

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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A young newsboy sells his papers outside the Lew Polsky Jewellery store on Eighth Avenue East, circa 1912. The stores on either side are also Jewish-owned: the Gurevitch Brothers Confectionery is on the left, while J. Diamond Liquors is on the right. Photo: Glenbow Alberta Archives NA-4230-6.

Harry Bell versus the Lord's Day Alliance – 1905

By Jack Switzer

A 14 year-old Jewish newsboy found himself in Calgary police court in 1905 charged with selling newspapers on Sunday. The boy was acquitted, and the Crown's action was mocked in the city's newspapers, but it was not a trivial event. The Calgary episode, and many others like it throughout the country, was part of a largely successful campaign to force Protestant Christian values on all Canadians—whatever their religious beliefs.

The summons handed to Harry Bell was the work of the powerful Lord's Day Alliance. His alleged offense was one of many used by the group in the pressure they put on Parliament to pass the 1907 Lord's Day Act, which restricted Sunday recreation and commerce in Canada right into the 1980s. One effect was to force observant Jewish merchants to close their doors on both Saturday and Sunday, a major economic disadvantage. More significantly, the public and parliamentary debates that preceded the Act's passage were filled with anti-Semitic rancor.

It is unlikely that anti-Semitism prompted cycle-shop owner J. Smythe

to go the Calgary police station and press charges that newsboy Harry Bell had broken the law of the Northwest Territories by having sold newspapers to him on a Sunday. Harry was selling the previous day's Winnipeg Free Press, brought in by train. Bell was a convenient target for Smythe in his crusade to discourage the newsboy and others from working on Sunday, considered by Smythe and his fellow Lord's Day Alliance zealots to have Biblical validation as a day of rest and worship.

Harry Bell went to trial in July of 1905, a few weeks before the Province of Alberta came into being. The Northwest Territories Sabbath observance laws were vague, and he was charged with violating statutes that came into effect in 17th century England. King Charles the Second had ruled in 1676 that "no tradesman, artificer, workman, labourer, or other person whatsoever shall do, or exercise any worldly labour, or work of their ordinary calling upon the Lord's day ...".

The police magistrate ruled that selling newspapers did not fall strictly within

the definitions of this law. Bell was not a tradesman, etc., and did not do work of an "ordinary calling". The charges were dismissed. The *Albertan* noted sardonically that Bell was saved from having to pay the fine of five shillings or spend two and a half hours in the stocks, as the original law demanded of those found guilty.

Calgary's newspapers applauded the verdict, and criticized the Alliance action as overzealous bullying. A *Herald* writer stated "The effort to make an example of a fourteen year old boy ... is calculated to bring the forces behind the prosecution into disrepute. The whole thing is too comical to be received seriously.

"And yet the Lord's Day Alliance is an organization of earnest people who constitute a force for law and order in Calgary. Their work is beyond criticism as a whole. Public sentiment supports their efforts, but not when directed in such a channel as the Bell case."

Bob Edwards was even more critical in his irreverent *Eye Opener* weekly paper. "What makes us so mad and exasperated every once in a while with church folk is the stupendous bigotry, narrow-mindedness and bogus holiness of some of the supposedly devout." He berated Smythe and held up Harry Bell as "a quiet, inoffensive lad who can give many a man in this town (lessons) in the line of attending to his own business.

"Calgary will always remain a one-horse town if it countenances paltry restraints and prohibitions such as these, allowing local cranks to take advantage of the strict letter of the law to vent their sanctimonious bile."

Continued on Page 2

In this Issue:

Newsboy Harry Bell in Court, 1905..1
Calgary's Jewish Newsboys.....3
New Photos5
Introducing A Joyful Harvest
Poster6
1900-1909 Timelines.....7
Sowing the Seeds.....7
Sample Display Panels.....8-9
Memberships10

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Harry Bell versus the Lord's Day Alliance

Continued from Page 1

We know little about Harry Bell. Edwards said the "three-lunged desperado" had no parents in Calgary, that he came from Chicago, and "hustles for his own living". It is possible he was related to and lived with the family of Nathan Bell, a cigar-store and newsstand owner who was active in the early Jewish community.

The Lord's Day Alliance was founded in Ottawa in 1888 by Presbyterian leaders and was later supported by Methodists and Congregationalist churches. (These three groups formed the United Church of Canada.) The Alliance hired an organizer and began well-funded lobbying for a Canada-wide Protestant-based Sunday-closing law.

The Alliance grew in numbers and in power. By the end of 1902 there were over 500 branches across Canada. As an example of their influence, the vice-president of the Alberta LDA region was Alexander Rutherford, the first premier of Alberta. The Alliance, with the support of labour groups who welcomed a guaranteed six-day work week, was successful in having a Sunday-closing bill placed before Canada's Parliament in 1906.

Canada's 40,000 Jews hoped for extension of the British practice, which allowed Jews (and other Sabbatarians) who closed their premises on Saturday to open for business on Sunday. They sought a similar exemption in the pending Canadian legislation, but met opposition. One historian states: "Seventh-day Adventists and Jews were dismissed as insignificant foreign minorities, American heretics, vicious Europeans, and 'strangers within our gates' who had to conform to the Christian majority's wishes."

Another source reports that Reverend J. Edgar Hill, president of the Alliance said: "Jews, with their separate ways, were an 'anachronism' in modern society, who should be ignored completely in the drafting of Sunday legislation". "During the debate many Protestants gave vent to anti-Semitic feelings usually suppressed. Dr. Hill and not a few others were honest about their aim of securing for Canada 'a Christian government in a Christian land'."

The debate also pitted the Alliance against Roman Catholics, particularly French Canadians, whose Sunday observances were felt by the Protestants to be rather too festive. In Quebec, Sunday was more of a holiday than a holy day.

Quebec MP Henri Bourassa recanted earlier anti-Semitic remarks and moved

an amendment to the legislation which would give Jews and others the same Saturday-closing-Sunday-opening that was enjoyed in England and in many parts of the USA. The proposed "Jewish exemption", engendered—as noted above—many anti-Semitic comments, but there were also voices supporting Jews as law-abiding, beneficial, and deserving of special consideration.

Jewish lobbying was led by Montreal's Harris Vineberg, assisted by other business leaders and English-speaking rabbis. Harry Bell's case was not mentioned in records of parliamentary committee proceedings, but Vineberg likely knew of it—some Calgary news appeared in the Montreal-based Canadian Jewish Times.

The legislation easily passed through Parliament in 1906, without the "Jewish exemption". "An Act Respecting the Lord's Day" prohibited almost all work and recreation on Sunday. Only work of necessity or mercy was allowed to interfere with worship.

Just before the law came into force in 1907, the Quebec government passed its own Sunday legislation, which took precedence over the federal act. It allowed Catholics the Sunday activities they had sought, and included the Jewish exemption clause. However, in 1912 the Supreme Court ruled the Quebec laws unconstitutional, and Montreal's Jews—the majority of those in Canada—again found themselves prosecuted by Alliance vigilantes.

World War I saw some relaxation of Sunday-closing laws, and provinces varied in the strength of their Lord's Day Act enforcement. But the laws remained on the books, a nuisance to some businesses and a constant reminder that non-Christians were, and should behave, as a minority.

Trivial prosecutions continued. In 1918 Calgary grocer Isadore Guttman was fined \$10 for selling candy on Sunday. Milk and bread—necessities—could be sold, but candy had to be consumed on the premises. Jewish homesteaders in Saskatchewan were cited for doing farm work on Sunday.

In 1923 Calgary's three kosher butchers were allowed to open Saturday nights past the usual closing times; this gave them a few hours between the Jewish Sabbath, during which they chose to close, and the legally-required Sunday closing, in which to serve Jewish customers.

Most Calgary Jews accepted the Act's restrictions, and enjoyed work-free Sundays as a family day. Sunday was also the main day for Jewish meetings. Almost all Jewish business opened on Saturday; indeed, it was their busiest day. Calgary's Jewish shopkeepers were pragmatic in this regard—Saturday opening was necessary to make a living. Or it may be that they were simply more secular than their Eastern counterparts.

In later decades Jewish businesses—bakeries and kosher butchers—opened on Sunday, but we are unaware of their legal status at the time.

The Lord's Day Act would be enforced with varying degrees of diligence until the 1980s. Some merchants opposed the Act, opening on Sunday and willingly paying nominal fines. That they did well on these Sundays attested to the decreasing influence of religion and the increase in available shopping and leisure time.

Furniture dealer Brian Sidorsky and Lennie Friedman of Super S Drugs were among those who challenged the Sunday closing laws in the 1970s. But it was a non-Jewish Calgary company, Big M Drugs, that finally broke the laws wide open. Calgary lawyers took their 1982 conviction for Sunday-closing all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Court ruled in 1985 that the Lord's Day Act was a violation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. One source summarizes: "...since the Lord's Day Act bound all Canadians to a sectarian Christian ideal it constituted a coercion inimical to the spirit of the charter and the dignity of all non-Christians. In proclaiming the standards of the Christian faith, the Lord's Day Act created a climate hostile to and gave the appearance of discrimination against, non-Christian Canadians."

"The court went on to hold such a statute could not be deemed justifiable in a free and democratic society such as Canada. The Court held the Lord's Day Act unconstitutional."

Eighty years separated the Calgary trial of Harry Bell and the Supreme Court decision in the Big M Drug Mart case. Jews in Canada should know the important connections between the two.

Sources: JHSSA Archives, Glenbow Alberta Library and Archives. The JHSSA has a copy of 'On Sunday Observance', 1906, by David Rome, which details the Jewish opposition to the Lord's Day Act.

In Their Own Words

Nate Horodezky Defends His Turf

From the 1911 newspaper article describing Nate Horodezky's News Telegram sales contest victory:

"In Calgary for one brief year, yet in that time to have mastered the intricacies of the English language, to have two city lots, and a bank account of \$210, and all by selling papers, or as he himself expresses it, by 'hustlin' dese poipers'.

"Nate has his regular customers now, but he admits it was tough sledding at first until he caught on to the Canadian language and the Canadian way of selling papers. 'De monies was different and de big sucker kids used to lick me, but you bet they don't do it now. I give one of them suckers a blue eye yesterday. I got my restaurants and my customers an' no sucker kid is going to take dem away now.'

"...I never make less than \$3 a day here, and besides I can go to school and learn English."

Harry Woolfe – Newsboy Memories

Extracts from an oral interview conducted by C. Leonoff and M. Freeman in Vancouver in 1975:

"The most vivid recollection I have of Calgary in my early youth was Calgary when it had its first Stampede ... in 1912. I can remember as a boy I used to sell papers on the corner of Centre Street and 8th Avenue in Calgary, and because of the Stampede they thought the most appropriate souvenir that they could sell to the public ... was a little watch fob that was made out of leather in the form of a pistol and a holster ... and standing at the corner and selling them at 75 cents apiece.

"The most vivid individual that I can recollect in Calgary ... was Bob Edwards. I had the good fortune of speaking to him periodically. I was a newsboy and I used to deliver either the *News-Telegram*, the *Albertan* or the *Calgary Herald* to his office."

Calgary's Jewish Newsboys

By Jack Switzer

A number of enterprising young Jews followed Harry Bell (see Page 1) as newspaper sellers on the streets of downtown Calgary. Street selling was a major distribution method for Calgary's newspapers, particularly in the early decades when both the *Calgary Daily Herald* and the *News-Telegram* published afternoon editions. Before radios became common, people heard the news from boys shouting the headlines.

Nate Horodezky (1900–1986) was another early Calgary newsboy. His father, Louis Horodezky, and older brothers Jack and Fred, homesteaded near Rumsey in 1908. Two years later 10-year old Nate and his twin sister Sarah were sent to Calgary to attend school.

He was a legendary "salesman," winning a *News-Telegram* sales contest and getting his picture published. Nate sold both papers, but pushed the *News-Telegram* because it returned more profits. He also sold the weekly *Eye Opener*. Working only after school and Saturdays, he made as much as many adults. His substantial savings account helped pay for his father's false teeth and his family's new farmhouse. He also paid for a wind-mill-powered water well.

Nate quit selling papers in 1914, returning to Rumsey and becoming a teen-aged farmer. Again, he prospered, and farmed until 1929, when he began his long career as an Eighth Avenue East merchant.

Harry Woolfe (1899–1994) recalled his stint as a teen-aged Calgary newsboy (see adjacent sidebar.) He sold all three Calgary dailies, and remembers delivering newspapers to Bob Edwards, colourful publisher of the *Eye Opener*, a popular weekly.

Eddie Cohen (1898–1987), who came to Canada in 1911, was also a busy newsboy, selling papers outside the Bank of Commerce at Eighth Avenue and Center Street. He also delivered meat for his father's kosher meat market.

David Pasternack is the next Jewish newsboy we know about. He sold the *Herald* from about 1912 until 1920, the year he completed high school, attended Normal School, and taught school for a year at Rumsey. In September 1921, 18-year-old David Pasternack left Calgary to attend Queen's University in Ontario, an event that merited a *Herald* news item.

The *Herald* noted David Pasternack's



Nate Horodezky, newsboy, c. 1911. Photo: Glenbow Alberta Archives NA-3045-2.

physical handicap; he had lost a leg when he was four. It continued: "David is the son of Israel Pasternack, a tailor. His younger brother is following in his footsteps and is among the most energetic of the *Herald's* newsboys. He has taken over his brother's old stand, on Eighth Avenue."

Pasternack graduated as a chemical engineer and returned to Alberta, where he worked at a forerunner of the Alberta Research Council in Edmonton. He was part of a team that developed a hot water refining process for the Athabasca tar sands.

David Pasternack was helped by a sympathetic *Herald* supervisor, **Nathan Roth** (1873–1929), also Jewish and also handicapped. Born in Germany and raised in New York, Roth had made his way to Vancouver, where a construction accident left him partially paralyzed. He came to Calgary in 1912 and became the *Herald's* only adult street seller. Nate sold at the city's busiest corner, Eighth Avenue and First Street West.

Roth saved enough to open a small newsstand and returned to New York in 1914. In 1916 he was back in Calgary, this time as supervisor of street sales. Illness forced him to retire in 1929, and he died the following year.

A *Herald* eulogy praised Roth's role in motivating under-privileged boys to achieve educational and career goals. His relationship with an unnamed newsboy

Continued on Page 4

Calgary's Jewish Newsboys

Continued from Page 3

(clearly David Pasternack) was described at length.

"Upon one occasion he urged a little street urchin to keep on going to school. That boy had a real battle to fight. Poverty stared him and his parents in the face. The boy's earning power, even as a 'newsy', meant much to the home. Nate urged him and his parents to sacrifice comforts in order that the lad might get an education. Nate helped the boy's mother to save his small earnings.

"Perhaps there were times when Nate gave the lad a little head start on more fortunate boys by letting him have his papers first now and then so that he might reap the benefit of being the first on the street. Who knows? But the fact remains that that lad went through elementary, high, and normal schools. He graduated from university with honours and is now one of the most distinguished scientists in Canada.

"That is only one example. There are hundreds of ways in which one may help boys and Nate seemed to understand them all."

Nathan Roth was a bachelor and left no heirs. Most of his modest estate went to his friends (all fellow *Herald* workers) but there was a bequest of \$500 to the Calgary Hebrew School.

Leo Sheftel also worked for Nathan Roth. Leo recalls many details of his newsboy experience. He was about thirteen when his family arrived in Calgary in 1926 from a Ukrainian town. His older brother Ben had been here since 1922.

"After one week's time I was taken by my brother to the *Calgary Herald*. I could not speak English at all. He introduced me to the man who was in charge of sales on the street. He was a Jewish fellow, Nate, I think. He was a cripple; he had a cane. He was very nice to me.

"He taught me two words in English that I took very seriously—please, and thank you. He gave me twenty papers and took me to the sidewalk outside the White Spot Restaurant, across from the Capitol Theatre on Eighth Avenue West.

"I came back home and I had sixty cents in my pocket. I gave the money to my mother. My mother—*aleha sholem*—was very excited. Anyway, there was a real celebration."

Leo Sheftel learned more and more English and made friends with many regular customers at his "stand". He started public school that September (progressing from grades one to eight in three



Image used to illustrate the Harry Bell trial report in both the Morning Albertan and the Calgary Eye Opener, July, 1905. Source: Glenbow Alberta Library microfilms.

years) and continued to sell newspapers before and after school. Leo made extra money by delivering magazines from Harry's News to the offices and work places of his customers.

Julius "Ziggy" Bleviss was also a *Herald* newsboy in the late 1920s.

"Nate Horodezky took me down to the *Herald* building. They sold the papers there—I bought five papers at three cents apiece and sold them for five cents. I ran home excited and said 'I made twenty five cents.' I forgot that I paid fifteen cents.

"At that time Leo Sheftel was selling papers. **Jack Singer** was selling papers. **Hymie Singer** was selling papers. I stopped selling papers when I went to work for Harry Goresht at City Bakery, delivering bread."

Undoubtedly, there were other Jewish newsboys. We would be happy to hear their stories.

Newspaper street sales gave way to home delivery. Later still, coin boxes were introduced. Many Jewish boys (and a few girls) delivered papers, but a neighborhood carrier route hardly had the color and excitement of standing on a downtown corner shouting the hour's headlines.

Newsboy Life No Picnic

Calgary's newsboys faced many challenges. Competitors tried to horn in on their assigned street space, and retailers—newsstands, confectioneries, and so on—resented their noisy intrusions. There were also police and welfare officials enforcing the city's bylaws regarding child labour.

The 1912 City of Calgary rules were typical. Newspaper sellers, messengers, shoe-shine boys and any other children selling in public spaces had to be at least twelve years old, and had to attend school until they were at least fourteen. They could not enter bars, pool rooms or bowling alleys. They could not sell past eight p.m. in the winter months, or nine p.m. the rest of the year.

Continued on Page 5

Leo Sheftel – Lessons for Life

Excerpts from JHSSA interviews with Leo Sheftel:

"There were a lot of kids selling newspapers, mostly immigrants—it was a regular League of Nations. I bumped into a couple of Jewish kids, **Dave Dvorkin** and his brother **Harry**. There was always a lot of scrapping. I tried to stay away from the fights; I was a little fellow. I remember this one fellow who was a very rude guy. He used to pick on the Jewish kids. But the Dvorkin boys, especially Harry, who was a bigger boy, used to stand up for us."

Leo recalls that after big sales days, many newsboys celebrated by going to a show at the Variety Theatre, and filling up on candy and popcorn. He says he did not join them. "They would come home with maybe thirty cents; I would come home with a dollar fifty. Every penny I made I took to my Mom, so she could have enough to buy groceries.

"I sold the *Albertan* starting at five o'clock in the morning, then the *Herald* after school, and then the ten o'clock edition of the *Albertan*, late at night. So I sold all these papers, plus all these magazines. As I said, this really taught me business. I have an awful lot of good friendships that I began with people by selling them papers. I could see that when you help people, they will be nice to you in turn."

Local Authors

In conjunction with this year's Jewish Book Fair, the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta mounted an exhibit featuring the title pages of the books of authors who grew up in this area or who have moved here from elsewhere and are writing here now. Much time was spent searching the web and our local libraries. We gathered an impressive array of authors, both old and new, who have written on a wide range of topics. Many thanks to those authors and their relatives who provided us with

information, title pages, and even complimentary copies of their books. All the material gathered will be incorporated into our files. We hope to develop a special collection of books written by local authors for our library. Please let us know if you think there is someone we might have missed.

The Merchants of Eighth Avenue

The article about the Jewish businesses of Eighth Ave. East drew some favourable responses from our readers—along with some inevitable correc-

tions. Thanks to all who contacted us. We hope to feature some additional businesses located further west on the Avenue and in the surrounding area in a future issue.

Bella Singer Biography

The biography of Bella Singer (1881-1984), who arrived in Calgary from Radom, Poland almost 100 years ago, was recently published. Titled *The Meema*, the book describes Bella's early life in Poland, her journey to Calgary with her husband, Abraham, and their efforts to bring as many relatives as possible to America from Poland prior to the Holocaust.

Author Tyler Trafford says the highlights of the book include unique photographs, commentaries by several of Bella's relatives, and a foreword by Premier Ralph Klein, who spoke at her funeral in 1984.

The Singer family has kindly donated a copy of *The Meema* to our library and it is available to all our members.

New Photos from our Archives



A 25-year-long fund-raising project ended in late April, 1954, when the House of Israel Association held a mortgage-burning ceremony to mark the retirement of the 'community building' debt. This photo shows the fire being kindled by 13-year old Harris Dworkin and 80-year old Jacob Woolfe, a Calgary resident since 1905. Standing at right is Morris Hector, House of Israel president. Seated at his left is Rabbi David Barenholtz, of the Congregation House of Jacob. Photo: Glenbow Alberta Archives, NA-5600-7824a.

Rose (Dworkin) Manson and Rose Lily Hendin Dworkin, c. 1921-22. Photo courtesy of David & Delsie Dworkin.

Newsboy Life No Picnic

Continued from Page 4

Licenses were issued by the police, but cost only twenty-five cents.

Girls were forbidden to be street "newsies". Officials made it clear that any girls found selling any product in public could be "apprehended as a neglected child". In 1911 the *Morning Albertan* reported that "five lusty little girls toting big armfuls of newspapers competed keenly with the boy 'newsies' to dispose of their stocks." Their parents were interviewed and warned that their daughters could be taken from them.

Newspaper and parental supervision must have been lax, as the laws were frequently ignored. We know that some Jewish newsboys were younger than twelve, but this may have preceded the enactment of the bylaws. One non-Jewish newsboy, an 11-year-old, was killed by a streetcar when he crossed Eighth Avenue East in 1912.

Newsboys were sometimes rewarded by the publishers with prizes and special treats. Theatre outings and picnics were regular events. One report said the three Calgary papers treated 500 "newsies" to the shows and rides of a visiting circus.

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy - Psalm 126



הורעים בדמעה ברנה יקצרו

A Joyful Harvest

A CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF JEWISH LIFE IN SOUTHERN ALBERTA
PRESENTED BY THE JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN ALBERTA — OPENING 2005



Sowing the Seeds for *A Joyful Harvest*

This image of a newly landed immigrant couple will serve as the logo for the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta's exhibit celebrating the centennial of the Province of Alberta in 2005. The items on these pages highlight some of the features of this exciting exhibit.



Our exhibit poster, displayed here on the left in reduced format, expresses the underlying concept of *A Joyful Harvest*. These are some of the children of Jewish immigrants to southern Alberta. *A Joyful Harvest* will show that our pioneer immigrant ancestors, through their hard work and persistence, helped build our thriving community and the province at large. They instilled in their children and grandchildren the traditional values of "tzedakah" and "gemilut hasadim"—charity and deeds of loving kindness—as the cornerstones of community building. It was the task of their descendants to build upon the foundations set by these pioneers.

Important events for each decade will be highlighted in illustrated timeline panels, as in the example given here on the right. Outstanding individuals, key places and major organizations that have contributed to the growth of our province over the past century will be featured in 100 display panels as illustrated here on the following pages.

Even our staff is amazed at how much local Jews have accomplished. Our research has uncovered significant contributions to both the Jewish and general communities, as our local 14 Order of Canada honourees show.

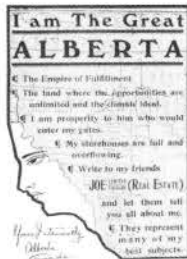
We plan to take the exhibit on the road throughout Alberta and western Canada, wherever there would be an interest in the development of our community. The exhibit contents may be documented in book form.

A Joyful Harvest will be a celebration of multiculturalism and the participation of all ethnic groups within the broader Canadian society. It should serve as inspiration for newer immigrant communities.



A Joyful Harvest THROUGH THE YEARS

1900 - 1909



1900 – The century begins with 4,200 persons in Calgary, only a handful of them Jews. The Canadian government encourages immigration to settle western territories.

1900 – Calgary begins a decade of major growth; growth of Jewish community keeps pace.

1900 – Jews begin to settle in Medicine Hat and Redcliff.

1904 – The death of infant Goldie Bell in Calgary prompts the small Jewish community to purchase the

Erlton cemetery site, and to form its first organized society, the Chevra Kadisha—the Jewish burial society.

1905 – The Kishinev pogrom and other Russian repressions encourage immigration to North America; 8,500 Jews enter Canada in 1905, double the previous year's number. Prominent Calgarians join local Jews to raise \$4,500 for the "Russian Massacre Committee".

September 1, 1905 – Province of Alberta formed from North-West Territories lands.

1905 – The Harris Goodman family arrives and becomes the first Jewish permanent settlers in Lethbridge.

1905 – Calgary's first Sefer Torah is donated to the Jewish community by a Montreal philanthropist.



1905 – Henry and Alexander Sereth move to Calgary and establish Riverside Lumber, a major employer and building material supplier to the growing city.

1906 – Jewish women form Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society, to carry out immigrant aid and other charitable work.

1906 – Rabbi Hyman Goldstick serves both Calgary and Edmonton Jewish communities.



1906 – Jewish homesteaders begin farming in Rumsey and Trochu areas; some sponsored by Baron de Hirsch's Jewish Colonization Association. There are twenty families in each "colony" by 1908.

1907 – Calgary Jews form Agudath Zion, early Zionist organization.

1907 – Congregation House of Jacob (Beth Jacob) is formed, plans building.

1909 – The Congregation House of Jacob is incorporated, buys land, and erects a small building for prayer, study and a cheder (Hebrew school).

1909 – Seventy men join Calgary's first Jewish lodge, the Independent Order of the Western Star.

1909 – Calgary's population has increased tenfold to 40,000 by 1910; the Jewish population reaches 500. Jews are largely small-scale merchants, but some prosper in liquor trade and hotel ownership.



Three examples from the 2005 exhibit, *A Joyful Harvest*, which will feature 100 Jewish people, places and organizations and detailed timelines for each decade.

William Epstein, Canada's Man of Peace



William Epstein, 1912-2001, literally wrote the book on disarmament. As a senior United Nations official, he promoted major international arms control and nuclear non-proliferation treaties. He later served as a Canadian delegate to several UN bodies, and continued writing and teaching for the cause of peace.

His parents, Harry and Masha Epstein, were Russian immigrants who came to Calgary around 1910 and ran the Grand Cigar Store. William was active in Jewish youth groups, and graduated with a law degree from the University of Alberta in 1935.

William Epstein served as a Canadian Army artillery and legal officer in England during World War II. He joined the new United Nations organization late in 1945, moving to New York.

An early UN assignment saw Epstein working on the Arab-Israeli peace talks that led to partition and Israel's independence; he was named chief of the UN's Middle East section but soon became involved in disarmament work.

In 1950 William Epstein became Director of the UN's disarmament Division, leading important treaty negotiations. After his official retirement in 1972, he continued his peace activism as a busy consultant, writer, teacher, and speaker.

Epstein was a visiting professor at many Canadian universities, and in 1971 he received the first honorary Doctor of Laws degree ever awarded by the University of Calgary. In 1990 he was made an Officer of the Order of Canada; the citation reads in part: "A world-renowned expert on disarmament, he has worked with a passion to encourage international accord."

House of Israel, 1931-1979



The House of Israel, 102 - 18 Avenue SE, known to many as the Jewish Community building, grew out of the general prosperity and population growth of the 1920s. Community leaders felt that Calgary's 1,500 Jews needed more than rented halls and makeshift schoolrooms to meet their social and cultural needs. In 1926 planning and fund-raising for a community centre began.

In 1929, the House of Israel Association was incorporated, a site was purchased and construction began in 1930. Plans called for a large auditorium, with a social hall and kitchens below it. One wing was to have meeting rooms and a chapel; the other wing would house classrooms.

Only the lower level was completed by 1931, when lack of funds stopped construction. The Calgary Hebrew School moved into the building. B'nai Brith, several women's organizations, youth groups and the new Beth Israel congregation became regular users of the facility. The depression and then World War II delayed completion of the House of Israel building until 1949.

The House of Israel was busy with social and community events in the 1940s and 50s, but the gradual move of the Jewish population to south Calgary districts made the building less and less convenient. Major users, such as the Calgary Hebrew School, relocated in the late 1950s.

By the 1970s use was greatly declining. In 1979 the existing Calgary Jewish Community Centre was opened, and the House of Israel building closed. The structure was later converted to condominiums.

B'nai Brith Calgary Lodge No. 816



Original Calgary Lodge Charter, 1917

Calgary B'nai Brith Lodge No. 816 got its start in 1917 when a group of young English-speaking Jewish men received a charter from the international men's service club. Benjamin Ginsberg, a lawyer originally from South Africa, was the first president. Its social and charitable activities helped members meet the mandate expressed in the B'nai Brith motto—Benevolence, Brotherly Love, and Harmony.

During the early decades meetings were followed by cards and refreshments. Members bowled, curled and played baseball in B'nai Brith leagues. Social events promoted brotherhood and raised funds for the Lodge's many social-action and community-assistance programs.

Lodge 816 may have been busiest during World War II, when it provided outstanding service to the local war effort. BB members manned Victory Bond drives, equipped military base lounges, entertained Jewish servicemen, and worked with other community groups to meet a variety of social service demands.

Local B'nai Brith members have worked with the parent lodge's Anti-Defamation League to counter anti-semitism. Lodge 816's outreach and charity have provided many non-Jewish groups with needed funds, equipment and manpower. Associated B'nai Brith lodges in Lethbridge and Medicine Hat, formed early in the 1940s, have carried out similar work in their communities.

B'nai Brith has sponsored and assisted Jewish youth groups—BBYO—and university Hillel work. Camp BB – Riback relied on B'nai Brith support for many years. Many community organizations throughout the city acknowledge regular gifts from the Calgary lodge.

PHOTO CREDITS:

William Harold Epstein at Privy Council, London, England, 1937. Photo: William Epstein.

The House of Israel, at the corner of 18th Avenue and Centre Street S. Photo: Glenbow Archives NA-3035-8.

B'nai Brith Lodge #816 Charter, June 17, 1917. Photo: Calgary Jewish News centennial edition, 1975.

You'll Go Down in History...

A great deal of research has already been done to prepare for our 2005 exhibit, *A Joyful Harvest*. We have been reviewing our archives, combing through the local newspapers and searching websites. We will continue this process, but our best source of information is still the membership of the local Jewish community.

We can't do it all ourselves, so we are appealing to our readers to tell us their stories relating to their communal activities throughout southern Alberta—in cities, towns and rural areas.

Send us old minute books, programs, flyers, memoirs and photos. Brag about the achievements of your family members. Tell us about the contributions you have made to the general community. We are especially interested in the years 1940 to 1975. This may seem too recent to be history, but this was a time when there was no local Jewish press, and no

consistent source of information. Your material will help us understand the development of our community; as part of our collection, it will serve future researchers. We can make copies of any material you wish to have returned.

There is another way in which you can be part of our centennial exhibit. Our research and productions costs for the exhibit are ongoing. We have a projected budget of \$50,000 for mounting the 2005 exhibit and a possible accompanying publication. The generous donations that we have received so far from foundations and individuals have been gratifying, but more funds are needed. We have a range of exhibit sponsorship categories and we will be soliciting financial support for this exciting project from the community throughout the coming year.

A Joyful Harvest will tell our story and we want you to be part of it.

Yes, I would like to join the Jewish Historical Society

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