

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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## Eighth Avenue East – Calgary's Jewish Business Birthplace



*Eighth Avenue East at Second Street, looking west, c. 1915. To the right of the Palmetto Bakery are the Harry Bloomfield Confectionery, Jacob Diamond Liquors (with the barrel-shaped roof), Lew Polsky Jeweler, and Charles Malkin General Store. Photo: Glenbow Archives NA-523-2.*

By Jack Switzer

Three blocks of Calgary's downtown business district once housed one of Canada's densest concentrations of Jewish businesses—Eighth Avenue East.

The three blocks on Eighth Avenue (originally Stephen Avenue) running east from Centre Street are now best known for their major public facilities. The block from Centre Street to First Street East is now flanked on both sides by The Telus Convention Centre Buildings; the newest convention structure features several facades from the Jewish-business period. Almost every other old building has been demolished.

Between First Street East and Macleod Trail (still called Second Street East by most old-timers) is the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts—the core of which was built in the early 30s to house the post office and other federal facilities—and the Olympic Plaza. The City administration building fills the third block,

from Second to Third Street East.

Most commercial buildings in the area were built between 1905 and 1914, a period of rapid growth in which Calgary's population rose from 10,000 to 60,000. Stephen Avenue, one block from the railway-based Atlantic Avenue (Ninth) became the major retailing street. It carried the city's first streetcars and was anchored by the major stores—first the I.G. Baker Company, then the Hudson's Bay Company, and later Eaton's.

The big stores, most banks, and the prestigious office spaces were located on Eighth Avenue West, towards the better residential areas. East was the direction of the rail yards, the packing plants, most industrial facilities, the homes of the immigrants who worked in these places, and the low-rent retail space occupied by the many Jewish merchants who established small business operations in the booming city.

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## Don't Miss Our ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Monday, October 20 7:30 pm  
at the Calgary Jewish Centre

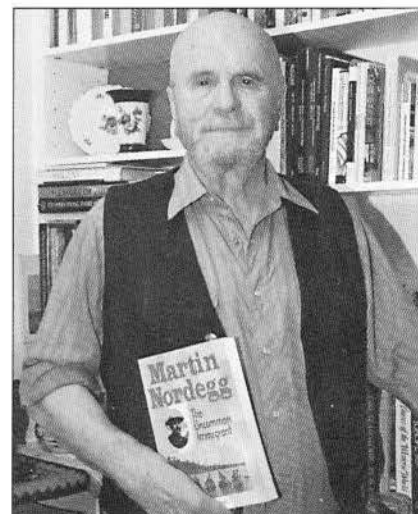
featuring author

John Koch

and the fascinating story of  
**MARTIN NORDEGG**

Nordeg was a Jewish immigrant who built the largest mine in Alberta and created a model town that bears his name to this day.

*Continued on Page 6*



*John Koch. Courtesy Jewish Archives & Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta.*

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*This issue of Discovery is sponsored by B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge No. 816.*

*Their generosity and support is greatly appreciated.*

## Eighth Avenue East

*Continued from Page 1*

### *The Early Years: 1890 – 1918*

The Jewish business presence on Eighth Avenue East dates back to the 1890s when Calgary's first Jewish settler, Jacob Diamond, ran a men's clothing store at #232. His brother William Diamond operated a similar store, at #136. Jacob Diamond converted his premises into a liquor vending business, which he sold in 1906. William Diamond moved to Edmonton about the same time.

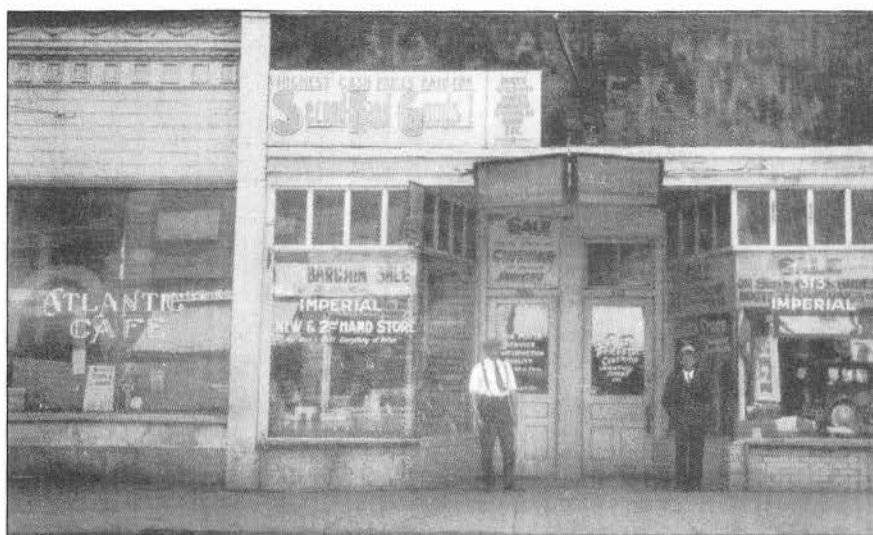
Several of the Jewish merchants on Eighth Avenue East after 1906 were also Rumsey/Trochu homesteaders. Joseph Guttman opened the Eagle Clothing House about 1905, homesteaded at Trochu the following year, and returned to Eighth Avenue a few years later to open a liquor store. His brother, Isadore Guttman and friend Phineas (Pincus) Waterman, also Trochu homesteaders, had a neighboring men's wear store.

Trochu farmers Samuel and Ben Goldenberg, ran Eighth Avenue second-hand and saddlery businesses (beginning in 1910) while continuing to improve their homesteads.

Eighth Avenue shared the pre-war building boom with other Calgary locations. Major growth began after 1905. Streets and sidewalks were improved and modern utilities installed throughout downtown. Streetcar service began in 1909. The years 1912 to 1914 saw a boom in land values and rampant speculation. Scores of land companies promoted real estate ventures. The bubble burst, but Eighth Avenue had been filled in with handsome sandstone and brick buildings. A few pre-boom buildings survived in the very east end of the area.

Joseph Guttman (as a liquor merchant) was one of three Jewish businessmen—all from Eighth Avenue East—who were featured in a 1913 newspaper series called *Calgarians in caricature*. The others were Charles Benjamin, by then operator of the W. Diamond Clothing Store, and "Junior" Allen, a member of the theatre-chain operating Allen family. All three were clean-shaven, well-spoken "integrated" Jews, at home in the greater community but also active in Jewish communal affairs. Allen and Benjamin had American origins; Guttman came from Austria and had Montreal business experience.

Most of their neighbours on Eighth Avenue East had less fluency in English and less experience with more established Canadians. Jews from eastern Europe—and elsewhere—were immigrating to Calgary in substantial numbers. The 1911 federal census counted 604 Jews in Calgary. Henderson's Directory for that year lists 25 Jewish businesses on Eighth Avenue East, as well as another 20 or so elsewhere, many on adjoining streets.



*Nate Horodezky (left) at his Imperial Second Hand Store, 308 Eighth Avenue East, c. 1932. Berel Aizenman (right) had a shoe repair shop in the store. Photo: Bertha Gold.*

The 1911 list includes the offices of Riverside Lumber, the huge building-supply empire owned by the city's wealthiest Jewish families, brothers Henry N. and Alexander Sereth. Charles Bell and Joseph Schiesel ran the sizeable Royal Hotel at Centre Street.

Liquor outlets (until prohibition in 1916) and clothing stores were joined by Jewish-owned grocers, confectioners, tobacconists, jewelry outlets, a barbershop, and a fur and hide dealer. There also emerged early in the century a business that was to be closely associated with immigrant Jewish entrepreneurs, the second-hand store.

Eight Avenue East had four Jewish second-hand dealers in 1911; this would grow to over 25 by 1917. The Avenue had two Jewish pawnbrokers in 1917, as well as three auction houses. These businesses all dealt in "used" goods, but had different business licenses and operating methods.

### *Opportunity and Need – Jews in Small Business*

Why did so many Jews open small stores in east Calgary? Some had some small-business experience in their European towns and villages, and the availability of affordable retail space was enticing. Language and cultural barriers, as well as unspoken but well-understood discrimination kept Jews out of many wage positions. Some industrial jobs were available; many Jews worked briefly in the CPR shops and the Burns packing plant, for example, but left these dirty and dangerous sites for more compatible workplaces, such as retail trade.

In other cities, immigrant Jews put their European experience to work in the "shmatte" or fur trades, garment-making establishments often called "sweat-shops." Calgary

had few such factories, so many Jews became storekeepers as a way to make a living. Market stalls and door-to-door peddling (discouraged by strict licensing rules) preceded store ownership for some.

East-end businesses had a fairly high turnover. While some retailers went on to bigger enterprises, many simply failed. Some were undercapitalized, others lacked business experience, while still others fell victim to downturns in the business cycle. For example, the Avenue's oldest building, Log Cabin Shoe Repairs at 340 Eighth Avenue East, had 13 different Jewish owners (all second-hand dealers) in the years between 1913 and 1933, when Shmuel Fishman began a 30-year tenancy as a shoe-repairer. (See *Discovery*, XII,1, February, 2002.)

(The longest-running one-owner Jewish business was probably Nate Horodezky's Imperial Clothing, which he ran at #308 from the mid-20s until the early 70s. Israel Roginsky and son Ben Roginsky ran Western Furniture Exchange from 1919 to 1978. Jaffe's Book and Music Exchange was open from about 1925 to 1979, but Shaie Jaffe sold it in the 1950s. Max Miller's Vancouver Second Hand Store and Berel Aizenman's Dominion Shoe Repair were open from the 30s well into the 70s.)

Most East Calgary merchants did business with the Dominion Bank, built in 1911 at the corner of First Street East. It was the only Eighth Avenue bank east of the four-bank corner at Centre Street. Some Jewish merchants opened their stores with small loans from Jewish self-help groups, first the Allen Free Loan Society and later the Polish Jewish Family Loan Association, but continuing business activity required the services of a bank.

*Continued on Page 4*

## Stephen Avenue – Eighth Avenue East – Pre-World War I era

### 1901-1902

W. Diamond Men's Furnishings  
Diamond & Carson Men's Wear – Jacob Diamond  
Alberta Cigar Company – Nathan Bell

### 1906

W. Diamond Men's Clothing – Charles Benjamin  
Jacob Diamond Wholesale Liquors  
Eagle Clothing House – J.A. Guttman  
(Phineas) Waterman & (Isaac) Guttman Clothing

### 1909-1911

- 101 Royal Hotel - Charles Bell & J. Schiesel
- 101 Royal Hotel Cigar Stand - Percy Engle
- 116 Moses Muskovitz, Jewelry Manufacturing
- 132 Riverside Lumber office – Sereth Brothers
- 136 William Diamond Clothing Co. – Charles Benjamin
- 210A Hub Clothing – Samuel Bercuson
- 211 Western Clothing Co. – Herman Bercuson
- 217 Bercuson & Co. Clothing – Jacob Bercuson & David Cohen
- 223 Cohen Bros. (Max and Nathan) & (E.) Geffen Clothing
- 230 (Raphael & Ben) Gurevitch Bros. Grocery
- 230 Lew Polsky Jeweler
- 231A Joseph Serot – Barber
- 232 Jacob Diamond Liquor Dealer
- 234 Charles Malkin Fruit & Confectionery
- 236 Harry Bloomfield Confectionery & Music Teacher
- 238 Philip Adelberg Clothing
- 302A Sam Bercov Confectionery
- 309 (Celia & Simon) Kurer Men's Furnishings
- 320 Solomon Joffe Clothing
- 321A Harry Bercov Tobacconist
- 336 Calgary Second Hand Store – Morris Martin
- 402 Israel Nelson – Second hand Dealer
- 404 Samuel Cobb Grocer
- 406 A. Bell Clothing – Phineas Waterman, mgr.
- 408 Selig Grinker Furniture
- 422 Western Second Hand Store – Joseph and David Goodman
- 431 Alberta Hide & Fur – Max Cohen
- 433 Alex Koren Second Hand Dealer
- 434 Joseph Rabin Second Hand Dealer
- 436 Harry M. Bercov Grocer
- 436 Golden West Grocery – H. Friedenthal
- 440 Fradkin & Bercov General Store

## Did You Know?

### They Have Done Us Proud

Did you know that in the past 30 years there have been at least 14 southern Alberta Jews who have been named to the Order of Canada either as Officer of the Order of Canada (O.C.) or as Member of the Order of Canada (C.M.)? These are people who either grew up here or presently reside here. You will be able to learn who they are and what they have accomplished in our 2005 exhibit, *A Joyful Harvest*

If you know of someone we may have overlooked, contact our office at 253-8600, ext. 209.

## Eighth Avenue East – 1918

- 107 W. Diamond Clothing – Charles Benjamin
- 119A Guarantee Jewelers – Jacob Epstein & Jacob Polsky
- 119 Allen Theatre – Allen family
- 129A J.B. Barron Law Office
- 130A Allen Theatres – head office  
Theatre Amusement Co. Ltd.  
Allen Theatre Company  
Famous Players Film Service
- 132 Dominion Auction Mart – Morris Groberman
- 134 Liberty Theatre – Allen family
- 210A Lew Polsky Jeweler
- 215 Marlboro Ice Cream Parlor – Isadore Guttman
- 217 Eastern Clothing – David Cohen
- 218A #8 – Israel Pasternack, Tailor
- 219 Empress Theatre – Isadore Wener, manager
- 221 Standard Clothing – Jacob Wise
- 224 Weiss Confectionery – Rose Weiss & Mrs. F. Cohen
- 227 J. Bercuson & Co., Clothing
- 229 Harry Margolis Jewelry
- 230 Harry Bloomfield – Confectionery
- 232 S. Segal Co., Men's Clothing, Sam Segal
- 234 Charles Malkin, Grocery
- 237 #305 – Ben Ginsberg, Law Office  
#406 – Samuel Taube, Optician
- 302 Popular Confectionery – Samuel Berkoff
- 307 Hyman Lipetz, Second Hand Dealer
- 308 Star Jewelry – Jacob Epstein
- 312 Cut Rate Clothing Store – S. Mayers
- 313A Rose Gallay Clothing
- 314 Reliable Furniture Exchange – Barney Groberman
- 316 David Goodman – Second Hand Dealer
- 315 Wolfe Greenberg, Second Hand Dealer
- 316 Princess Exchange, Ben Wex
- 317 Elijah Geffen, Second Hand Dealer
- 318 Imperial Auction Mart – Alex Koren & S. Hoffman
- 320 Progress Second Hand Store – J. Rosenthal
- 321 Isidor Berg, Watchmaker
- 323A Bessie Goldstein, Second Hand Dealer
- 328 Calgary Furniture Exchange – Isaac Kay
- 329 New England Second Hand Store – Harry Carnat & Ben Margolis
- 330 Groberman & Goldberg Pool Room – Abe Groberman & Louis Goldberg
- 331 Jacob Shlafmitz – Second Hand Dealer
- 333 Sunalta Clothing – M. Schlamovitch
- 335 Rabinovitz Brothers, Second Hand Dealers
- 336 Hansen & Adams Second Hand Dealers – Morris Hansen & Samuel Adams
- 339 Bernard Margolis – Second Hand Dealer
- 340 Central Second Hand Store – Isaac Gofsky
- 401 Harry Gould, Second Hand Dealer
- 404 Samuel Cobb Hardware
- 404A Calgary Brokerage Exchange, Second Hand, Harry Steinberg
- 408 National New & Second Hand Store – Harry Shaw
- 409 Ben Goldenberg, Second Hand Dealer
- 413 Morris Kurtzberg – Harness Maker
- 422 L. Weiss Second Hand Store
- 424 M. Pepper Clothing, Mendel Pepper
- 428 Eastern Second Hand Store – A. Koren
- 434 Abraham Dworkin Confectionery
- 436 A. Litchinsky Second Hand Dealer
- 440 People's Clothing Store – Sam Bercov

## Eighth Avenue East – 1941

### Centre St. to First Street East

- 104 #35, I. Pomerance, manufacturer's agent
- 106 Parisian Ltd. – Samuel Gurevitch
- 107 Standard Furniture – A. Groberman
- 108 Sykes-Imperial Furniture – Barney Groberman
- 109 #305, M. Harold Ginsberg, manufacturer's agent
- 110 Garden Clothing – Joe Joffe
- 112 Regal Clothing – Joe Joffe
- 111 Mirror Confectionery – Sam Spier
- 113 Capitol Barber Shop – N. Krowitz
- 114 Smithbilt Hat Company – Morris Smith
- 114A The Debutante – Morris Greenberg
- 124 Cristy-Grant Company – Isadore Gurevitch
- 125 Alberta Loan – A. Bloomenthal
- 126 Cristy's Furniture Store – Abe Belzberg
- 129 Smithen's Loan & Jewellery – Sydney Shnitka
- 131 United Clothing – Ralph Switzer
- 133 Capitol Auction Rooms – Louis Belzberg, Myer Switzer

### First Street to Second Street East

- 208 Guttman's Clothing Store – Joseph Guttman
- 214 Public Furniture Exchange – Morris Wex
- 216 Jack's Suit Store – Jack Faber
- 221 Progressive Furniture Store – A. Belzberg
- 221A Sol Freedman Clothing Store
- 225 Jaffe's Book and Music Exchange – Shaie Jaffe
- 230 Bargain Shop – Max Silver
- 230A H.E. Bloomfield Confectionery
- 231 Chetner Brothers Furniture – Abe and Dave Chetner
- 240 Hollywood Style Shop – Max Silver

### Second Street (MacLeod Trail) to Third Street East

- 306 Home Furniture – David Switzer
- 308 Imperial News & Second Hand Store – Nate Horodezky
- 309 Star Shoe Repair – H. Ryder
- 309 Star Clothing Store – Dave Berg
- 313 Manitoba Second Hand Store – Z. Zysblat
- 314 Princess Clothing – Leo Aizenman
- 316 Reliable Furniture Store – Morris Srolovitz
- 317 Grand Second Hand Store – I. Goldenberg
- 318 Acme Furniture – Max Belzberg
- 322 Radio Shoe Repair – Joseph Feldberg
- 323 Morris Aizenman Second Hand Dealer
- 324 Myer's Furniture Store – Myer Sidorsky
- 325 Empress Clothing, Empress Shoe Repair – Harry Mittleman
- 327 Calgary Brokerage Exchange – Morris Srolovitz
- 328 East End Food Store – Herman Weisz
- 329 Winnipeg Second Hand Store – Harry Switzer
- 331 Jack's Shoe Repair – A. Feldman
- 331A Harry's Cartage – Harry Goresht
- 332 Second Hand Hardwareteria – Max Srolovitz
- 333 Vancouver Clothing – Max Miller
- 335 Western Second Hand Furniture Exchange – Israel Roginsky
- 339 Dominion Shoe Repair – Berel Aizenman
- 340 Samuel Fishman Shoe Repair

### East of Third Street

- 409 Fanny Koren Second Hand Dealer
- 436 Star Kosher Meat Market – Leo Dvorkin
- 440 Empire Grocery – Rose Manson
- 502 Palm Grocery – Ben Smehoff

Sources: from 1918 and 1941 Henderson's Directory, Glenbow Library.

## Eighth Avenue East

*Continued from Page 3*

Immigrant storekeepers learned to write cheques, make out deposit slips, and apply for loans with the help of patient Dominion Bank clerks. The Dominion Bank building is now the Teatro cafe, and is one of the few surviving structures on the Avenue.

Across from the old Dominion Bank the Calgary Public Building still stands, as part of the Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts. The building was Calgary's main post office from 1930 until 1961. Another surviving structure is the Burns Building, built in 1911 at Second Street.

The majority of early east Calgary Jewish retailers rented their premises, generally from non-Jewish landlords. Some later managed to buy the buildings they occupied, as well as other properties in the area. These landowners were to benefit greatly when the City expropriated most of Eighth Avenue East in the late 1970s.

### *Stage, Screen, and Neighbours*

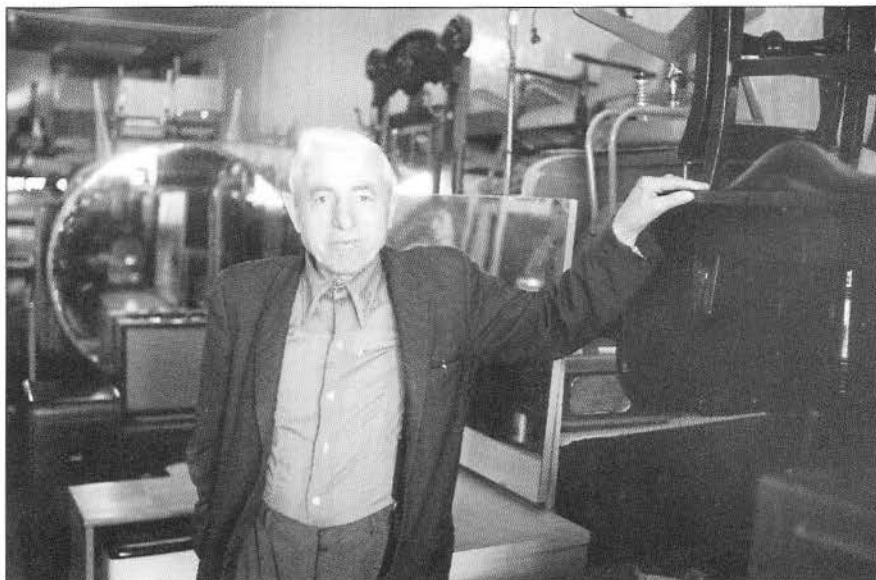
Theatres were among the biggest Eighth Avenue businesses. The Allen family, prominent in the Jewish community during their Calgary years (1909 – 1918), built three theatres, all offering various combinations of plays, vaudeville and silent movies. In 1909 they opened a 600-seat venue, the Monarch Theatre, at #135.

In 1913 their showpiece, the Allen Theatre, opened at 117 Eighth Avenue East. It boasted 840 seats, an ornate facade, marble staircases, and many other "spacious and beautiful" features. Major Jewish meetings were occasionally held at the Allen on Sundays, when it was closed for commercial showings. The Allen, much altered, later became the Strand Theatre, a second-run movie house.

East of Second Street was the Empress Theatre, later renamed the Variety Theatre. Although not Jewish-owned, low ticket prices and double-feature films made Saturday at the Variety a popular event with Jewish children.

On Sundays for several years during and after World War I the Empress/Variety was home to "The People's Forum," where speakers such as CCF founders J.S. Woodsworth and William Irvine lectured on socialist and social reform topics. Many socialist-minded Jews attended and enjoyed this Canadian affirmation of their European-bred "radical" politics.

Some of the bigger buildings on Eighth Avenue East had offices or apartments on their upper floors. Those nearest to Centre Street housed some Jewish firms in the early years, such as the Barron brothers law office and



*Morris Aizenman in his second hand store, 321 Eighth Avenue East, Calgary, 1973. Photo: Bill Simpkins, Glenbow Archives NA-5516-24.*

Harry Edelson's stock brokerage. The Allen Theatre chain head office was nearby. Ben Ginsberg opened his first law office in the Burns Building at Second Street East.

Only a few Jews lived on these three blocks, although there were many Jewish families within a few blocks. Jewish homes were common north and east of the Eighth Avenue blocks. Rabbi David Barenholtz lived on Seventh Avenue East (behind the still-standing St. Louis Hotel); his House of Jacob synagogue was on Fifth Avenue East. The kosher butchers were a block or two east of the area.

### *Stability Amidst Change – 1930 – 1950*

By 1930 more prosperous Jewish merchants were opening "mainstream" stores on Eighth Avenue East, notably in the Centre Street area. The Parisian Ladies Ready-to-Wear store, then run by L. Levey, operated at #106. The Gurevitch brothers had Christie Grant Furniture Co. at #106 (it was later sold to the Belzberg family). Charles Benjamin continued to operate the W. Diamond Clothing Co at #107. The Groberman family had Sykes Imperial Furniture at #131.

They would be later be joined on the same block by Calgary Home Furniture (Dave Switzer) and Capitol Furniture (Louis Belzberg and Myer Switzer.)

The 1930s saw business momentum continue its persistent shift to the west. Both the Hudson's Bay Co. and the T. Eaton Co. opened big new stores on Eighth Avenue West in 1929. Residential growth was to the south and west. Eighth Avenue East saw little new construction and considerable deterioration.

One exception was the 1930 opening of Calgary's first Safeway supermarket, at #234. Safeway purchased the business of Jewish grocer Charles Malkin, demolished his store and built its first Canadian store on the site. The heavily Jewish City Hall Market, just around the corner on Second Street East, continued to attract more traditional shoppers.

The 1930s saw the "Great Depression" and the end of Jewish emigration to Canada. The depression hurt every Canadian, but meant low priced used goods—the stock-in-trade of many Eighth Avenue merchants—were in greater demand. The end of immigration was heartbreaking for some families, and meant a lack of newcomers—"greener"—to become small-store entrepreneurs.

As merchants prospered they moved their stores westward, or took up other business opportunities. Most children of east Calgary merchants chose other career paths, going to university if they were able, or seeking work in the increasingly-open greater business community. Some sons and daughters stayed on the Avenue, and saw it through to the 1978/79 City of Calgary buyouts.

The peak of Jewish activity on Eighth Avenue East may have been the 1940s, a decade of relative prosperity for businesses and one of the last in which downtown was still the major focus of retailing. In 1941 there were about 50 Jewish stores, plus a few offices, in the three blocks under study. We have listed their names and proprietors on Page 3. The block between Second and Third Street was almost solidly Jewish (major

*Continued on Page 5*

## Among Family on Eighth Avenue East

By Jack Switzer

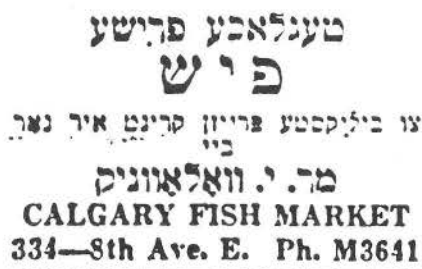
Eighth Avenue East is a block from where I spent my first eight years (until 1945). We lived on Seventh Avenue, next to the current police headquarters, and across from the old police station. Our synagogue was two blocks to the north, Rabbi Barenholtz lived down the street, and our neighbor was Mr. Kozatzky, then the Jewish community's *shochet* (ritual slaughterer.) He or the rabbi killed chickens in our garage, from which my parents ran their kosher chicken business. Many of our customers lived in the nearby East Calgary and Victoria Park areas, and others got poultry deliveries to their Eighth Avenue East stores.

The large number of Jewish stores on Eighth Avenue East made it easy for Jewish functionaries to do their business. I remember Mr. Pepper, the *shamus* (beadle) of House of Jacob going door to door to collect synagogue dues. Visiting *meshulachim*—fund-raisers—from far-off Montreal, New York, and even Jerusalem found it equally convenient to canvass the many Jewish merchants on behalf of their *yeshivot* (seminaries) or orphanages.

And my twin brother Henry and I found Eighth Avenue East very easy pickings for Chanukah gelt. The one block between Second and Third Street east was full of close relatives, and there were a few to the west. During the late 1940s and early 50s we regularly took the streetcar to the busy corner of Eighth Avenue and Second Street East, often to take in the double features at the Strand or Variety theatres, followed by a ten-cent slice of cream pie at the Hub Café. And we always visited an uncle or two.

At Chanukah we would start at my uncle Harry Switzer's Star Cleaners, that he ran with his brother-in-law Ben Rosenbaum and Ben's father Lou Rosenbaum (he had a second-hand store in the early years of our annual Chanukah trek). A door or two down were the second hand stores of two uncles, Zysha Zysblat and Chiel (Harry) Mittleman (they were married to my father's sisters). At the end of the block was my uncle Berel Aizenman, my mother's brother, a shoemaker. That's four uncles on one side of the street on one block. We had to endure a lot of pinched cheeks, but we got a lot of quarters and even an occasional half-dollar coin.

My father also had nine cousins with businesses on Eighth Avenue East. Myer Switzer, Dave Switzer, and Ralph Switzer



O. Wolovnik fish store ad, 1932.

(brothers) had furniture stores; their sister's husband Nate Horodezky sold clothing. (Brother Charlie Switzer was around the corner, near City Hall.) Shmuel Fishman had Log Cabin Shoe Repairs at Third Street East; his brother Percy Fishman had a second-hand store near Second Street. Brothers-in-law Moishe (Morris) Aizenman and Leo Aizenman were also second-hand dealers, and towards Centre Street Avrum Belzberg had his furniture store, Cristys.

There were also many Jewish businesses on other east-Calgary streets. My uncle Zysman Groner (married to my father's twin sister Dincha) had a stall in the City Hall Market. The social centre of the business community in these years was Al's delicatessen (Shirley & Al Rabinovitch), just north of Eighth Avenue on First Street East, next door to Jack Lebow's barbershop. I never went, but I knew all the "men" went Sunday morning to the steam bath on Third Street east, right behind Shmuel Fishman's shoe repair shop.

I knew all the cousins but they had their own Chanukah gelt-collecting nieces, nephews, and sons and daughters, so we restricted our visits to those men who regularly played poker with my father. Many others we also knew well. Max Miller was my Uncle Chiel's brother-in-law. Jack Faber (Jack's Suit Store) had several sons about my age, although they went to the rival Talmud Torah (we were Peretz School people). His brother Jake Faber had a tiny novelty store across the street, and we would look at his inventory with envy, wishing we could afford a Groucho Marx kit.

Parents today would be unlikely to allow eleven and twelve year-olds to go to the city's "east end" by themselves. But ours did. Calgary was a smaller city, with more trust and neighbourliness. And on Eighth Avenue East, we were always among family.

## Eighth Avenue East

Continued from Page 4

exceptions were the Variety Theatre and the Queen's Hotel).

### Decline and Demolition: 1950 – 1980

During the 1950s the decline of Eighth Avenue East began to accelerate. Jewish families were among those flocking to the new car-oriented suburbs. Shopping centre development, begun in the late 50s, drew customers away from downtown. General prosperity reduced the customer base of the area's "down-market" stores.

Eighth Avenue East's theatres closed in the 1960s, and many stores were vacated. A few merchants shifted attention to the more transient trade. Some specialized stores did well. For example, the Pomerance family turned to western wear as their main line. Similarly, the Calgary Shoe Hospital did a brisk trade in cowboy boots.

Customer loyalty was a valuable asset for many accommodating Jewish merchants, who provided translation and credit, and even baby-sitting services on occasion. Yiddish was sometimes more common than English, and some storeowners could also do business in a variety of European languages.

Remaining Jewish merchants carried on bravely until redevelopment changed the face of Eighth Avenue East. In 1978 and 1979 the City of Calgary bought several blocks of land on Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Avenues between Centre Street and Third Street East.

Eighth Avenue East, once the domain of the small-store Jewish retailers, is now occupied by the Telus Convention Centre, The Epcor Centre for the Performing Arts, the Olympic Plaza, and the Calgary Municipal Building. All opened in the mid-1980s. Three showpiece buildings and a few facades were saved and restored.

The major concert hall at the Epcor Centre is named for Jewish businessman Jack Singer. It is a block west of the site of the Progress Second Hand Store, owned in 1917 by his mother, Bella Singer. She bought the license and set up the store for her 18 year-old nephew Charlie Switzer, the first of hundreds of relatives she was to help bring to Calgary.

Jack's father Abraham Singer also ran a second-hand store on the Avenue in the 20s.

There was a lot of heart on Jewish Eighth Avenue East. The Jewish shoemakers, grocers, tailors, clothiers, furniture salesmen, and their cluttered stores are gone, but our memories remain.

Sources: Glenbow Library and Archives, Calgary Public Library Local History Department, JHSSA Archives. The JHSSA's recent business questionnaire was a valuable source.

## Author, Author

In conjunction with Jewish Book month in November, the JHSSA would like to mount a display of the works of local southern Alberta Jewish authors.

If you know of an Alberta Jewish author who we should showcase, please let us know at 253-8600, ext. 209.

Speaking of local authors, historian and JHSSA director Harry Sanders has produced another book dealing with local history—*The Story Behind Alberta Names: How Cities, Towns, Villages and Hamlets Got Their Names*. See what Jewish connections there might be in Alberta names, besides that of the town of Nordegg.

## AGM Program

*Continued from Page 1*

Our guest speaker, John Koch of Edmonton, tells the story of Martin Cohn-Nordegg in great detail in his 1997 book *Martin Nordegg; The Uncommon Immigrant*. He paints a vivid portrait of an unusual man and tells a gripping tale of one immigrant's role in the development of our area.

Our AGM will also feature a presentation of special certificates to our community's 80 year olds. JHSSA members will vote on a new slate of directors. President Jay Joffe will give a report on the past year's activities. Refreshments will be served. The meeting is open to the general public.

## Bessie Waterman and Baby Phil Survive the Flu – 1918

*Former Albertan and JHSSA member Leah Kellogg sent us the following letter upon reading the June 2003 Discovery article about the 1918 flu epidemic and its effect on the local Jewish community.*

*The lead article in the June 2003 edition evoked a family memory.*

On Dec. 25th, 1918, (during the height of the influenza epidemic) my late mother Bessie Waterman, nee Katzin, gave birth to my late brother Phillip Waterman who died May of 2002 in Vancouver.

My mother was fond of telling the family that she was told by the nursing staff at the hospital in Trochu, Alberta that she or her baby or both would die.

Needless to say both survived.

My brother Phil was persuaded to write his memoirs, which he did with the title "Flying Phil". He had volunteered early to the RCAF in WWII, and flew Spitfires out of England over the dangerous skies of Europe.

In Dec. of 1943 he was shot down over Belgium and spent the rest of the war in a German Stalag.

In order to authenticate his memoirs he did pay a visit to the hospital in Trochu to verify the date and other pertinent information of his birth.

His was a life well lived with the knowledge his family cherished of two miracles which blessed all of us.

Most sincerely,

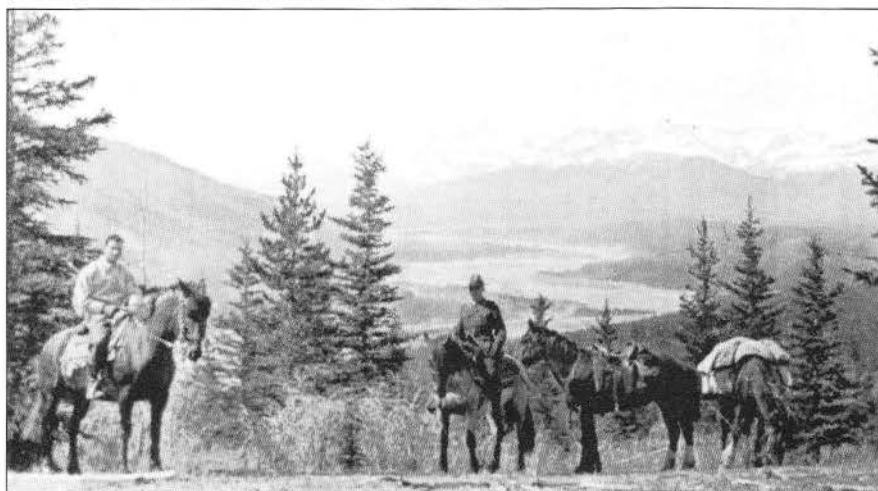
Leah Kellogg, nee Waterman  
Santa Fe, New Mexico



## New Photos from our Archives

*(Left) Wedding of Charles and Ethel Waterman (nee Guttman), June 2, 1912. Photo courtesy of Al Rubin.*

*(Below) Dr. Sidney Gelfand and RCMP Constable G. Krause near Nordegg, Alberta, 1930s. Sid Gelfand practiced medicine at Nordegg before moving to Calgary. Photo: Glenbow Archives NA-2635-8.*



### Yes, I would like to join the Jewish Historical Society

- ☐ Benefactor .....\$100
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Southern Alberta  
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*Do not send cash through the mail*

# We need your support. Renew your membership – Join today.

## JHSSA Projects and Activities Supported by your Membership

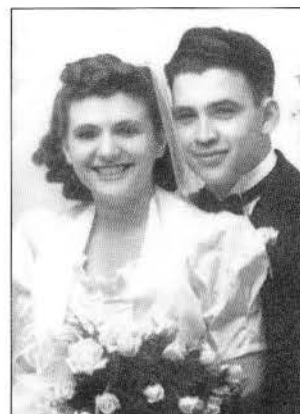


### • Publications

Our journal, *Discovery*, is distributed to the entire Jewish community three times a year. A binder of 34 back issues is available for \$25 from our office. We have also published *Shorashim-Roots* (1991), a guide to historical resources, and the book *Land of Promise: The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta 1889-1945*, which is now out of print.

### • JHSSA Photo Collection

This 1940 wedding photo of Jean Shulman and Sid Libin is one of over 1,200 in our collection. We make a laser copy of each photo to produce a photo index file for easy reference and to protect the originals. Each image will be indexed in the computer to allow for maximum accessibility.

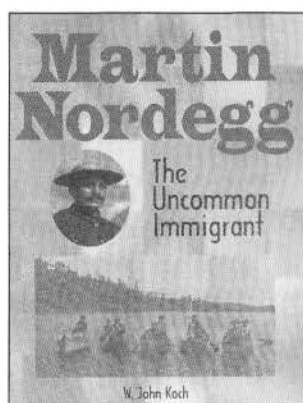


### • Harry and Martha Cohen Library

This book by the guest speaker at our 2003 AGM is just one of over 300 books and videos in our growing library. We also subscribe to a variety of historical and genealogical journals. JHSSA members are welcome to borrow books and the general public is welcome to consult our collection.

### • Oral History Collection

Robert Sattin's oral history is one of over 100 audio cassettes in our oral collection. Most of these interviews have now been transcribed. We also have a number of videotaped interviews with our pioneers.

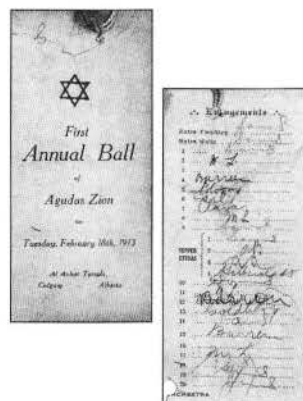


### • JHSSA Archives

These dance cards are an example of the varied original material we collect and preserve in our archival collection. We continue to collect minutes books, financial records, memoirs, programs, certificates, letters and official documents from individuals and organizations in the southern Alberta Jewish community.

### • Local Jewish Press Collection

The JHSSA has ensured the preservation of the valuable information contained in local Jewish periodical publications. We have photocopied and produced an index of every issue available of all earlier Jewish publications and these are available for researchers. In addition, we have a file of articles concerning the Jewish community published in local newspapers dating back from 1893.

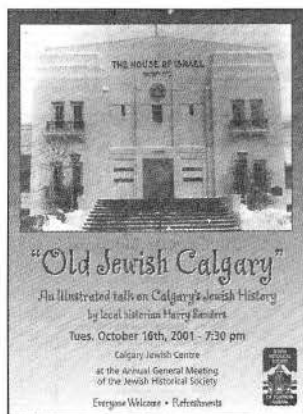


### • Education

Education is part of the JHSSA mandate. This is done through our cooperation with Historic Calgary Week, our continued involvement with local Jewish schools, programming at our AGM, rotating displays at the Calgary Jewish Centre and many hours spent answering research questions from near and far.

### • Jewish Cemeteries File

This photo of the gravestone of community leader Charles Waterman is part of our comprehensive cemetery file. Each gravestone in every cemetery in southern Alberta is photographed. The location of the grave is recorded and the Hebrew inscription and date is translated. We have also collected printed obituaries since 1994. This is an ongoing project and the file is updated annually.



## JHSSA News

### We are Connected!

JHSSA has joined the 21st century and has gone online. You can contact us to inform us of your historical documents, to ask for information or to order tribute cards at [jhssa@shaw.ca](mailto:jhssa@shaw.ca) any time of the day. Please remember that we do not have full time staff and it may take us a while to get back to you.

### Honouring our 80 Year Olds

We are still collecting names of 80 year old southern Albertans to honour at our AGM on October 20th at the Calgary Jewish Centre. If you know of someone who has turned 80 in 2003 and has lived in Western Canada for 50 years, please call our office at 253-8600, ext. 209 or email [jhssa@shaw.ca](mailto:jhssa@shaw.ca).

### Remembering Edythe Pearlman

The Board of Directors of the JHSSA is saddened by the passing of long-time

Board member Edythe Pearlman. Fortunately the JHSSA archives contain both an oral history and video interview with Edythe which outline her rich life and significant contributions to the cultural life of our community.

### Professional Development

JHSSA librarian and archivist, Agi Romer Segal successfully completed the week-long Archives Society of Alberta Archives Institute at the University of Calgary in May. This professional development opportunity was very helpful to her work with our archives.

### Thanks to our Casino Volunteers

Once again we thank the many people who kindly volunteered to staff our Casino on July 22nd and 23rd. It is thanks to the generous spirit and tireless efforts of such volunteers that we are able to operate and to undertake special projects. If you were unable to help out this year but would like to be contacted the next time, please call our office.

### Calgary Jewish Cemeteries File Update

Over the summer, we have updated our Jewish cemetery file. Volunteers Naomi and Allan Kerr have photographed every gravestone that was missing in our files. The information on each stone was then recorded, and translated, on an index card.

In addition, thanks to help from visiting volunteer, Rhoda Segal, we have now filed all obituaries published since 1994 in with our cemetery files. We have also kept a record of these obituaries in chronological order. We are still looking for a volunteer to collect and copy obituaries from the local newspapers published prior to 1994.

### JHSSA Tribute Cards Available through our office

We owe many thanks to our Board member and longtime volunteer, Tiby Presma, for her many years as our tribute card maven. Through Tiby's efforts we have raised steady and considerable funds for our library and archives and we have also raised awareness about our society in the wider community. Amazingly, Tiby did all that work with her trusty typewriter. Now the typewriter is getting harder to service and Tiby has asked us to take over her job of sending out tribute cards.

All we had to do was ask and along came volunteer Carey Smith who set up a template for us on the computer so that we might continue to send out our historic photo cards to suit all your needs. You can order a card for any occasion by calling our office at 253-8600, ext. 209 or by e-mailing us at [jhssa@shaw.ca](mailto:jhssa@shaw.ca). The minimum donation is \$5.00 and a donation of \$36.00 will pay for a bookplate for a new book in our library in honour of the recipient of the card.

## Life After '45 or You Are History

The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta mounted its inaugural exhibit, *Land of Promise; the Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta*, in 1992. That exhibit formed the basis of our sold-out publication of the same name. Both these projects featured historical material relating to Jewish life in this area until 1945. Communal life in this province has continued through the ups and downs of the decades since the end of World War II. To celebrate the centennial of our province, the JHSSA is planning to mount a new exhibit, *A Joyful Harvest*, in 2005. As the title suggests, this exhibit will feature the people, places and organizations that have made significant contributions to the Jewish community started by Calgary's first Jewish immigrants, as well as to the community at large.

A large part of the exhibit will focus on more recent developments. This is why we need your help. Bring your photos and documents in to our offices at the Calgary Jewish Centre and let us decide whether they form an important part of the larger picture of our past.

We cannot tell our collective story without your help. Your recent past constitutes our community's history and the basis for its future.

### 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.

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