

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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Alberta's first Rabbi – Hyman Goldstick

Alberta's first Jewish religious leader was a commuter, who served both Edmonton and Calgary as schochet, mohel, teacher, and rabbi for several years early in this century.

Hyman Goldstick lived in Edmonton, but made frequent visits to Calgary in 1906 and 1907. He continued to serve the Edmonton Jewish community for several years, and went on to become a prominent Alberta civic leader.

He was born in Latvia in 1882, and began his Yeshiva studies at 16 in Tels, Lithuania. He graduated in 1902. After practising for a year as a schochet and mohel in Latvia, he married, and the Goldsticks moved to Leeds, England. They soon moved to the United States, and came to Toronto in 1904.

Historical sources are vague about Hyman Goldstick's ordination status. He used the title Reverend, and although he performed many "rabbinic" duties, it is possible that he was not, in 1906, a fully-qualified rabbi.

Religious quorums had begun in Calgary in 1894, and were carried on whenever possible by laymen. Community leaders in the new province of Alberta, notably Jacob Diamond in Calgary and his brother William Diamond in Edmonton, petitioned Canada's Chief Rabbi to send someone West.

Goldstick's own narration of his sojourn here is as follows:

"During the year 1906 the Jewish people of Edmonton and Calgary made inquiries to the Rabbis in Montreal to seek a young Rabbi to organize the scattered Jewish people of Edmonton and Calgary, providing he possesses all the qualifications of a shochet to provide kosher meat; a mohel to perform circumcisions; to



The Hyman Goldstick Family, (sans Hyman) about 1920
L to R: Celia Goldstick (Cohen), Graham Goldstick, Mrs. Bessie Goldstick
Front: Mollie Goldstick (Yochlowitz), Cecil (Tiger) Goldstick

serve as a Hebrew teacher and to serve as a cantor; that is, to conform to all Jewish tradition.

At that time I had a position in Toronto as a schochet and Hebrew teacher. I was advised by a Rabbi in Toronto who knew that I was qualified in all the requirements, that I would be the proper man to organize the Jewish people in the west, to interview Rabbi Hirsh Cohen in Montreal.

I spent three days in Montreal and during that time Rabbi Cohen gave me a thorough examination of all my credentials that I had from Europe, the

United States, and Canada; as well as an oral examination of everything. I was sure that my proficiency satisfied him as he gave me his own credentials in writing with his signature attested thereto dated August 2nd, 1906.

I was given transportation and expenses to travel directly to Edmonton; I arrived on August 6, 1906. A meeting was called to arrange as to salary and other important matters. Those present were A. Cristall, Wm. Diamond, Jack Berkman, Mr. Frankenberg, Mr. Boyaner, Mr. Philipson, Mr. Hyman, Mr. H.B. Kline, Mr. Shugarman Sr. (of Strathcona on the south side.)

On my advice it was agreed to name the congregation the Edmonton Hebrew Association and it was registered under that name."

Goldstick arranged for a "kosher corner" in a local butcher shop, using a new block and new utensils. He was able to conduct high holiday services at the I.O.O.F. Hall. Late in 1906

Featured in this issue

- Calgary's first Rabbi - 1906
- American Jew founds famous Alberta town
- Pine Lake Jewish colony - 1893-1895
- JHSSA news - our archives, new books

Goldstick. . . from page 1

he presided at the first Jewish funeral in Edmonton.

"During 1906-7 I had to travel to Calgary twice a week," Goldstick recalled, "and sometimes more often, to provide kosher meat for the Jewish people there and other times to perform weddings or circumcisions."

The previous account, from a brief community history Goldstick wrote for the Provincial Archives of Alberta, differs somewhat from an interview he gave to an Edmonton Journal reporter. The article says Goldstick came to Calgary first, intending to base his Alberta operations from that city, but he became discouraged with the small number of Jews there.

"I was a very idealistic young man back in those days. I wasn't satisfied in Calgary, so I moved to Edmonton."

Calgary had only twelve Jewish families in 1907, but despite this small number, the community formed a religious organization, the House of Jacob Congregation. Hyman Goldstick was undoubtedly instrumental in the formalization of this religious effort, as he had been the previous year in Edmonton.

In Calgary, the House of Jacob was soon able to hire its own religious leader, Mr. S. Sosinsky, so it was no longer necessary for Goldstick to keep on commuting from Edmonton.

Goldstick continued to serve the Edmonton Jewish community until 1912, when he moved to Edson, Alberta, where he operated a men's clothing store. While in Edson he served on the school board, town council, and became mayor. He spent his retirement in Edmonton, and died in 1978, at 96.

Hyman and Bessie Goldstick raised four children in Edmonton and Edson - Celia, Cecil, Graham, and Mollie. Cecil, better known as Tiger Goldstick, may be the best known. He was an active amateur athlete, a sports trainer, and was later a radio and television sportscaster in Edmonton. Tiger Goldstick was awarded the Order of Canada in

by Jack Switzer,
credits: Provincial Archives of Alberta,
Calgary Public Library, Edmonton
Journal, Glenbow Museum, JHSSA
Archives. Family photo reproduced by
Documentary Heritage Society of
Alberta.



Rabbi Hyman Goldstick

COMING EVENTS

June 12 - 13: Conference of the Canadian Jewish Historical Society, session of the Learned Societies Conference, University of Calgary

June 12 - JHSSA and CJC reception and program for Canadian Jewish Historical Society, Calgary Jewish Community Centre, 7:30 p.m. Everyone welcome.

June 27 - June 30: "Pathways through Many Lands" - 12th Annual International Summer Session on Jewish Genealogy, Park Plaza Hotel, Toronto.

Journal Notes

by Jack Switzer

Articles in this issue of *Discovery* focus on some little-known people and events in local Jewish history. The failed Pine Lake colony of 100 years ago has very little documentation, and the Jewish-connected founding of Frank, site of the 1903 Frank slide tragedy, has been extremely obscure.

Better known is the story of Hyman Goldstick, Alberta's first rabbi. He spent most of his life in Edmonton and Edson, but his contributions to the founding of Calgary communal Jewish life needs further acknowledgement.

We have also noted several new books in our genealogical library. I think readers might find their most interesting to be *Where Once We Walked*, a very comprehensive "shtetl finder," which provides information on thousands of Eastern European Jewish locales.

I easily found more about my father's home town in Poland than I had previously known, and you are invited to search for more of your roots through this and other reference works in the Society's library.

Our archives and library are available for your use. A volunteer staffs the office every Wednesday afternoon, or you can call us to make an appointment. Our office is upstairs at the Calgary Jewish Community Centre.

DISCOVERY

Editors **Jack Switzer, Jay Joffe**

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 J.H.S.S.A.

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The Frank Slide - The Jewish Connection

Frank, Alberta, on Highway 3 in the Crows Nest Past area, is widely known as the site of one of Western Canada's most tragic natural disasters, the Frank slide. Early in the morning of April 29, 1903, a section of Turtle Mountain slid over part of the town, killing over 100 sleeping coal miners and their families.

What is less widely known is that the town was founded by an American Jew, Henry L. Frank.

H.L. Frank was an Ohio-born politician and mining executive. He was mayor of Butte, Montana, in 1885 and 1886. He was a state legislator and nearly became a U.S. senator for Montana. At the Republican national convention in Chicago in 1908, he suffered a major stroke, and died soon after, at age 57.

The local newspaper, the Frank Herald, described his contribution to the town as follows:

"Mr. Frank became interested in the coal fields of Alberta through S.W. Gebo, managing director of the Canadian-American Coal & Coke company, and in the early months of 1901 came to the Pass to investigate with a view to investing.

He was shown the present property of the Canadian-American company on which there was then only a prospect hole, and was so pleased with the situation that he advanced the \$30,000 necessary for the purchase of the property. He provided the funds with which to begin development operations and the work of making a mine commenced. That was the inception of coal mining in The Pass.

The site of the town of Frank was at that time covered in bush. During the summer the site was cleared and in the early fall the town was opened and was given Mr. Frank's name.

Probably the thing which did most to direct Mr. Frank toward his grave was the slide. Up to that time he had always enjoyed good health, but from

the day of the slide he was a changed man.

He seemed to feel the loss of life in that terrible catastrophe most keenly and would be often heard to say that the destruction of property was as nothing to him, that he would willingly have given the rest of his fortune if by doing so it would have saved the lives of those who perished."

The newspaper reports that Mr. Frank was a frequent visitor to the town, and that his death was greatly mourned by local residents. He headed the coal mining company in the rebuilt town until early 1908, when he sold out to a French firm for \$2,000,000, a huge sum in those days.

H.L. Frank never married. He was buried in Cincinnati, where relatives, the Fox family, are still active in the Jewish community.

Alberta Highway 3 runs right through the Frank slide site, and an interpretive centre allows visitors to learn more about the fatal slide and the once-busy Crows Nest Pass coal mining industry.

Butte still has a small but active Jewish community, begun by pioneers like Henry L. Frank.

by Jack Switzer

Credits: Glenbow Museum; JHSSA Archives; Friends of the Frank Slide Centre Society; John Fox, Cincinnati, Ohio; H & F Rachlin, Pioneer Jews, Houghton Mifflin, 1984

Recent Acquisitions to the J.H.S.S.A. Harry B. Cohen Genealogical Library

Compiled by David Bickman

Arthur Kurzweil, *From Generation to Generation*
William Morel and Company, 1980.

This book tells, in some detail how a reader can trace his or her Jewish genealogy and personal history. Starting with interviews of older family members, the book then goes on to give fairly detailed information on how a researcher can access various governmental agencies, libraries, and such to obtain copies of public records detailing births, marriages, immigration arrivals, applications for citizenship, and so on. This book has been described as "the definitive guide to Jewish genealogical investigation."

Heinrich W. Gugenheimer and Eva H. Gugenheimer, *Jewish Family Names and Their Origins*
Ktav Publishing Inc., 1992.

An etymological dictionary, this book offers an inventory and explanation of current family names for most Jewish groups, be they Ashkenazi, Sephardim, Oriental or modern Israeli. It is probably as complete a collection of such family names as has been gathered, with an explanation of the sources and roots of these

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acquisitions continued from page 3

Alexander Beider, **A Dictionary of Jewish Surnames from the Russian Empire**
Avotaynu, Inc., 1993.

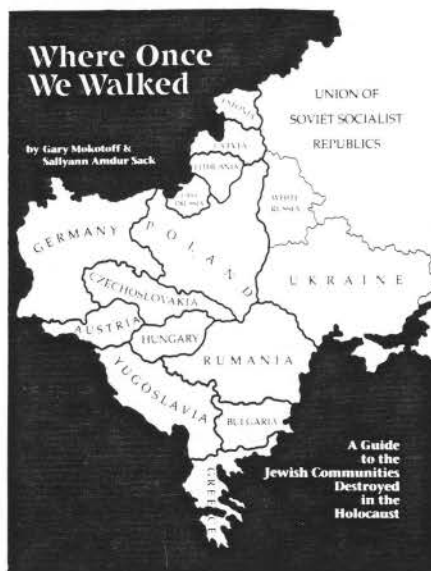
This dictionary lists surnames borne by at least one Jewish man in the nineteenth or twentieth century within the Pale of Settlement; that is, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Bessarabia, Lithuania, part of contemporary Latvia, and several Russian cities outside the Pale. Each surname is accompanied by the location in the Russian Empire where the surname occurred, along with a brief explanation of the roots of the surname, and similar surnames that share that root.

Lawrence F. Tapper, **A Biographical Dictionary of Canadian Jewry, 1909-1914**
Avotaynu, Inc., 1992.

This book contains material drawn from the columns of the Canadian Jewish Times, in the years 1909 to 1914 inclusive. This period was a fairly important period in Canadian Jewish history. By 1914, the Jewish presence in Canada was firmly established largely as a result of the immigration to Canada by Jews from Central and Eastern Europe in the years 1897 to 1914. This book contains extracts and summaries of articles containing names of Jewish persons and is of some assistance to persons who are carrying our research into their family's history in Canada. There is a section in the book containing references to individuals from Alberta.

Gary Mokotoff and Sallyann Amdur Sack, **Where Once We Walked**
Avotaynu, Inc., 1991

This book is a gazetteer guide to the Jewish communities that were destroyed in the Holocaust of 1939 to 1945. It lists twenty-two thousand individual communities alphabetically, setting forth their population, location to nearest city, map coordinates and abbreviated names of other books for further information about that particular community. It is considered by many to be the very best "shtetl finder" to those Jews



names, seeking to find more about their ancestral birth towns in Central and Eastern Europe.

Emmanuel and Neil Rosenstein, **Latter Day Leaders, Sages and Scholars**
Computer Centre for Jewish Genealogy, 1983.

This book contains over 5,500 entries giving the names of Rabbis and scholars born between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries and setting forth, alongside their names, the towns where they were born. The vast bulk of the entries pertain to Rabbis from Central and Eastern Europe.

Hannah Kliger, **Jewish Hometown Associations and Family Circles in New York**
Indiana University Press, 1992.

This book is an in-depth analysis of the "Landsmanshaftn" and family circles that developed in New York in the early part of the twentieth century. Each such organization containing persons who all came from a particular town or village largely from somewhere in the Pale of Settlement. The folk lore and social role of the Landsmanshaftn and family circles are discussed, along with information on how one can access particulars for the Landsmanshaftn on his or her ancestral birth town.

The Archives Collection - a Broad Overview

by Agi Romer Segal

An important mandate of the JHSSA is to collect original documents which reflect the history of the local Jewish community as it developed through the years. Much of the material that documents this development consists of isolated papers - deeds of sale, acts of incorporation, government forms, contracts, and the like.

Our collection also includes some more extensive source material such as memoirs and record books. In some cases we are fortunate enough to have the original, unique documents. However, most often we have only photocopies. This source material is invaluable for understanding the history of our community.

The pioneer journals in our collection deal largely with the hardships of early Jewish settlers in Alberta.

Jack Hackman's journal covers the years of homesteading in 1906 - 1926. Jacob Baltzan lived from 1872 - 1939 and his journal was edited and translated from the Yiddish by his family. "The Sereth Story" is based on the German diary of Henry Noah Sereth (1864 - 1944.)

More recent history is revealed in our copy of the limited edition of Charles Ursenbach's extensive 1974 interview with Dr. Harry Cohen.

Many key Jewish organizations are represented in the Society's collection by their minute books. Here is a partial list of our present holdings:

- Bnai Brith Lodge # 812, minute books, 1936-44;
- Calgary Jewish Community - minutes of building fund committee, 1926-28;
- Chevra Kadisha - records book, 1912-14 (Yiddish); minute books, 1948-59 (translated from Yiddish by S. Heilik.)
- Congregation House of Jacob - minute books, 1936-63 (Yiddish);

continues page 6

The 1893-95 Pine Lake Jewish Colony - A Dream Dies

A century ago, this area's largest Jewish community was not in Calgary or Edmonton, but in a rural area between the two cities near Pine Lake, in the Red Deer district.

For three years, in 1893, 1894, and 1895, up to 30 Jewish homesteaders - 70 persons - lived in Red Deer or on their Pine Lake homesteads. They were known as the Russo-Jewish colony; few details about their odyssey have been recorded.

The CPR had come to Calgary in 1883, and a rail line was extended north through Red Deer to Edmonton in 1891. In 1893, when these Jewish farmers arrived, Calgary had a population of about 4000, with only two Jewish families.

Within a year of their arrival, the Jewish settlers were asking officials for assistance. The following letter, dated late in 1894, is the only one in the JHSSA files, but is probably similar to earlier appeals. It was sent to the Dominion Lands Agent at Red Deer.

Dear Sir,

I beg to apply to you for assistance as I am destitute.

Am a Jewish settler, broke 18 acres, crop failed, my little money all spent for building, no stock to sell, Merchants wont give me credit and I am threatened with starvation unless some one comes to my assistance.

Please help me get some grain for seed next Spring and some food for Winter. Awaiting your reply,

I am, Yours truly,
(sd.) A. Blank

The federal government's response was to deny responsibility, on the technicality that the settlers had not met all their homesteading obligations. The matter was forwarded through the Canadian High Commission in London to "the promoters of this Colony," the Russo-Jewish Relief Committee.

The British Jews responded with at least one donation of 100 pounds, as well as other payments.

The plight of the Jewish homestead-

ers and the attitude of the authorities is reinforced in this letter to his superior in Winnipeg by Red Deer Dominion Lands Agent J.G. Jessup, in April, 1894.

"I have the honor to enclose herewith a letter from a member of a small Jewish colony brought into this District last year through the agency I understand of a Mr. Holmes. They have settled in Township 36-25 W.4.M., but none of them have as yet made entry, notwithstanding all my warnings and notifications to do so. They say they have no money at present.

Altogether they are most undesirable immigrants, being miserably poor and knowing absolutely nothing about farming. Then again the white settlers

in the locality object strongly to them as neighbors and are dreading a further incursion.

The agent at Calgary came up here about a month ago for the purpose of distributing among them seed grain and provisions to the amount of something over \$400 which I believe was furnished by some wealthy foreign people of the same race but after his arrival he found their necessities so urgent that he made a money distribution instead."

The Calgary agent, Amos Rowe, left a list of families to whom he had distributed British relief funds. His remarks on one of the lists indicates that even after one year many of the

continues page 6

375606 RECEIVED MAR 4 1895

Statement of the disbursement of £50 sterling contributed by the Russo-Jewish Committee London - England for the benefit of the Jewish Refugees in the Red Deer District

	\$	c	\$	c
			243	33
A. Blank	30	40		
O. Wexleman	30	40		
J. Wexleman Sen ^r	30	40		
L. Wexleman	30	40		
Sarah Wexleman	30	53		
Mrs. Wexleman Jun ^r	30	40		
R. Wexleman	30	40		
P. Weinstein	30	40		
	243	33	243	33

Account of the final 1895 relief payment to the "Jewish Refugees in the Red Deer District."

Pine Lake Jews

continued from page 5

Red Deer Jews were in the process of leaving for more amenable locales. Here are excerpts from his notes:

User Wexelman, wife & one child;
At present on land;

Isaac Wexelman, wife and one child;

Going to California to earn money for family. Wife & child remain here;
Joseph Wexelman, wife & 2 children;

At present on land. Family in old country;

Jonas Wexelman, wife & 2 children;

Gone to California to earn money. Intends on returning. Family still there;
Joseph Wexelman Jr., Boy of 19 years; In Township;

A. Pewowitz, wife & 2 children;
Gone to Chicago; Back in spring. A. Asherman has letter of authority to make entry for him;

Asha Asherman, wife & 2 children;
In Township with wife; Has made entry but ... his fee should be returned to him if fees are supplied to others - is now utterly destitute;

A. Blanck, wife & 2 children; In Township, but family in the States;

Solomon, Joseph, Joe, and Philip Blanck, sons of A. Blanck; Came in with their father but have gone to the States for work."

In February, 1895, Red Deer lands agent Jessup distributed another British relief payment, and reported to Ottawa in part as follows:

"I have distributed the amount 50 pounds sterling - contributed by the Russo-Jewish Committee in Longing for the relief of the Russo-Jewish Refugees who are still living in this district.

At first I had resolved to make an apportionment upon a basis of heads of families and un-married members but on being informed that everything was held by them in common, and that they were accustomed to assist each other, I acceded to their request to make an equal division of the funds.

The whole amount is to be applied to sustenance as it seems to me the time before harvest is so long that the money would only suffice for their personal wants and perhaps a little seed grain. They expressed themselves in terms of gratitude for the relief provided for them by the committee.

It is probable that if they ever get ahead and are in a position to do so

they will pay the homestead entry fees with the lands they have settled upon. I gave them clearly to understand that no further appeal would be entertained."

Our records end in 1895; presumably the colony members moved to the United States; we have no knowledge that any existing Alberta Jews are their descendants.

A smaller group of 16 Jews, also sponsored by the Russo-Jewish Committee, attempted in 1893 to farm near Fort Macleod, 100 miles south of Calgary. Their colony failed as well.

Compiled by Jack Switzer. Credits: National Archives of Canada; JHSSA Archives; Max Rubin, "Alberta's Jews," in Frank Palmer, Peoples of Alberta.

The Archives

continued from page 4

- Register of marriages, deaths, 1918-33 (Rabbi S. Smolensky's original provincial record book)

- Hadassah - minute books, 1933-41;

- National Council of Jewish Women, Calgary, - scrapbook, reflecting the chapter's activity, 1948-53.

This material is complimented by an ever-growing collection of research articles, photographs, official documents, and oral histories that reflect a vibrant, active Jewish community.

Land of Promise - The Book

Land of Promise, a planned hardcover book, will contain many photos and data from our recent exhibit. We are still seeking new material, notably old photos and family histories.

If you have any interesting pre-1945 "Jews in Southern Alberta" photos and can lend them to us, please call our office (253-8600) Wednesday afternoons.

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Many, Many Thanks to Tiby Presma who started a new and appropriate fundraiser for us. To honour Mel & Therese Nagler's 40th Wedding Anniversary, she established a special fund with proceeds being donated for books for our library. A special certificate was presented to the couple to mark the occasion.

A similar fund and certificate was presented to Azriel Presma to celebrate his 70th birthday.

Thanks to the families who contributed to these special funds.