House of Israel, was built at Centre Street and 18th Avenue South. Sod turning took place in 1929, but the Depression and World War II intervened, and the full structure was not completed until 1949. The basement was used in the interval. It was home to several Jewish organizations including the Calgary Hebrew School, the Hadassah and the B'nai B'rith. From 1935 to 1960, it was also home to Beth Israel, the second-oldest Jewish congregation in Calgary. In 1960, the Shaarey Tzedec synagogue was built on adjoining property at 17th Avenue and Centre Street.

In 1979, a new community centre was built on 90th Avenue and 16th Street SW and the old centre closed. The former House of Israel was converted into residential condominiums in 1998.

It is hard to know where to start with regard to the Jewish people who have lived in our community, but since we are in election mode right now, let's start with a couple of politicians. Two Calgary Buffalo MLAs have been residents of the community: Ron Gitter, elected MLA in 1971, served until 1978. He was a Senator from 1993 to 2000.

Still a Mission resident, he is a well known development industry lawyer and human rights advocate.

The second, Sheldon Chumir, was elected in 1986 and served until his death in 1992. Although a Liberal in Conservative Calgary, he crossed political boundaries and enjoyed support from across the political spectrum. He lived in a house at the south end of Cliff Street near 25th Avenue that is now a bed-and-breakfast.

Harold Hanen was a great supporter



Built for rancher William Treend, Harold Hanen and his family called this wonderful Prairie-style house their home. Photo: Sharon Thomson

of the community and the "father" of the Plus 15 system downtown. He was the grandson of the first permanent rabbi in Calgary. His family home was the wonderful brick bungalow located at Royal Avenue and 5th Street SW, built in 1921 for rancher William R. Treend. This house reflects the Prairie School of architecture developed by the foremost architect of the 1900s, Frank Lloyd Wright. Harold Hanen was also an architect by training, and apprenticed under Lloyd Wright.

Harold Hanen's legacy lives on in the

Cliff Bungalow Area Redevelopment Plan, which he helped to revise. He had started to help with the review of the Mission ARP also but passed away early in that process. He was a very holistic thinker, who challenged the rest of us to think outside the box.

Abraham Belzberg came to Canada in 1919 from Poland. He worked as a farmhand and in the Burns meat packing plant to earn enough money to bring his family over to Calgary. He later amassed a large real estate portfolio and built up a furniture store that became well known as Christy's Arcade. In the 1930s, he and his family lived in the duplex on 22nd Avenue across from Cliff Bungalow School. His sons, Hyman, Sam and William were also successful businessmen and principals in First City Financial Corporation.

Martha Cohen is well known in the Calgary arts community and is formally recognized at the Calgary Centre for the Performing Arts. She also helped found the social agency Jewish Family Service Calgary. She, too, resides in the community.

Some of the other Jewish families who have lived in Cliff Bungalow-Mission are Groberman, Chetner, Shanov, Aizenberg, Rootman, Katzin, Silver, Shumatcher, Libin, Duke, Lavin, Hagler, Bloomenthal, Jacobson, Goldenberg, Perell, Wolochow, Gold and Caplan. Space does not allow us to review the entire history of the Jewish community in Cliff Bungalow-Mission, but hopefully you will now recognize another important part of our community's history.

More on Jews in Mission

(Published as a letter to Mission Statement, March/April 2006)

By Jack Switzer

Thank you for recognizing the contributions of prominent Jewish residents to your community in the most recent edition of Mission Statement.

May I add a few names that are worthy of mention?

Two small groceries that operated on 4th Street for several decades were

Jewish-owned, and will be recalled by many. Sonia and Saul Libin ran the Lorraine Confectionery at 2502 - 4th Street from the early 1930s until their retirement in 1953. The Libins had five children, including businessman and civic leader Philip Libin.

Jacob Safran was proprietor of the

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Immigration Policies Shatter Marriage Plans of Calgary Jew, 1930

By Jack Switzer

I never knew my grandfather, Jacob Switzer. He died in Calgary in 1936, about a year before my twin brother Henry and I were born. I knew I was named after him, and near my desk is a photo of Jacob, balding, serious, with a white beard that has been trimmed, unlike that of his full-bearded father Wolf Baer Switzer, in an adjacent photo.

But recently I had an unexpected "meeting" with my grandfather, while thumbing through the extensive A.I. Shumiatcher collection at the Glenbow Archives in Calgary. In a thin file for the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society I came across an immigration request application form filled out by Jacob Switzer. It was an application for the admission to Canada of a Polish widow, Pesul Kriger, and her 14-year old daughter Bena. "Object in coming to Canada": to marry my grandfather.

My grandfather had a girlfriend!

Jacob Switzer became a widower in 1921, when his wife Chaya passed away. In the 1920s seven of their eight surviving children emigrated from the Radom area of Poland to Calgary, part of an extended-family immigration flow initiated and nurtured by Jacob's sister Bella Singer. (The eighth, Dintcha Groner, came with her family from France after World War II.)

Eldest son Mendle Switzer, my father, came to Canada in 1927, under a provision of the immigration regulations known as PC #183. (PC stands for Privy Council; these were Cabinet and Ministerial decisions, not Acts of Parliament.) The 1923 Order-in-Council allowed admission to Canada of "bona fide farm laborers having reasonable assurance of employment." It also allowed single women admission as domestic servants, with similar job-offer requirements.

My father's immigration documents would have included an offer of employment from an established farmer, a Mr. Will, who lived near Standard, just east of Calgary. The offer would have been arranged by a relative like Bella Singer, or by Abraham S. Horwitz, the Calgary chairman of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society.

Horwitz and his fellow JIAS representatives helped local Jews steer through

the federal bureaucracy, and provided settlement assistance to newcomers. The JIAS may be most remembered by immigrants for the group's welcome at Halifax and Quebec City, Canada's main ports-of-entry.

Many men did their farm labor time at Jewish homesteads in the Rumsey and Trochu districts. Avrum Belzberg, for



Jacob Switzer, c. 1930. Source: Sophie Kettner

example, worked at the Rumsey farm of his friend Nate Horodezky.

My father spent several months working at the Will farm, and then moved to Calgary. The Wills and the Switzers remained close friends. My older brother Israel (Sruki) spent several summer vacations at the Will farm.

My father brought his fiancée, Rifka Aizenman, to Canada in 1928. They were married in Calgary that summer. She was the first of her immediate family to emigrate; since there were no provisions to bring in brides and grooms-to-be, I assume she was admitted under the domestic servant regulation of PC #183, likely under the sponsorship of Bella

Singer, another Switzer family member, or possibly a gentile householder.

Jacob Switzer, my grandfather, came to Calgary in May 1929, at the age of 55. He was admitted to Canada under P.C. #534 (1926), which permitted entry of a mother, father, or unmarried son, daughter, brother or sister.

His 1930 application to admit Pesul and Bela Kriger faced significant obstacles. Fiancées did not qualify, and only single women were considered for the domestic servant status. It would require pressure by the JIAS and the family's own resources to get a ministerial permit. PC #534 gave the Immigration department huge discretionary power. It would allow into Canada any person "who has satisfied the Minister that his labor or service is required in Canada."

No immigration minister would issue a permit for Jewish entry without major political pressure; in any event there was a backlog of applications, and the Switzer/Kriger file lay in a bureaucratic limbo.

The situation deteriorated a few months later when the Conservative government of R.B. Bennett took office in Ottawa, in August 1930. The Great Depression had begun and unemployment was rising, adding to the already strong anti-east-European and anti-Semitic attitudes of Canadian pressure groups. Bennett, a Calgarian with several close Jewish friends (notably lawyer Benjamin Ginsberg) was unable to increase the trickle of Jewish immigrants allowed into his economically-strained nation.

The doors closed even more tightly in March 1931, when a new Order-in-Council, PC #659, abolished the two regulations, #183 and #534, which had provided the major route for the last decade's Jewish immigration. The new rules "prohibited the landing in Canada of all immigrants, of all countries and all occupations," except for British subjects, American citizens, and a very few others. Wives and young children of Canadian residents might be allowed in, but there were many restrictions.

Jewish immigration to Canada was drastically curtailed; Pesul Kriger and Jacob Switzer never did marry. The Warsaw widow and her daughter fell victim,

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FURS FURS

The fur season is now on and we are prepared to give you the highest possible cash prices for your hides and furs

Don't sell your Furs to an outside concern until you have seen us.

—

The "Flu" has gone and so is our old stocks, our groceries are new and fresh

—

Don't forget us when you want winter clothing. The government wont supply any more military suits but we can fit you with latest styles. We are sure to interest you with our samples and prices.

—

Belkin Bros.

This ad from the Dec. 12, 1918 edition of the **Big Valley News** was sent to us by Allan Johnston of the Big Valley Historical Society after we answered his query about the Joffe Bros. store which was sold to the Belkins c. 1917. Joe Joffe opened his store c.1912 and moved to Morin in 1917. Charles and Sam Belkin were still in the area in 1920. The ad makes reference to the 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic. Big Valley, 60 km north of Drumheller, was founded in 1911 and had a population of about 500 in 1921.

A Century Ago

A Party of Jews Arrive in Calgary

The Weekly Albertan, June 6, 1906

A party of twenty-five Jews sent out from England by the Baron Hersch [sic] Society arrived in Calgary on Wednesday looking for a location. The local immigration hall was quite inadequate to accommodate them but William Diamond bestirred himself on their behalf and quarters were rented for them near by.

They do not speak any English and converse among themselves in the Giddish [sic] dialect, a combination of German and Hebrew.

They are an industrious hard-working lot but not especially attractive to the Anglo-Saxon mind.

(Notes – During 1905, 600 Jewish communities were attacked in Russia following the October revolution, promoting mass emigration from the area. In Calgary funds were

raised for the Russian Massacre Committee. By 1907 Calgary's Jewish population was about 400. Wm. Diamond moved to Edmonton in 1906.)

Discovery Corrections

There was an error in the story of Gertie Belkin's childhood dress in the latest *Discovery* from January, 2006. Gertie was originally from Mezherich in the Ukraine, in the Rovno area, and not from Poland as stated in the article.

The article on the Grand Theatre mentioned orchestra players Leon and Mary Asper. They were brother and sister. Leon's wife was musician Celia Asper. Mary Asper married Louis Goldstein and stayed in Calgary.

Immigration Policies

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as did three million other Polish Jews, to the Holocaust.

As we know their pleas fell on deaf ears. In 1931, on behalf of Jacob Switzer and other frustrated sponsors, the Calgary JIAS sent a letter to Deputy Immigration Minister W.J. Egan, through a Calgary MP, Dr. G.D. Stanley (who had many Jewish patients and was the writer's childhood family doctor), urging him to broaden the rules to allow Canadian entry of prospective brides, parents, and children up to the age of twenty-one. They suggested that such new Canadians would not be a drain on the economy, and that their presence here would allow funds being sent overseas to be spent domestically.

Egan's Minister refused this request, as well as many others from eastern-Canadian Jewish groups and their lobbyists.

I have in my files documentation of other unsuccessful attempts by Calgary Jews to bring over family members – nieces, grandchildren and others requiring Ministerial permits – later in the 1930s. The efforts included guarantees to City officials that the newcomers would never become welfare recipients, as well as poignant letters to other officials.

Immigration historian Simon Belkin, in *Through Narrow Gates*, called the 1930s "The Tragic Decade", Irving Abella and Harold Troper chronicled these years in *None is Too Many*, their denunciation of Canada's shameful anti-Jewish immigration history between 1933 and 1948.

Much of my father's family did make it to Canada in the 1920s and earlier, before the "narrow gates" closed almost completely to Jewish immigration. But some, like my grandfather's bride-to-be and her daughter were stopped. The history books tell of Canada's rejection of tens of thousands of Jews, many of them desperate orphans and refugees from Nazi terrorism. The failure of my grandfather's attempts to have two Polish Jews join him to form a family is very modest in comparison, but the unhappy episode is more personal and is thus more meaningful in many ways.

Sources: Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*; Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many*; Joseph Kage, *With Faith and Thanksgiving*; David Rome, *Clouds in the Thirties*; Glenbow Archives, Shumiatcher Fonds, File 133, JIAS; JHSSA Archives, Switzer 2005 Reunion Family Guide.

Clara Laven Litchinsky – 91 Years in Mission

Clara Litchinsky has likely lived in the Mission district longer than any other area resident – 91 years.

She was born in 1914 and has lived in Mission all her life. Her parents, Calgary Jewish pioneers Zelda (Fradkin) and Jack Laven, ran the Lorraine Confectionery on 4th Street West, and lived nearby. Later the Lavens sold the store to Saul Libin and moved a few blocks south to 24th Avenue, where they opened the Elbow View Confectionery.

Clara attended Cliff Bungalow School in the 1920s.

Jack Laven replaced the original Elbow View store with a commercial building he named the Zelda Block, after his wife. The adjacent property housed

his Humpty Dumpty miniature golf course during the 1930s. The Laven family lived at 520 - 24 Avenue SW.

Clara Laven married Louis Litchinsky in 1940; the young couple moved into a Mission home. Louis worked for MGM in the film exchange for some time; he

was manager of the Tivoli Theatre in his later years.

Louis Litchinsky passed away in 1986. Clara now lives in an apartment building next door to the location of her parents' Mission business.



Left: Jack and Zelda Laven, 1970s. Photo: Sharna Laven.

Above: The "Art Moderne" Tivoli Theatre at 2015 - 4 St. SW opened in 1936 and had several Jewish managers. Norman Hoffman owned the movie venue from 1951 until the early 1960s. In 1991 Lionel and Mitch Ravvin converted the building into the Tivoli Shops. Photo: Jack Switzer

More on Jews in Mission

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Little Gem Grocery at 2002 - 4th Street between 1922 and 1953. His customers knew him as "the little general."

Jacob and Etta Safran were able to send both their sons to university. Nate Safran became a science instructor and administrator at what was later known as SAIT, while Carl Safran graduated in engineering, served in Europe during World War II as a Captain in the Royal Canadian Engineers, and later became superintendent of the Calgary School Board.

Mission's first prominent Jewish family was that of Henry N. Sereth, who built a large brick home at 5th Street and 24th Avenue in 1913. Sereth and his brother owned the Riverside Lumber group of sawmills, lumber yards and other building supply and construction companies. At one time the firm was Calgary's second-largest private employer (the CPR was first).

Rachel and Henry Sereth had five daughters. One married Edmonton jurist

and sportsman Morris Lieberman. Another was married, in the Mission family home, to Harry J. Allen, part of the Allen family that then ran Canada's largest theatre chain from their Calgary base. The Sereths left Calgary in 1918. Their house served as a veteran's convalescent home, and then became the Scottish Nursing Home, originally a maternity hospital.

Abraham Shumiatcher, oldest of the eleven-sibling Shumiatcher/Smith family, lived for many years, beginning in the 1930s, at 316 - 23rd Avenue SW. He became a lawyer in 1929, and was involved with many Jewish organizations. His wife Luba was active in Calgary's classical music scene.

Daughter Minuetta Shumiatcher became a world-renowned pianist. Their son, lawyer and philanthropist Morris Shumiatcher, drafted much of Tommy Douglas' early CCF legislation in Saskatchewan. When Morris attended Crescent Heights High School, he rode

with Mission resident and family friend William Aberhart, the school's principal.

About 25 Jewish families lived in Mission in the mid-1930s. They moved there from Victoria Park and East Calgary because the district was prestigious, was close to downtown, had excellent streetcar service, convenient retail presence, and was more affordable than Elbow Park or Scarboro (and much cheaper than Mount Royal.) The 18th Avenue location of the Jewish Community building was an attraction; it was not much farther to another busy Jewish building, the Peretz School, at 13th Avenue and Centre St. Both buildings hosted frequent social and cultural events.

And the Roman-Catholic-run Holy Cross Hospital was the hospital of choice for most Calgary Jews. There were only a handful of Jewish doctors in Calgary before 1950; many Jews saw the doctors at the Calgary Associate Clinic, who primarily used the Holy Cross.

JHSSA News

JHSSA Web Page

The Society finally has its own web site. At this point it only contains basic information about the JHSSA and access to our first publication, *Land of Promise*, which is now out of print. The project to digitize *Land of Promise* was partially funded by B'nai Brith Lodge No. 816. It can be accessed at www.jhssa.org.



Ida Horwitz, 1912 - 2006

Longtime JHSSA director, Ida Horwitz, passed away in January. Both Ida and director Dave Waterman, who passed away in 2005 (see *Discovery*, January 2006), were remembered at our recent AGM. Ida was born in Edmonton to Jacob and Hinda (Nina) Baltzan. In 1937 she married Cecil Horwitz (d. 1968) and became involved in the Calgary Jewish community. They raised three children (Joel, Frances [d. 2001] and Marvin) and welcomed war orphan Elliott Zuckier into their home. Together they were instrumental in the formation of the Beth Israel synagogue. Ida will be remembered by her lovely handiworks. Some photos of her many needlework projects were shown at the AGM. She brought many memories and much good humour to our meetings.

JHSSA President Honoured

Jay Joffe, president of the JHSSA, was recently awarded an Alberta Centennial Medal. The award, part of the 2005 Alberta Centennial program, is presented by the government of Alberta to acknowledge significant achievements that have benefited the community and the province. Mr. Joffe's leadership of the *Joyous Harvest* project is just his most recent such achievement. Mazal Tov on a well deserved honour.

JOIN THE JHSSA

Help record and preserve
our local Jewish heritage.

Family membership – \$25

Single person – \$18

Institution/Corporation – \$30

Patron – \$50

Benefactor – \$100

JHSSA Casino – Corrected Dates, June 20-21, 2006

The incorrect dates for our upcoming Casino appeared in the January issue of *Discovery*. If you are able to volunteer for the Tuesday, June 20th or Wednesday, June 21st casino at the Stampede Casino, please call our office, 444-3171.

Roots 2006

JHSSA Directors Florence Elman and David Bickman have been invited to participate in the Alberta Family Histories Society's Workshop, Roots 2006, on Oct. 13-14 at the Carriage House Inn.

JHSSA Membership Update

The following list includes the omissions and additions to the membership list published in the January 2006 edition of *Discovery*. Thank you to all those who included a donation beyond their membership fee.

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DISCOVERY

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The Editors welcome submissions for publication relating to areas of Calgary and Southern Alberta Jewish History. All articles should be typed, documented and sent for consideration. Statements of fact or opinion appearing in *Discovery* are made on the responsibility of the authors alone, and do not imply the endorsement of the Editors or the JHSSA.

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