

DISCOVERY

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H. Hoffman's Fish Market & Grocery Store, 508 - 4th Street S.E. Calgary, c.1909.

Photo: JHSSA Archives

Focus on Jewish Business

A major difference between the history of Jews in Alberta and those in the rest of Canada is this area's reliance on independent business ownership - large and small - as the major occupation.

Many Jews here carried on with the trades and skills they had practiced in Eastern Europe. Others, out of necessity, sought out workshop and retailing as the clearest path to security.

Alberta did not offer to immigrant Jews the factory jobs so common in eastern centers. Some Jews were

salaried workers, but the majority were independent business owners. As evidence, the 1931 census reported the following data about Alberta Jews: there were 66 Jewish farmers, 76 wholesalers and dealers, 26 hawkers and pedlars, and an astonishing 460 retailers. (There were about 1,000 Jewish households in Alberta in 1931.)

Post-war economic and social progress have seen able Jewish men and women move into professional and managerial occupations in large

numbers. Many more now work as employees. The previous dominance of business ownership as the major Jewish occupation has, however, declined.

Early Alberta Jewish businesses ranged from tiny market stalls to large multi-branch companies. Most, however, were small in scale - groceries, second-hand stores, tailor shops, furniture stores, clothing outlets, jewellers, and the like. Some evolved into major enterprises; all faced the challenges of economic upheavals and social changes. And some, fortunately fewer than in other areas of Canada, faced hostility from competitors and anti-semites.

The articles in this issue describe only a few of these businesses and the men and women behind their counters. They are intended to illustrate both the prosperity

and the hardships experienced by Southern Alberta's Jewish businessmen.

Featured in this issue

- *Jewish Bakers*
- *J.A. Guttman - A Business Odyssey*
- *1915 Prohibition Campaign*
- *Mary Hurw Goldberg*
- *Kosher Butchers*
- *H.N. Sereth - Lumber King*
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Jewish Bakers Mix It Up - 1929-1931

Between 1929 and 1931 Calgary's Jewish bakers met regularly to maintain prices and discourage competition among themselves. Illegal now, the merchant group formed by the bakers was then legal, common and typical, and such associations were by no means restricted to Jewish businesses.

The Calgary Jewish Bakers' Association was modelled after a similar group in Regina, which included most of that city's bakeries. (Among them was a Jewish shop, Queen City Bakeries, run by H. Presma.)

The group's formation may have been encouraged by the community's only Rabbi, Simon Smolensky, as part of his responsibility to maintain "shalom bayit" - "peace in the house."

A young lawyer and Jewish community leader, Abraham I Shumiatcher, served as the group's secretary and most meetings were held in his Grain Exchange Building law office. It is in the extensive Shumiatcher papers in the Glenbow Archives that the records of the Jewish Bakers' Association are found.

Besides A.I. Shumiatcher and Rabbi Smolensky, the following were present at the group's first meeting, on February 25, 1929: Lawrence Lederer, Old Country Bakery, 101 - 9 Street NE; Fischel Davids, Our Own Bakery, 230 - 3 Avenue East; Feivel Rosenthal, Calgary Bakery, 906 - First Avenue NE; Sam Martin, Independent Bakery; and Hyman Caplan, Independent Bakery, of 405 - 4 Avenue East.

Each member was to deposit \$50 (later \$100) with the treasurer (Rabbi Smolensky) and dues were set at \$2.00 per month. Fines assessed for violation of the group's rules could come out of the offender's deposit. Shumiatcher's fees and expenses were paid from the dues.

The first complaint came quickly. One of Lederer's drivers stated, in an affidavit, that Our Own Bakery had sold bread to a homemaker at less than the Association-set price of 14 cents per double loaf. Davids said it was a boarding house, entitled to a lower price.

"After some deliberation it was decided that that particular house is a rooming house and not a boarding house..." Davids agreed to sell to this customer at retail, and no fine was assessed.

Later meetings repeated this pattern, with some of the bakers becoming more and more combative, laying frequent charges and counter-accusation against each other.

Raiding of customers, prohibited by the Association, was a common complaint. Davids accused Lederer of unethical conduct when Lederer began supplying the new owner of Frico Store # 5. Davids said he had been their bread supplier for six years and had lost money when the earlier owners went broke.

The verdict (by Caplan, Rosenthal, and Shumiatcher,) was "that Mr. Lederer should deliver only half of the number of loaves of breads sold previously by F. Davids to the Frico Store. L. Lederer, however, showed his good heartedness and right spirit since he promised to give up entirely Frico Store No. 5."

"This was applauded by all the members present because Mr. Lederer has proven that he has the interests and peace of the members deep in his heart. Mr Davids agreed to let Mr. Lederer have the Sun Cafe located on Eighth Avenue East."

Some other colorful notes from Shumiatcher's minutes:

April 9, 1929 - "Davids claims that the Ritz cafe taken away from him by L. Lederer."

April 16, 1929 - "S. Ostrowsky, a driver for Mr. Lederer, testified..." On Monday, the 15th instant, the manager of the Somme Cafe refused to take any bread from me because he had borrowed \$200 from Mr., Davids, therefore he decided to take F. David's bread only."

April 22, 1929 - "The meeting was a stormy one, and at one time it was thought that the organization was in danger, but, nevertheless, the members survived the storm and they shall remain to function."

May 6, 1929 - "Mr. A. Groberman (Jewish Community president) and Rev. S. Smolensky were the Arbitrators in the matter of Lederer vs. Davids. Sam Ostrowsky (representing Lederer) was too excited and the heat of the moment called Davids a liar. Mr. Davids would not stand for it and declared that he is compelled to leave the meeting, which he did."

"It was decided to hold a picnic on the first of July, A.D. 1930."

July 31 - "Mr. McKay of the Fleishman Yeast Company was present at this meeting, when he informed the members of this association that the prices of bread the other (non-Jewish) bakers are going to charge from the First of August, 1929, are as follows ... retail - 11 cents per loaf."

August 10, 1929 - "Mr. Davids complained of Mr. Kazakevich, a driver for Mr. Rosenthal, who sold 15 loaves of bread for \$1 to Mr. Smith, one of the storekeepers in the City Hall Market, in the presence of Herman Nagler."

"Wise has a wagon on which there is an inscription 'Wise's Grocery.' He is selling groceries from house to house and at the same time offering bread at a lower price."

'A. Fineberg, who used to work for Our Own Bakery, has left his position and is intending to commence buying bread from bakers and selling same to individuals and storekeepers. This is creating a new situation, something that has never taken place before because there never existed any bread pedlars."

The next two years, marked by the beginning of the Great Depression, saw some turnover of membership and general hardship in the baking and retailing community. By September of 1931 the sanctioned wholesale price for bread had dropped to nine cents per double loaf from the 1929 price of fourteen cents. Even the distress prices were being undercut by members, and some retailers were accused of selling below cost.

The last minutes in the file mention Norman Libin, of Regal Bakery. This shop was the forerunner of what was to become a local baking giant - Palace Bread.

It is assumed that the members, pressed economically, increasingly ignored the Association's rules and let the group's influence lapse. In December, 1931, the bank of Montreal wrote to Shumiatcher about the Association's inactive account.

Jewish bakers continued to be an important part of the community's life, but the Baker's Association - its members argumentative and financially stressed - was never again a business influence.

by Jack Switzer. Source: A.I. Shumiatcher papers, Glenbow Alberta Archives

Joseph A. Guttman - A Business Odyssey

Joseph Arthur Guttman was one of eight children brought to Montreal by widower Shmuel Guttman from the town of Suchava, Bukovina, (then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and now in Romania.) The four brothers, Arthur, Lieb (Louis,) Israel (Schoel,) and Isadore came with their father in 1897. Sisters Pia, Ethel, and Esther came later, and were followed by a half-sister, Machla and her husband, Leib Kramer.

Herb Guttman, Arthur's son, of Toronto, has done extensive research on his family's history, and the following quotations are from papers he has donated to the JHSSA.

"Schmuel, my father, and the uncles took up door-to-door peddling in Montreal for a livelihood. They stayed there until 1905 when they moved to take up homesteads near Trochu, Alberta. (The Leib Kramers, and Pia and husband Mendel Pepper, also homesteaded nearby. Esther and her husband Max Silver farmed there after their 1913 marriage. Ethel Guttman married Charles Waterman, son of another Trochu-area Jewish homesteader.)

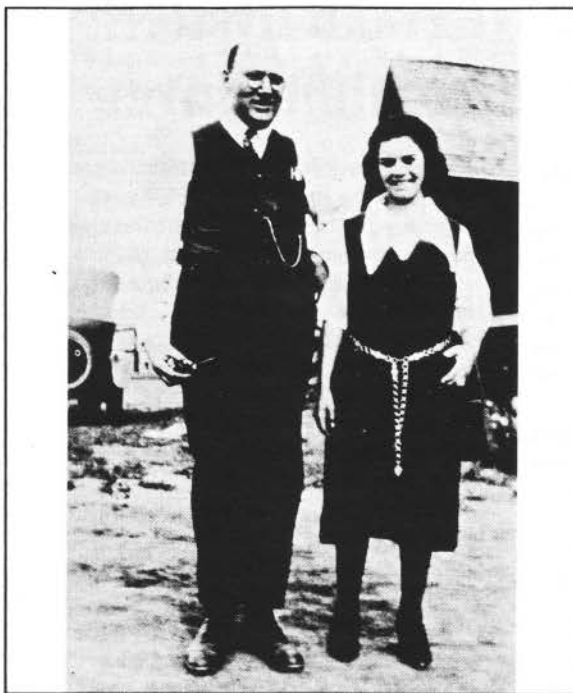
"Dad was appointed as a Trustee to the Trochu school district in 1908, and in 1911 became the first Jewish 'Justice of the Peace' in Alberta.

"An article by Dad in the Canadian Western Jewish Times talks about the hardships in establishing the farms and the problems caused by drought, etc. In 1911, an early frost wiped out the crops and most of the group went to look for temporary work in the nearby towns and in Calgary. Some had returned to Trochu by 1913, which was a good farming year.

"A few, including Dad and Uncles Isadore and Schoel, chose not to return to the land.

"Dad and his brothers Isadore, Schoel, and Leib started a liquor store when they went to Calgary. Leib's diary read that he came to Calgary on January 1, 1912 and began the liquor business in March of that year. They stayed with this a short time only.

Herb Guttman's notes may be in error on the liquor business dates. Archival records show the family's involvement in the liquor trade lasted



Joseph A. Guttman and Mary Zuidema, Trochu, 1992.

Photo: JHSSA Archives

until prohibition came to Alberta in 1915. The 1915 city directory lists Leib and Isadore Guttman as running Family Liquor Supply at 812 Centre St. South. Saul Guttman (Schoel) is also listed as a liquor dealer. The Guttman Liquor Store (A.J. Guttman) at 326 - 8th Avenue East is noted as being in receivership.

Joseph Guttman was active in the 1915 anti-prohibition campaign. A separate article (page 4) describes the "dry" side's ferocious attack on Guttman.

"I can't recall anyone ever referring to Dad as being wealthy. Mind you, the business must have been a good one. Dad and Uncle Isadore bought the Grand Central Hotel in Okotoks in 1913, and Schoel started a confectionery store on 8th Avenue in Calgary around that time. The money for these ventures probably came from the liquor store.

"Isadore stayed with the hotel in Okotoks. Dad couldn't have lasted too long with him, in view of the fact that he got married (to Leontina Ghitter) in September 1913 in Montreal.

Word has it that Morris Ghitter worked for the CPR, and made frequent trips to Calgary. Reportedly, he had heard about Dad, and looked him up with the suggestion ...'have I got a girl

for you.' I don't know whether Mom and dad spent time together before the wedding, whether they got to know each other, etc. In some ways this can be looked upon as an 'arranged marriage.'

"Mom and Dad started off living in Calgary. Zeida (Morris) Ghitter and the rest of his family must have moved west soon thereafter. By 1914 Morris Ghitter was established in a men's clothing/second-hand store, Empire Clothing, at 124 - 9th Avenue East in Calgary. His son Lou Ghitter and Dad worked with Zeida at this location.

"Mom and Dad moved back to Montreal prior to 1918. Don't know why this move. Their stay in the east didn't last long. For some reason they spent time in the States before heading back to Calgary. (Daughter Jeanette was born in Chicago in 1918.) Dad may have had dealings with the Bronfmans in Montreal, and the sojourn to Chicago may have been in connection with this.

"I think Dad started up a second-hand store two or three doors away from Zeida Ghitter's Empire Clothing on his return to Calgary. It was Liberty Exchange, at 116 - 9th Avenue East. I'm sure he was still in it until the mid-1920's.

"From 1927 until 1934 we lived in Glietzen, where Dad ran the Glietzen Hotel. By this time Isadore was in Carbon, Alberta, and Leib and Schoel had returned to Montreal with their families.

"The Hotel wasn't all that large. It had a beer parlour, a large kitchen with a large dining room, a suite of rooms on the second floor where we lived, and about 25 rental rooms. I can remember that a number of Jewish cattle buyers, fur merchants, and peddlers would stay with us on their regular swings through the area.

"After Glietzen, Mom and Dad returned to Calgary and opened a confectionery store on Centre Street and 3rd Avenue. As well as selling candy, Mom served home-made soup, sandwiches, etc. Things were really tough; the place went belly-up in 1935 after just over a year.

"Next Dad tried selling life insurance with Izzy Florence. Dad was hardly the

Joseph Guttman from previous page

super-salesman; about all we got out of it was a set of cheap life-insurance policies for us kids. During this period (1935 - 1937) we lived in the Devenish Apartments, on 17th Avenue and 8th Street West.

"Dad next joined his father-in-law, Morris Ghitler, at Empire Clothing. Lou Ghitler was also involved until he moved to Edmonton in 1938. There, Lou and Ett Ghitler raised a daughter, Karen (Roth,) and two sons, Harvey Ghitler and Ron Ghitler. (Ron Ghitler and Karen Roth now live in Calgary; Harvey died in 1975.)

"After the war broke out, there was a general business improvement, so that going on his own again became feasible.

"He opened Guttman's Clothing Store, at 208 - 8th Avenue East, in the early 40's. It was a couple of doors down from Jack Faber's place - Jack's Suit Store. Jack and Dad ran deals together; if a customer came into either place and couldn't find what he wanted, the response would be.. 'wait a minute, I'll go check with my other store.'

"Dad's last place of business was Marshall Clothing, on 8th Avenue near 4th Street East. He probably moved there shortly after his son Sidney was discharged from the army in 1946. About 1947 Uncle Isadore sold his store in Carbon, and became partners again with Dad, and Sid.

"Isadore Guttman died in 1949. In 1952 Marshall Clothing, Dad's last business, was wound down, and Sid opened his first Lad & Lassie Store. Dad then retired."

Joseph Guttman died in 1957, at 85. Leontina Ghitler Guttman (1895-1977) survived him for nearly 20 years. The children of Leontina and Joseph Guttman were Jeanette, 1918-1965 (m. Abe Zellman;) Sidney, 1919-1990 (Cecilia Finegold;) Herb, b. 1923 (Sybil Eve Caplan;) and David, 1929-1974 (Estelle Heller.)

Sources: Herb Guttman, Toronto; JHSSA Archives; Glenbow Alberta Archives.

"Herr Guttman" Victim of Anti-German Hysteria in 1915 Prohibition Vote

Jewish pioneer Joseph A. Guttman got more than he expected when he took an active part in the 1915 provincial plebiscite on liquor prohibition. He was an "assimilated" Jew, a former rural Justice of the Peace, active in local business affairs, with many non-Jewish social and political connections.

Guttman was a leader of the "wet" side, which favored retention of the relatively liberal existing laws. His family ran a large retail/wholesale liquor business in Calgary and at the time of the 1915 vote owned the Grand Central Hotel in Okotoks, just south of the city.

Guttman and his hotel and liquor trade colleagues, organized as the Licensed Victualers Association, brought in an American "expert," Dr. A. C. Windle to represent them in public. The Chicago journalist had run pro-German articles in his magazine, which did not go down well in a Canada then at war with Germany and its ally, the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The "dry" side seized upon the anti-German fever of the times and viciously attacked Windle whenever he spoke. They also reviled Joseph Guttman. The prohibitionist Calgary *Albertan*, learning that he had been born in part of Austria, ran a headline: "Herr Guttman

and Some of the Men Whom he is Canadianizing." The wets had been pushing through the courts the naturalization (and voting privileges) of many immigrants, mainly Chinese and eastern Europeans.

The *Albertan* stated: "J. A. Guttman, liquor man, and Austrian by birth, is sponsor of the large number of alien enemies and "German-Russians" as well as a large number of Chinamen who are being naturalized in order to vote against the loyal citizens and the white people on the prohibition vote."

The "dry" forces were led by a Baptist minister, J.H. Patterson, acting for a coalition of Christian, temperance, and women's groups known as the Alberta Temperance and Moral Reform League.

During the last week of the campaign the Bartenders' Union brought famous American lawyer Clarence Darrow to Calgary to boost their cause.

Prohibition newspapers attacked the wets to the very end. Regarding voter registration, The *Albertan* reported: "Herr Guttman was in his element. He trotted out a list of about a hundred proteges and tendered it to the enumerator at Poll 16 in Centre Calgary. The enumerator sniffed at it."


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Issued by the Alberta Temperance and Moral Reform League

Mary Hurov Goldberg

From the Family History Section of *Land of Promise*

"I was born Mary Zeidel and was raised in a Polish village called Lopiennik, near Lublin. My parents were also born in Poland in a village called Faselvitz.

"So, in 1926, my cousins sent me a ticket. I left my family to go to Canada, not knowing that I would never see them again. They all perished in the Holocaust.

"It took three weeks to reach Canada. I travelled by boat and train and finally arrived in Eyre, Saskatchewan, to my cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Max Klein and their family. They were very happy that I came. I had to help in the house and with the farm chores like milking cows, tending to the chickens, etc. It wasn't easy. I also went to school there. The school was about three miles away, so I had to go with a horse and buggy. I stayed there for three years, then I decided to move on.

"I wanted to go to a city, so I came to Calgary in December, 1929. I didn't know anybody here. But my cousins, the Kleins, knew a family by the name of Rootman. Sam Mozeson met me at the CNR station when I arrived. I took up residence with the Rootmans. "I had to start looking for a job, and got one with Pat Burns and Co., making wieners at 25 cents an hour. After a few months I got a 2 1/2 cent raise. I worked there for one year and then I was laid off, so I had to get another job. I found one at the Clifton Grocery and Confectionery store for \$10 per week.

"Bob Hurov was my boss. After I

worked there for several months, Bob and I fell in love and I married my boss in 1931. We had four children, Ronnie Hurov, Harvey Hurov, Shirley Goldberg, and Estelle Bleet.

"Unfortunately, Bob passed away in 1947. I was left with my four beautiful children, the oldest being thirteen and the youngest two and a half. I was working hard and long hours in my store to raise and educate my children.

"After my children grew up, I met Louis Goldberg (whose son Arnold married my daughter Shirley.) We were married in 1966 and, after eleven years of our wonderful life together, Louis passed away in 1977.

"My children are now married and I have 13 grandchildren, who give me much happiness."

As told by Mary Goldberg

Herr Guttman cont'd

The vote, on July 21, 1915, was victory for prohibition. Province-wide, the vote was 60 per cent prohibitionist; in Calgary the dry vote was slightly higher. The result was very restrictive liquor laws, the demise of local liquor retailers, and the temporary end of hotel liquor consumption.

Several Jewish hotel owners in the province were affected, and Guttman's outlets were soon in bankruptcy. Pioneer liquor merchant Jacob Diamond left the business before the campaign, and was less affected.

The prohibitionist attacks on "German-Russians" and "enemy aliens" like Joseph A. Guttman was, unfortunately, only part of a major wartime movement that pitted the "Anglo-Saxon" majority against minority-group immigrants perceived as radical, inferior, and dangerous.

Persecution took political forms, with the internment of some "enemy aliens" and the requirements that others register and regularly report to police. Only a few hundred of Alberta's 37,000 non-naturalized natives of Germany and Austro-Hungary were Jewish, but all were tarred with the anti-Canadian brush. Many such immigrants who had already been naturalized were stripped of their citizenship under wartime emergency legislation.

"Alien" organizations, schools, and publications were shut down. Anyone perceived as "alien," including east European-born Jews, were victims of the war patriotism frenzy.

Rioting occurred in Calgary in February, 1916, when soldiers and civilians wrecked a downtown "German-owned" restaurant and the Riverside Hotel in the "German-speaking" Riverside/Bridgeland area. The area's immigrant population, including many Jewish families, cowered in their homes.

Several southern Alberta Jewish men joined the Canadian forces during "The Great War," and two - Samuel Hackman and Simon Zuidema, (both European-born) - died in France.

Despite such notable cases, Jewish efforts to join the Canadian mainstream were hindered by their unwilling association with a

demonized enemy. The 1915 prohibition campaign, in which Joseph A. Guttman was subject to virulent harassment, typified this frustration.

by Jack Switzer
Sources, JHSSA
Archives; Glenbow
Alberta Archives;
James Gray, Booze;
Howard Palmer,
Patterns of Prejudice

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Calgary Kosher Butchers Go to City Hall - 1923

Calgary's Kosher butchers were able in 1923 to gain a small exemption from the city's hours-of-business by-laws. It was a relatively minor matter, but an examination of its progress through City Hall shows some interesting and instructive aspects of Jewish-Gentile business relationships in that era.

In 1923 Calgary had a population of about 75,000, including 1400 Jews.

Hours-of-business rules were specific in Calgary. Retailers in 1923 closed weekdays at six, Saturdays at ten, every Wednesday afternoon, and all day Sunday. An exemption had been granted to "Kosher" markets in 1917.

At some point, however, the exemption was rescinded, and the kosher butchers set out early in 1923 to once again have separate business hours.

Three Jewish butchers were involved: Isaac Marks, of Kosher Meat Market, 622 - 4 Street East; Louis Rootman, of Standard Kosher Meat Market, 521 - 4 Street East; and J. Lukatsky, of the London Meat Market, 438 - 8 Avenue East.

(Lukatsky is also listed in a City Directory as assistant manager of Union Packing, which had a large plant on Nose Creek and a stall at the City Hall Market. Henry Belkin is noted as manager of both operations. Presumably Lukatsky ran both his kosher shop on 8th Avenue and the firm's retail outlet at the Market, which is assumed to have been non-Kosher.)

On February 1, 1923, the Legislative

Committee reported to City Council that lawyer Benjamin Ginsberg, representing three Kosher butchers, "dealing exclusively in Kosher meat," requested they... "be allowed to open from sunset to twelve o'clock midnight on Saturdays. ...the customers are practically confined to the Jewish race, and in other cities this privilege was granted this type of shop."

The committee "whilst favorably inclined to the proposition," decided to canvass the city's other butcher's about the issue.

Over 80 letters were sent out, and twenty or so replies were received by the city clerk. Some butchers favored the Jewish request, but a few were opposed. R. Hicks, of the New Calgary market, stated the existing bylaw "is good enough for both Jew & Canadian. ... as I go home ... I can see one of the Jew-shops, (belonging to Latoski & Belkin, both Jews) serving customers long after the proper time to close."

J. Brown said "if the Laws of this Town don't suit them let them get out of the meat business."

An official of the giant P. Burns & Company, which ran six retail shops in Calgary, wrote that "whilst some of these Kosher Meat Markets do not open to the Jewish trade until Sunset, they are not above doing business with the Gentiles in the way of taking orders, et., on Saturday. ... they should conform with the By-laws of the City and Country in which they reside."

Some opponents cannot be considered Anti-semitic; their concerns were about the principles of consistent business regulation, the difficulty of enforcing any exemptions, and the effects on retail employees.

W. Fisher - "I have strong objections as it will cause a dissatisfaction about hours all over town."

John Allan - "Whereas there only three such markets at present, grant such a request and in a very short time the number will be greatly increased."

Robert Burns - "...these three shops certainly are a privileged class for while they may sell only Kosher Meat they could sell it to any others than Orthodox Jews. Assuming that their privilege permitted them only to sell to people of their own Faith who will vouch for its being done?"

The legislative committee recommended that the butchers' petition be granted, with considerable restrictions. They could now stay open until eleven, but only between April 1 to September 30. They could sell only kosher products. It was felt the early sunset of the winter months provided Jewish customers enough time, between sunset and ten pm, to buy their meat within the existing legal hours. City Council agreed.

The Jewish merchants had won minor concessions, but their efforts can be viewed as significant. They showed that bigots did exist in their midst, but could not prevent fair-minded people from acting on their behalf.

We can only speculate on the result had the three kosher butcher shops presented more of a competitive force to the retail establishment.

By Jack Switzer. Sources: JHSSA Archives, City of Calgary Archives, Glenbow Alberta Archives.

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.

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Henry N. Sereth and his Riches - Five Daughters and a Lumber Empire

Two men - brothers Henry Noah Sereth and Alexander Sereth, are the only Jews counted among Calgary's pre-World War I business elite.

The list, by historian Paul Voisey includes politician/lawyers R.B. Bennett and James Lougheed; ranchers Patrick Burns, A.E. Cross, William Roper Hull, and Col. James Walker; and a number of men associated with lumber and construction materials, including Peter Prince, W.H. Cushing, and the Sereth Brothers, owners of the huge Riverside Lumber Company.

H.N. and Alexander Sereth were one of the city's largest private employers in 1914. Riverside Lumber, including its Calgary mill and yards, two British Columbia lumber mills, rural lumber yards, and its construction and farm subsidiaries employed 600 men. Only the Canadian Pacific Railway had more employees than Riverside Lumber.

Henry Sereth (known by all as HN) and his younger brother Alexander Sereth moved from Zbarash, in Austrian Poland, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, to Montreal in 1900. HN had been a lumber dealer in eastern Europe. He left behind his wife Rachel Kleiner and five young daughters. Alexander soon returned to Europe, and HN sought opportunities in various American locations.

By 1903 HN Sereth was in Seattle where he re-entered the lumber business as a tallyman - measuring lumber. He soon moved to take up a similar job at Arrowhead, British Columbia. In 1904, as a lumber salesman, he visited Calgary, made a good deal of money (\$7,000) on lumber deals, and then made the city his permanent home.

Rachel and the five daughters, Sophie, Cecyle, Emily, Stella, and Clara, joined HN in 1905. Alexander returned, to Calgary as well, with his wife Sophie.

There was big money to be made in real estate and construction.

The Sereth Brothers became involved in both areas, through Southern Alberta Lumber Company, its subsidiary Riverside Lumber Company, and Adanac Construction Company, which built houses in the Hillhurst-Sunnyside, Roxboro, and Bridgeland districts. Their Cheadle Farming Company owned sev-



Sereth Family, c. 1906. Top row: (l-r) Emily, Cecyle. Middle: Sophie, Henry & Rachel (mother & father). Front row: Calra, Stella

eral sections of farmland just east of Calgary.

Voisey states: 'A 15,000 dollar investment launched the Riverside Lumber Company in 1905, and seven years later they were turning out annually 360,000 dollars worth of assorted wood products. Two mills had been thrown up in British Columbia and retail lumber yards were scattered in numerous towns.'

The H.N. Sereth family first lived in Calgary at 431 - 12th Avenue East. HN helped a Jewish neighbor, Nat Bell, build a duplex next door. The Bells lived on one side; Sereth daughters and newly-arrived relatives occupied the other half.

Stella Sameth recalls, in *The Sereth Story*: "'There was a barn in the back yard and we had a cow. Grandma Kleiner always saw to it that her daughter always had good Polish maids whom she personally selected in Galicia; sometime there were two. Vasy, a Doukhabor, who worked at father's lumber yard would come to clean the barn and do other chores around the house.'

"Netta Bell (wife of Nat Bell) was very helpful in the process of Americanizing our family. She was born in the United States and to us it

seemed as if she had come over on the Mayflower. It was she who anglicized our names."

Sereth grandson Stanley Winfield continues the family story: "On a trip to Europe in 1912, HN visited his sister Esther Nagler in Zbarash; she suggested he take her eldest son Herman with him to Canada. In 1913 Herman Nagler's parents, Meyer and Esther Nagler and Herman's six brothers and sisters came to Calgary.

"Both Herman and his father worked at the Riverside Lumber Company as did many Jewish and German immigrants to the area. Morris Kleiner, who worked as a foreman at the yard, recalled " ... some people working in the lumber yard would come early in the morning and daven with their tallis on right there, between piles of lumber.

In 1913 the H.N. Sereths moved to a large home at 24th Avenue and 5th Street S.W. (The red-brick house is now part of the Scottish Nursing Home.)

Stanley Winfield continues: "By 1916 the two Sereth families were well established Calgarians and had accumulated considerable wealth. HN was a founding member of the House of Jacob Synagogue and donated much of the lumber for its construction,

and my grandmother Rosa (Rachel) was a founding member of the Calgary Symphony and very active in the growing Jewish community.

"In 1916 this tranquil and financially secure life ended. A crop failure combined with federal legislation forced Riverside into receivership. The new law was intended to assist farmers serving in the armed forces and allowed, under certain conditions, a moratorium of their debts. Many who qualified were indebted to the Riverside Lumber Company.

"The Cheadle farm sustained the Sereths until 1919, when the Southern Alberta Lumber Company contracted with the federal government to supply all the timber for the construction of wharves in Montreal. Richard B. Bennett, a Calgary Member of Parliament - and the company lawyer - helped to overcome a serious obstacle created by an anti-semitic bureaucrat in charge of allocating space on government-owned freighters."

In 1918 the HN Sereth family moved to Seattle, where HN had already established an office. Alexander Sereth later moved to Vancouver to run the BC mill operations. The fortunes of the Sereth brothers were to rise and fall again amid the economic turbulence of the 20's and 30's. Alexander continued in the lumber business in Vancouver until his death in 1953. H.N. Sereth retired in 1935, and died in Seattle in 1944. He had devoted much of his post retirement efforts towards rescuing European relatives from the Holocaust threat.

Three H.N. Sereth Daughters, Sophie, Cecyle, and Emily, were married in Calgary. Sophie married John Weinfield, Calgary's first Jewish pharmacist. Cecyle's husband was Harry Allen, who with his brothers and uncles ran the Allen Theatre chain, then Canada's largest, from Calgary. The Weinfields later moved to Vancouver, the Allens to Toronto.

Emily Sereth married Edmonton lawyer Moses I. Lieberman, and moved to that city. Moe Lieberman was active in many areas of Edmonton society, and was a founder of the Canadian Football League. Stella and Clara were married in Seattle, Stella to James Sameth,



H.N. Sereth (with newspaper) at his McGillvary, B.C. mill, c. 1910.
Photo: S.H. Winfield

whom she had met in Calgary, and Clara to Mandel Nieder. Both men worked briefly for HN and later became independent businessmen.

Stella Sereth ends her chapter on her mother, (who died in 1935) with this unusual tribute:

"The H.N. Sereths had married off their daughters within a span of ten years. The brides were married at an average age of twenty-one years. All married within their own faith to decent young men - although their father-in-law once described them as 'dem fools.' He helped them all at one time or another as his father and father-in-law had helped him. There were no divorces and there were fourteen wonderful grandchildren. There was particular tribute paid to Rosa as the best mother-in-law, because she accepted her daughters' husbands with uncritical affection."

by Jack Switzer

Sources: JHSSA Archives; Stanley Winfield, Vancouver; Stella Sameth, The Sereth Story; Paul Voisey, "Entrepreneurs in Early Calgary," in A. Rasporich, Frontier Calgary; Glenbow Alberta Archives.

JHSSA News

Land of Promise in Production Soon

Our photo history of the Jewish experience in Southern Alberta, Land of Promise, will be at the printer within days and will be available in the fall. Over one hundred copies have already been sold.

Your copy can be reserved by sending us the order form on page 5 of this issue. Price is \$50 per copy. The hard-cover book includes 400 photos, informative text, and numerous family histories.

Library List sent to Members

JHSSA members should have recently received a complete list of the books and videos in the Society's Harry B. Cohen Genealogical Library. The catalogue was updated by David Bickman, who regularly examines publishers' lists for suitable material and recommends purchases.

Our library of Jewish history and genealogy materials, although relatively small, is one of the few maintained by a local Jewish organization that has an active acquisition program.

JHSSA Tribute Cards

Beautiful photo tribute cards displaying five scenes from Southern Alberta's Jewish history are available to honor special occasions. Minimum (tax deductible) donation to have a card sent out is \$5.00.

To order cards, please call Tiby Presma at 2812-3910.

JHSSA Co-sponsors Godfrey Lecture

The Society was pleased to recently co-sponsor, along with the Calgary Jewish Community Council, a visit to Calgary by two Canadian historians, Judith Godfrey and Sheldon Godfrey. The Godfreys, of Toronto, discussed their recently-published work Search out the Land: The Jews and the Growth of Equality in British Colonial America, 1740 - 1867. A copy of their book has been added to our library.

Join the Jewish Historic Society of Southern Alberta