DISCOVERY

The Journal of the

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

תגלית

VOLUME 7, NO. 1 WINTER 1997

Jewish Cattlemen Remembered

Southern Alberta's Jews have a long history of involvement in the province's livestock industry. There were, as early as 1906, Jewish farmers involved in the cattle business, and later some sizeable Jewish-run ranches. There were Jewish dairy farms in the area.

The 1920's saw the development of a distinct western Canadian institution, the Jewish cattle dealer. City-based Jewish men travelled country roads as peddlers, taking cash if possible, but frequently settling for barter payment—vegetables, eggs, chickens, furs and hides, even livestock.

Many started as peddlers, but evolved into cattle-trading specialists, buying cattle from farmers, and selling them through licensed commission agents at the Calgary or Lethbridge stockyards. The immigrant Jewish dealers were poorly capitalized, and so many worked as sub-agents for the big livestock commission firms. The "commission men" often gave the Jewish dealers cash advances, and relations were generally friendly.

Morris Manolson, livestock dealer, Calgary, late 1930's. Source: Charna Shapiro.

Some cattle dealers owned or leased land, used for grazing or as feed lots, on which they fattened up cattle for resale. Many "farmed out" cattle to farmers to feed on a share or fee basis.

A few cattle dealers opened small slaughter-house enterprises which became major meat packing operations. These included Henry Belkin and Joe Lukatsky (Union Packing), Ben, Mire and Sam Katchen (Katchen Brothers—Calgary Packers), the Dvorkin family, and the Ben Kerr family.

(Not all were cattle "men". Several Jewish women, mainly on farms, raised cattle, and one prominent Jewish woman, Zahava Hanen, has run a large ranch near Turner Valley for many years.)

Articles in this issue of Discovery present some of our Jewish cattleman history—including peddlers, dealers, feeders, ranchers and packers.

– by Jack Switzer

A Special Thank You

We want to say thank you to our contributing foundations and a special group of members—our benefactors and patrons—persons and organizations who have made contributions well in excess of our regular dues. The special people and groups are:

Foundations:
The Kahanoff Foundation, Calgary
The Alvin & Mona Libin Foundation, Calgary
Harry B. Cohen Foundation, Calgary
Alberta Historical Resources Foundation

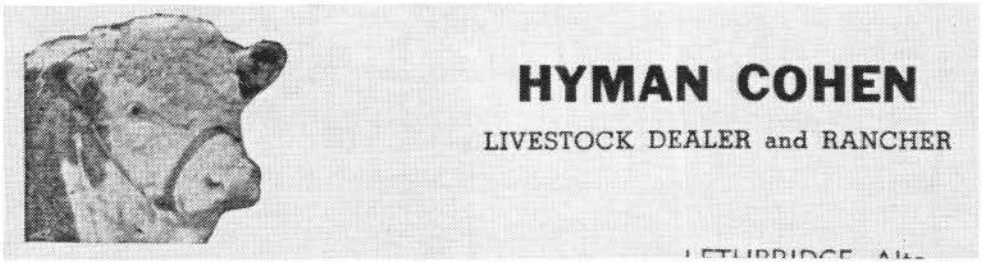
Corporate Sponsors:
Renfrew Insurance Brokers Ltd.

Benefactors:
Max & Blanche Bercovich
Jack & Rose Edelson
Dr. Noel Hershfield
Jay & Barbara Joffe
Chuck & Laurie Mozeson, Edmonton
Faith Riback
Alex & Phylis Rubin
Leo & Goldie Sheftel
Barry & Cheryl Slawsky, Edmonton
Barry & Debby Smolkin
David & Dinah Spindel

Patrons:
Walter & Beverly Barron
Dr. Ted Busheikin
Dr. Martha Cohen
Dan & JoAnn Gordon, Oak Park, CA
Bob & Sydney Kalef
Frank & Sophie Kettner
Barbara Libin
Allan & Wendy Mendelman
Alex Osten
Morris & Miriam Sanders
Betty Sherwood, Toronto
Nat Starr, San Mateo, CA
Stanley Winfield, New Westminster
Calgary Jewish Academy

In this Issue:

* Jewish cattlemen - from peddlers to packers
* The stockyards gang - 1920's
* Jewish cattlemen - 40 quick profiles
* The Katchen Family - pioneer packers
* Jewish brand names
* JHSSA news



Hyman Cohen blank cheque, Lethbridge, 1930's. The portrait is not that of Mr. Cohen. Source: Emanuel Cohen

The Stockyards Gang

The Jewish peddlers and cattle dealers of the mid-1920's (and in later decades) were true "traders." They left Calgary with a variety of goods in their trucks (and cars) and traded them to farmers and townsfolk for anything of value that could be sold back in the city. Buying and selling for cash might have been preferable, but reality often demanded "horse trading"—sometimes literally.

The dealers left the city early each week and spent several days in the countryside, sleeping in customers' homes or in small-town hotels, and returning towards the weekend with livestock and poultry, furs and hides, scrap metal, or anything else they could re-sell at a profit.

The cattle were sold through licensed commission agents at the stockyards. Other goods went to the Hide & Fur Exchange, second hand stores, scrap yards, while poultry and vegetables could be taken to the public market at 3rd Avenue and 3rd Street East.

On Friday afternoon, their vehicles unloaded, the dealers would meet in the Stockyards building to "shmooze" —to discuss business, to play poker or pinochle, and to enjoy a fresh cigar.

It was a hard life. There had to be enough cash to buy goods to sell, for travel expenses, and to leave for the family to get through the week. On-the-road partnerships were common; two men were better able than one to close deals, and two knew more English as well as more of the customers' many languages.

At one of the Friday afternoon meetings in 1925, cattle dealer Hyman Cohen (the writer's father) had big news. He was travelling to Winnipeg. His father-in-law, Solomon Goldenberg, was bidding on surplus goods from the T. Eaton catalogue warehouse. Hyman was soon off in a CPR caboose (a privilege normally granted to cattlemen accompanying their stock.)

A few days later Hyman's brother-in-law Izzy Goldenberg got a telegram from Winnipeg. He shared it with the Dvorkins and Avremkeh Levine at the Friday afternoon stockyards meeting. A boxcar full of Eaton's surplus hardware was on its way to Calgary. The stockyard gang was needed to unload, store, and sell the goods.

The products were "heavy metal." There were blacksmith anvils, sledge hammers, crowbars, and other hardware items. Eaton's had sold them the goods as scrap, by the ton.

Eaton's had offered Goldenberg and Cohen a consignment deal; they could pay in 30 days. There was one catch, though. Since the products had Eaton's labels, they could not be sold in the immediate trading area of an Eaton's store—they could only be disposed of in the countryside. This was fine with the dealers.

The stockyard group took samples of the goods on their next trading trip. Each carried an Eaton's catalogue and offered the goods to their customers at half the retail price. By Friday most had returned with their samples sold or traded and with orders for more items.

By the end of the third week, almost all the inventory had been moved by the enthusiastic peddlers. Soon Eaton's had been paid, and the group tallied up their profits, with Cohen and Goldenberg getting a share of all sales. Some made enough money to trade up to better trucks.

A year later, they did it again. They successfully bid on another carload of Eaton's surplus goods, adding such items as vices, pipe wrenches, hammers, chisels, and blacksmith tools to their inventory. This time the group split up the territory into routes, to avoid any disputes among themselves.

Year three rolled around with the dealers having high expectations. But they were to be disappointed. Eaton's told them the deal was off; there had been complaints from city Eaton stores as well as from rural retailers that the surplus-goods peddlers were hurting their business.

The Jewish stockyards gang was disappointed but resourceful. Some became manufacturer's agents, representing suppliers of goods in demand by their farm and town customers. Some took on new lines, and began selling paint, lumber, furniture, patent medicines, sewing and clothing goods, and other lines new to them.

The Eaton's catalogue continued to be a of use to them, as a guide to prices, as well as to the changing merchandise mix in demand by rural customers.

The Eaton's hardware experience had made them a few dollars, turned them into better businessmen, and taught them the deal-making techniques that would see them through the tough years to come.

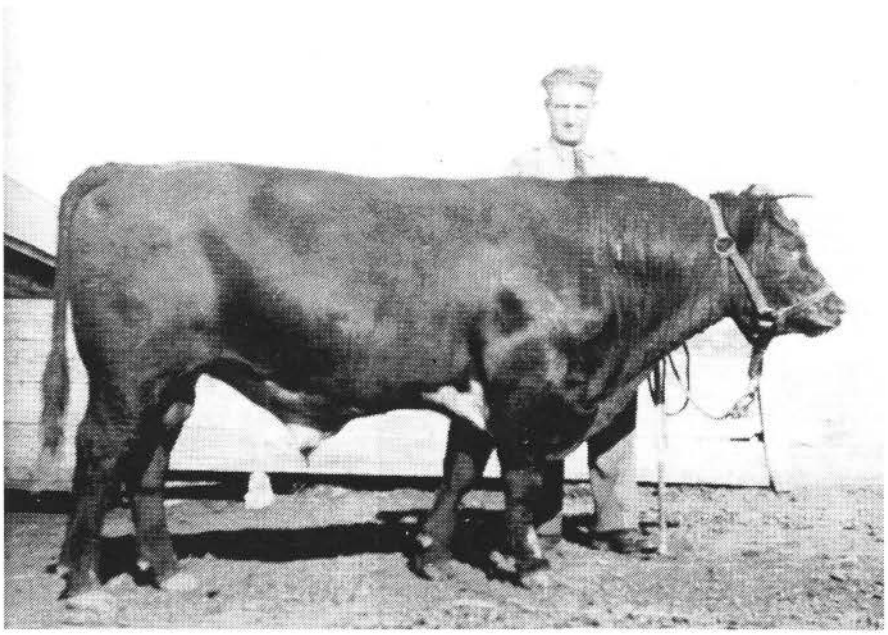
Solomon Goldenberg, a harness maker, was a farmer and flour miller before he settled in Calgary as operator of the Grand Second Hand Store on 8th Avenue East. He handled surplus hardware and saddlery; he was said to be the biggest customer of the CPR damaged-freight auctions.

– by Emanuel Cohen

Land of Promise Lauded

We recently received a letter from Janice Rosen, Archives Director for the Canadian Jewish Congress in Montreal, thanking us for donating a copy of *Land of Promise* to the CJC collection. Her letter, in part:

> "To say I am impressed with this book is the most pale of understatements. The quality of the information presented, the family history summaries, the illustrations, and the manner in which the book is laid out make this both a fascinating read and an invaluable reference document. I am sure we will have numerous occasions to refer our Western Canadian history researchers to this book.
>
> My congratulations to all who worked on this project. I extend my heartfelt thanks to your society ..."



Mendle Switzer, cattle dealer, c. 1940. Source: Jack Switzer

Jewish Cattlemen & Characters

About twenty Jewish cattlemen—dealers, feeders, ranchers, and packers are among those chronicled by Leonard Friesen in his recent history of the Calgary stockyards, *Cows, Cowboys, Cattlemen & Characters.* Here are excerpts from his book, as well as a look at some Jewish cattlemen he did not recall.

The names are in alphabetical order. We have included only the "older" generation of southern Alberta Jewish cattlemen. Material in Italics is from JHSSA history files. These brief items are not intended to be complete family histories.

Henry Belkin—"He was in partnership with a man named Mayland. They owned Union Packing on Nose Creek. For many years Henry bought cattle at the Stockyards. He custom killed them, then sold the beef to local stores and restaurants. Henry Belkin always bought the few veal calves that showed up at the yards. Price was no object. Nobody could buy them away from him.

"Henry moved to the Coast where he and his son owned a large box-making factory."

Henry Belkin, a Calgarian since 1907, was married to Anna Karasick, Ben Kerr's sister.

Dave Dvorkin—"Davey loved to party and he liked to gamble. He liked to sing. I think he learned that talent in the Synagogue as a young boy. He was nine or ten years old when they came to Canada from Russia. He had no accent.

"For years Dave and his brother Harry Dvorkin bought cattle, which they had custom killed. Sometimes in the 1960's they built their own plant south of the Stockyards. Here they developed a large business."

Harry Dvorkin—"Harry was Dave Dvorkin's brother. He was a solid citizen and a good businessman. Harry was not afraid of work. When they first started out (in the packing plant) he would give his men a hand in the beef coolers in the morning, sell beef, and then go buy cattle. Later, he just looked after the purchasing of cattle, which is the big key to any plant's success. Harry died a relatively young man."

"**Hymie Dvorkin** was a brother of Sol, Tony, and Yale Dvorkin; he was Dave and Harry Dvorkin's uncle. Hymie Dvorkin was a cattle dealer in Calgary ever since he came from Russia in about 1928. Hymie was the last of the old Jewish dealer group. He was around the Yards for well over fifty years."

"**Sol Dvorkin** was also a cattle dealer; I did not know him too well."

"**Tony Dvorkin** was a fairly tall, slender man. He was a levelheaded man and didn't get nearly as excited as his brother Hymie did when his cattle made or lost money."

"**Morton Dvorkin** was Tony Dvorkin's son. For years, he bought big bunches of cattle out in the country and sold them through Parslow & Denoon. It was not unusual for Morton to bring in several hundred head at a time."

"**Yale Dvorkin,** like his three brothers, was a cattle trader. He did not operate on a large scale; however, he was one of the last Jewish dealers at the Yards. He came there nearly every day. He took life as it came."

"**Harry Gedeger** was one of the last half-dozen Jewish cattle dealers who operated at the Yards. He was a very excitable individual. He bought a lot of cattle from Hutterites."

"**Abe Green**, or 'Whispering Abe' as we sometimes called him, was a Scottish Jew—quite a combination. He was a good cattleman, but he found it hard to trust very many people. With Abe, everything was a secret. He would cup his hand to the side of his mouth and whisper in your ear.

"Bob Smolkin told me about the time he and Abe were going to a cattle sale at Whiskey Gap. While they were driving through some desolate country, Abe looked around to see if there was anyone nearby, and whispered something about the cattle business into Bob's ear. Of course, there wasn't anybody within ten miles."

Ben Katchen, Mire Katchen, Sam Katchen—see adjoining article in this issue.

"**Benny Kerr** was a cattle dealer turned meat packer. For many years he operated a small abattoir close to the Bow River. Benny and his sons killed cattle there for their own customers. They also custom killed cattle for other people, mostly some of their Jewish friends, including Dvorkin Bros.

"Benny was physically a small man, but always tried to stand up for himself. This gave the boys many opportunities to tease him. Benny had a good singing voice; however he seldom sang in the sale ring, like Davey Dvorkin did. We used to bug Davey by saying: 'it's too bad you don't have a good voice like Benny's.' "

"**Jack Levitt** was a good cattleman. In his day he bought and sold a lot of cattle. he owned several places (farms) including one at Nanton. Jack was born in Canada and raised at Rumsey ,at the Jewish settlement there. The Rumsey Jews were all good cattlemen, Besides Jack, there were Sam Raskin, the Sengaus Brothers, and others. For the last thirty years of his life, Jack Leavitt fed cattle at Hubalta, just east of Forest Lawn. His old feedlot is covered with houses now."

con't. on page 4

Jewish Cattlemen ...

con't. from page 3

"**Sam Mozeson** was an easygoing likeable Jewish cattle dealer. He travelled in the country. His volume wasn't really big, but he always made a living. His goal was not to get rich, but to enjoy life. Sam always had a cigar in his mouth and a friendly word for everyone." *Sam Mozeson started as a dealer after leaving the furniture business in the early 30's. Sam was close to many Hutterites, and was a frequent dinner and overnight guest at Colonies around southern Alberta. He left the cattle business about 1965 and died in 1978.*

"**Sam Raskin** was raised and lived at Rumsey. He was a big-time cattle dealer. He had a good personality—well suited to doing business. Size of deals never bothered Sam—the bigger the better. He was around the Stockyards a lot, especially after he started to court Niva, who worked at the Bank of Montreal in the Stockyards building. He ended up marrying her."

"**Harry Schneider** was a Jewish cattle drover (dealer?). He was an excitable character. If he was losing money at the sale ring, the cigar in his mouth would shake like a leaf in a windstorm. The boys always referred him as 'lump jaw' Schneider. I have no idea why."

"**Harry Sheftel** was a cattle dealer and feeder. He liked coming to the market to buy his own feeders, and also liked going to the country to buy cattle. Harry liked a bargain, and he sometimes got quite frustrated when he was buying and selling cattle.

"Harry and his brothers operated a food market in Calgary, and from there they branched into hotels."

"**Bob Smolkin** was a cattle feeder in the Nose Creek area, just south of the old Union Packing site. Bob spent a fair amount of time in the stockyards. He liked to kibbitz with the boys. Usually he smoked a big cigar. He also wore fairly heavy glasses."

Bob Smolkin specialized in feeding hogs. He came West from Ottawa in 1928 as a farm laborer, and then worked a as a peddler in north-west Alberta. He came to Calgary and became a livestock trader and feeder, and married cattleman Ben Katchen's daughter Pauline in 1928.

Earlier Cattlemen

—from JHSSA Archival material—

These men ended their livestock careers prior to Friesen's Stockyard years:

Union Packing Co. Ltd., Nose Creek, 1919. The plant was built by Jewish cattlemen Henry Belkin and Joe Lukatsky; A.H. Mayland became a partner in 1920. The much-expanded plant was sold to Swift Canadian in 1946. Source: Glenbow Archives, ND-8, #312.

Louis Bikman (Bickman) was an uncle of prominent Lethbridge businessman Abe Bickman. The Bikman family reached Lethbridge in 1911, and Louis ranched for nearly 50 years near Coutts, on the Canadian side of the U.S.–Canada border. He retired to Lethbridge in 1965. (Source—David Bickman)

Max Bell (originally Bellostotsky) came from Russia about 1920. His brother-in-law was Joe Lukatsky, for a time in partnership with Henry Belkin at Union Packing. Max opened a kosher butcher shop in Calgary, but soon gave it up in favor of cattle buying, a trade at which he had much more success. One of Max and Bessie Bell's daughters, Ethel, married cattleman Ben Kerr. Max Bell died in 1950. (Source—Naomi Belkin Kerr)

Jack Bleviss came to Calgary in 1925 and soon began working as a cattle dealer. He first had a small truck, filled with fruit on the outbound trip and with two or three head of cattle on the trip back. Later he moved up to a one-ton truck, holding up to eight head, and making two trips a week. The Bleviss home was a meeting place every Sunday for Jewish cattle dealers, who would enjoy lunch, a cigar, and cattle business gossip. Jack and Annie Bleviss had nine children; the oldest, **Julius (Ziggy) Bleviss** worked for many years in the meat packing business. Jack Bleviss died in 1964. (Source—Saul Bleviss)

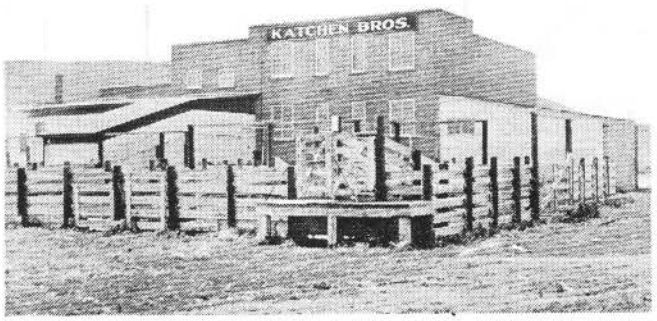
Hyman Cohen worked as a livestock buyer in the 1920's for Burns and Union Packing while still in his late teens. He soon bought a ranch in the Porcupine Hills area, then raised cattle and sheep at Claresholm and Pincher Creek. During the early 40's he had a ranch in the Little Bow area, and later moved to a huge—9 square miles—spread in the Hand Hills district east of Drumheller. Sheep were raised on a spread near Medicine Hat. Hyman Cohen was a racehorse owner as well as a rancher and livestock feeder. His jockeys wore a Star of David on their silks.

Two of his sons, **Emanuel Cohen** and **Sam Cohen**, were involved in the cattle operation; both were pilots, and flew their nervous father between ranch sites in a ski-equipped Piper Pacer. Hyman Cohen gave up the ranch after the 1953 foot-and-mouth disease scare ruined cattle prices. He died in 1963. (Source—Emanuel Cohen)

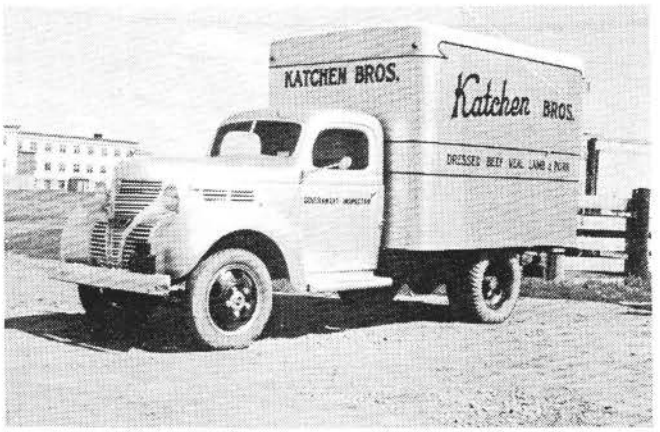
Sam Davidow—He lived in Calgary from about 1929 to 1945, and specialized in buying and selling farm horses. He worked as a horse trader out of Edmonton for several years, and gave up the business as farms became mechanized and the farm use of horses declined. Sam Davidow later moved to Winnipeg, where he operated the Smith's Corned Beef plant. (Source—Howard Davidow, Edmonton)

Sam Feldman started buying and selling cattle shortly after he came to Canada in 1929, working as a dealer until his death in 1958. He worked mainly south of Calgary, near towns such as Claresholm and Pincher Creek. In later

con't. on page 5



Katchen Bros. packing plant, Calgary stockyards, c. 1936. The greatly enlarged business later became Calgary Packers, and was sold to Canada Packers in 1954. Source: Joseph Katchen



Katchen Bros. delivery truck, c. 1936. Source: Joseph Katchen

Jewish Cattlemen ...

con't. from page 4

years he handled large volumes of cattle. He married Bella Zeidman, sister of the wife of Harry Sheftel, briefly a cattleman. Another brother-in-law, **Lou Rosenbaum**, was a also a cattle dealer early in his business career. (Source—Betty Feldman Maier)

Abush (Abe) Kline came to Alberta from Denver (and Russia) in 1906; his nephew Ben Katchen was in the cattle business here. With his sons Isadore Kline (Izzy) and Sam Kline and his son-in-law Morris Manolson, the family operated several feed lots and were major cattle dealers. Abush died in 1935. (Source—Charna Manolson Shapiro)

Isadore (Izzy) Kline was another son of cattleman Abush Kline. The family cattle trading firm was known as Kline, Son, and Manolson. Izzy Kline died in 1957. (Source—Connie Kline)

Sam Kline learned the cattle business from his father, Abush Kline, but flourished as an independent dealer. For many years he was a partner with Hyman Cohen in ranch and feed operations. He became a purchasing agent for Canada Packers and Armour's, a huge Chicago meat packing firm. His son Cecil Kline married Doreen, a daughter of cattle dealer Jack Levitt.

Avremkeh Levine was an early Jewish cattle dealer, buying cattle and feeding them at his farm in north-east Calgary. He later ran a hide business and a large livestock feed store. One of his daughters, Jennie, married Hymie Belzberg.

Hymie Levitt was a kosher butcher before he became a cattle dealer. He was a brother to Jack Levitt. The Levitt brothers were raised on a Rumsey-area farm; later they farmed near Strathmore and ran a Calgary-area feed lot. Hymie Levitt died in 1953 at the age of 46. (Source—Becky Levitt Cohen)

Joseph Lukatsky came from Odessa to Calgary in 1907 and soon went into business with Henry Belkin running a large abattoir, Union Packers, and several retail meat markets. He was an uncle to Ethel Kerr, wife of cattle dealer Benny Kerr. Joe Lukatsky died in 1931.

Mair (Myer) Madorsky came to Calgary in 1913 and peddled furs and metal before opening the American Hide & Fur Company. In 1941 he went into cattle ranching. He had ranches near Cochrane and in the Nose Creek area. His brother-in-law **Sam Aisenstat** was also a cattle dealer. Mair and Avremkeh Levine also had a dairy farm in Strathmore. He died in 1962. (Source—Alice Adler)

Morris Manolson was a Montefiore Colony homesteader but moved to Calgary with his wife Fanny to join his father-in-law Abush Kline as cattle dealers. He later became a major cattleman in his own right. During World War II he served in the armed forces as a supply officer, buying cattle for military and relief needs. His firm exported many cattle to the Chicago market.

The motto of "M.F. Manolson, Livestock Dealer, Wholesale Butcher, and Exporter" was "The Old Reliable." (Source—Charna Shapiro)

Alex (Elye) Morris was Avrum Switzer's father-in-law, and was one of the earliest Jewish cattle dealers. For many years he ran a large feed lot operation west and south of what is now Anderson Road and Macleod Trail. He sold his land-purchase option and retired in 1948. (Source—Bernie Switzer)

Mike Segal was a Calgary-based livestock dealer, who specialized in draft horses. Many were fed, trained and groomed on the Hyman Cohen ranch near Lethbridge. During the 30's Segal shipped hundreds of horses a year to the Bodonoff Horse Exchange in Montreal, where most were auctioned to Quebec loggers.

Abraham (Avrum) Switzer was a busy livestock dealer, and died at an early age, in 1942, while on a cattle-buying trip in central Alberta. He was married to Sadie Morris and had one son, Bernie Switzer.

Mendle (Max) Switzer handled cattle for many years but later turned to buying chickens and supplying kosher poultry to Calgary's Jewish community. Chickens were processed in a building behind his 7th Avenue East home. He continued to handle poultry while running Hillside Grocery, and then owned a fish wholesale. He was a brother to cattle dealer Abraham Switzer. Mendle died in 1982. (Source—Jack Switzer)

Harry Veiner—before (and while) he was mayor of Medicine Hat, Harry Veiner ran a large hardware business and had extensive cattle ranching and feed-lot operations in south-east Alberta. During the war he was a procurement officer with the Canadian Army, and organized effective recycling of training camp wastes into livestock feeds. One of his ranches, at Brooks, was donated to Medicine Hat College as a satellite campus site.

We know there were **other Jewish cattlemen,** and we regret not having information about them in time for this issue. These include **Sam Brodsky**, **Chuna Ryder**, **Bill Davids**, and **Morris Green.** Do you know any others? Send us their stories.

– compiled by Jack Switzer

The Ben Katchen Family, October 12, 1944. Back row, l to r – Bob and Pauline Smolkin, Mire and Kay Katchen, Sam and Dorothy Katchen; front row, l to r – Barry Smolkin, Allen Smolkin, "Grandma" Karsh, Ben and Fanny Katchen. Mrs. Karsh was Fanny's mother. The occasion was Kay and Mire's wedding. Source: Joseph Katchen

The Katchens – From Peddlers to Packers

One of the biggest success stories in the saga of Alberta's Jewish cattlemen is that of the Katchen family—father Benjamin Katchen and his sons Mire and Sam.

Ben Katchen, known as Benny at the stockyards, came to Alberta with his wife and two children from Denver, Colorado, in 1909. After homesteading for a year, the family settled in Calgary. Eldest son Mire was born in 1906, daughter Pauline in 1908, and son Samuel in 1910.

Ben followed a familiar Jewish cattle-dealer route, starting out as a peddler buying cattle from farmers and selling them at auction. He went a step farther, by having some cattle custom-slaughtered and selling the meat himself to the butcher trade.

By the early 1920's Ben Katchen was a licensed commission agent, a member of the Calgary Stockyards Association. Few Jews reached this status; most Jewish dealers were sub-agents for the licensed commission men. He handled large numbers of cattle, swine, sheep and horses.

At the beginning of the Great Depression, cattle prices dropped; Katchen was stuck with a large inventory and many debts. He went bankrupt, and the family suffered through several trying years.

Mire Katchen, now in his 20's, took up the slack. He became a hide and fur dealer in the Peace River area, at first riding a horse and pulling his goods on an Indian travois. He had no cash. He dealt with natives and farmers on a handshake basis, promising to pay them after he had sold their furs.

He kept his promises and developed a profitable trade, moving up from the travois to a horse and buggy and eventually a truck.

Sam and Mire Katchen were able to pay their father's debts and in 1936 the family re-entered the cattle business in 1936 as meat packers—buying livestock and slaughtering, processing, and marketing the meat products.

The Katchens built a plant across from the stockyards and called their business Katchen Bros., and later Calgary Packers.

The business grew through the war years, becoming a major meat plant, second only in the area to packing giant Burns and Co. It processed mainly pork, as well as large amounts of beef. Mire Katchen often remarked that as a observant Jew he never tasted his plant's most profitable product, its bacon.

At its peak Calgary Packers had 350 employees. Some were Jewish. Ziggy Bleviss was a Calgary Packers veteran, and many post-war refugees, including Max Shulder, started their Canadian business careers as laborers at the Katchen plant. The work was hard and dirty, but the Katchen brothers could be counted on to give a newcomer a hand up.

Ben Katchen died in 1951, at 66 years of age. His wife Fanny Katchen passed away in 1957. She was the daughter of Calgary Jewish pioneers Ida and Baruch Karsh.

Mire Katchen ran the "cattle" end of Calgary packers. He was responsible for buying cattle and running the packing operation. Stockyards historian Leonard Friesen says Mire "was a top-notch cattle buyer." He was one of the few packing plant owners (along with Dave Dvorkin,) who personally attended the daily auctions; multi-plant firms sent staff buyers.

The financial and marketing end of the business was run by Sam Katchen. Friesen recalls that Sam came to the hog and sheep scale to buy occasionally. "On the hogs, he was as tough as he needed to be, but when it came to lambs he was a 'patsy'." Sellers "priced their lambs $2 or $3 over the market and Sam bought them every time."

In 1954 Mire and Sam Katchen sold the plant to Canada Packers. They did not, however, retire. Mire went into several successful non-meat business ventures. Sam stayed in related fields, running a hide processing plant in Calgary and a packing plant in Detroit.

Mire Katchen married Kay Leven, of Winnipeg. They had two sons, Joe Katchen, a Calgary lawyer, and Bernie Katchen, of Toronto. Mire died in 1990. Kay Katchen still lives in Calgary.

Sam Katchen lives in retirement in Florida. His first wife, Dorothy Hanson, died in 1955. They had two children, Stanley Katchen, of Toronto, and Annabelle Bondar, of Calgary.

Their sister, Pauline Katchen, married Bob Smolkin in 1933. Bob was a major hog feeder, operating a feed lot in the Nose Creek area of north-east Calgary. Bob Smolkin still lives in Calgary, but Pauline Smolkin died in 1989. Their sons were Barry Smolkin, Calgary, and Alan Smolkin, of Victoria.

The Calgary stockyards and the Burns packing plant have been razed, but The Calgary Packers building still stands and is again in Jewish hands. The Krieger family is now converting the building into a public market. A memorial to the pioneer Jewish peddlers and packers, the Katchen family, will be par of the renovation.

Sources: JHSSA Archives; Joseph Katchen, QC; Leonard Friesen, Cows, Cowboys, Cattlemen, & Characters.

– by Jack Switzer

Jewish Brand Names

Cattle brands are an important part of the rangeland culture. Spring calf branding is still a special ritual on many farms and ranches. Basically, brands provide proof of ownership, and were necessary where cattle were mixed in communal pastures, or contracted to farmers for fattening-up along with other stock.

Brands are not mandatory, but they are felt to discourage rustling—cattle theft. Brands are registered by livestock owners, and checked at auctions and packing houses by provincial brand inspectors. "Brand books" provide horse and cattle buyers with a complete listing of registered brands and their owners.

Identical brands are possible—they are then located on different parts of the animal. For cattle, the ribs are preferred, for ease of identification at a distance.

Perhaps the most colorful "Jewish" brand is "CPR." Former stockyards veterinarian Dr. Morris Hanson recalls the brand belonging to Harry Hashman; we found it registered to Dave Dvorkin. The owner explained, when asked why his brand read "CPR", that that no one would dare steal his cattle if they thought they belonged to the CPR—the Canadian Pacific Railway was too feared and too respected.

Presented here are a large number of brands registered to area Jewish dealers, farmers, and ranchers. They were found in Alberta Brand Books dated for several years between 1937 and 1954. A few brands from the 1920's have been so noted.

They indicate, along with other data in this issue of Discovery, that for several decades, Jews were an important part of the livestock industry and our "western" heritage.

(Sources: Glenbow Alberta Institute, Morris Hanson)

– by Jack Switzer

Jewish Homesteader Horse Brands 1916-18

Gurevitch, Ben, Rumsey; right shoulder

Hanen, Sam, Rumsey; left shoulder

Sengaus, Elias, Rumsey; right shoulder

Aisenstat, Sam, 2718 - 17 St. S.W., Calgary; right hip

Belkin, Harry, 1711 - 12 St. W., Calgary; left ribs

Belzberg, A., 327 - 8 Ave. E., Calgary; left ribs

Bikman, L., Milk River; left shoulder (1920)

Cohen, Hyman, Calgary; left shoulder (1924)

Cohen, Hyman, 1610 - 6th Ave. S., Lethbridge; left hip

Davids, Abie, 718 - 9 St. S., Lethbridge; right ribs

Davids & Cooper, 718 - 9 St. S., Lethbridge; left hip

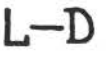
Dvorkin, David L., 840 - 18 Ave. W., Calgary; left ribs

Dvorkin, Harry, Calgary Stockyards, Calgary; left shoulder

Dvorkin, L., 408 - 3 Ave. W., Calgary; left hip

Dvorkin, Morton, 237 - 11 Ave. N.E., Calgary; right hip

Dvorkin, Tony, 2328 - 24 Ave. S.W., Calgary; right shoulder


Dvorkin, Yale, 727 - 3 Ave. W., Calgary; left hip

Estrin, Harry, 206 Devenish Apts., Calgary; right hip

Fefferman, Morris, & Davids, Abraham L., Lethbridge; right hip

Gediger, Harry, 1414 - 2 St. E., Calgary; left hip

Geffen Co. Ltd., 228 - 15 Ave. E., Calgary; left hip

Gorasht, Sam, 611 - 3rd St. E., Calgary; left shoulder

Gurevitch, Raphael, Rumsey; right shoulder

Hanson, Mrs. A., c/o Union Milk Co., Calgary; left hip

Hashman, Harry, 229 - 4 Ave. E., Calgary; right hip

Katchen, L.B., Alberta Stock Yards, Calgary; left ribs

Kline, I., 1240 - 15 Ave. W., Calgary; left ribs

Kline, Sam, Lethbridge; left hip

Kline, Samuel, 130 Scarborough Ave., Calgary; left hip

Levitt, Hyman & Jack, Hubalta; left ribs

Levitt, John, Hubalta; left hip

Manolson, M.F., 1403 - 12 St. W., Calgary; right hip

Morris, A., Calgary; right hip

Sanderson, J., & Dvorkin, H., 115 - 11 Ave. E., Calgary; right shoulder

Sengaus, E., Rumsey; right hip

Sheftel, Harry, Stock Yards, Calgary; left ribs

Switzer, Abraham, 409 - 12 Ave. E., Calgary; right thigh

Switzer, Max, 334 - 7 Ave. E., Calgary; right hip

Veiner, Harry, 634 - 3 St., Medicine Hat; left ribs

JHSSA News

Wedding Exhibit at Beth Tzedec

Photos and artifacts from our archives are on display at the Beth Tzedec synagogue in Calgary until the end of April. The exhibit includes wedding photos, most from the "Wedding" section of Land of Promise, pages from Rabbi Simon Smolensky's wedding register, and a wedding dress, belonging to Phylis Rubin and worn by several Jewish brides in the 1930's.

Corrections & Addenda

The fur trader shown on the first page of our last issue was Abe Aaron, not Aron. His son, Dr. T.H. Aaron of Edmonton, says the photo dates from around 1914. Abe Aaron came to Edmonton in 1909 after farming in Saskatchewan. His wife, Julia Grausbord, was the daughter of Jewish homesteaders who came to the Hirsch colony near Oxbow, Saskatchewan, in 1890.

The journal of Jack Hackman was written in English, not in Yiddish, as we stated in our last issue.

Land of Promise Best Seller

Nearly 500 copies of *Land of Promise* have been sold. Copies are still available. See the adjoining notice for ordering information. A copy of the book is on display at the front desk of the Calgary Jewish Centre, where the book can be purchased. The book is on a special fixture made and contributed to the JHSSA by Arnold Cohen. Thanks again, Sparky.

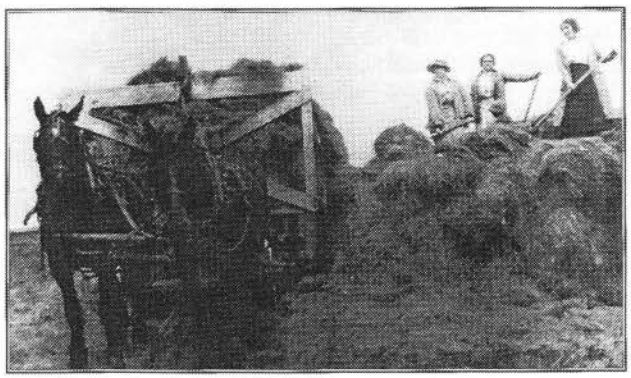
JHSSA Cards, Books, for Special Giving

Our members and friends are reminded of the availability of historic photo cards which can be sent in your name to honor any special occasion. Minimum (tax deductible) donation to have a card sent out is $5. Please call Tiby Presma at 281-3910.

New books in the Harry B. Cohen Genealogical Library can be inscribed to honor your friends and family. A donation of $36 or more will allow us to add new books and dedicate them according to your wishes. Again, call Tiby Presma at 281-3910 for information.

LAND OF PROMISE

The Jewish Experience In Southern Alberta



A BOOK TO TREASURE

The Story of The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta

A wonderful gift for any occasion: Chanuka, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, Anniversaries. A must for every home library. This newly published 300-page limited edition hard-cover book portrays the story of Southern Alberta's Jews with 400 photos and detailed captions.

Chapters include:
Pioneers • Early and Homestead Families • Schools • Synagogues • Organizations • Jewish life in Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Small Towns • Weddings • Military • Business • Celebrations • plus brief Family Histories

Only 1,000 books were printed and they are hand-numbered (one-half have already been sold). The book is available at the front desk of The Calgary Jewish Centre for $50.00. For mail order send a cheque made payable to The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta for $55.00 ($5.00 to cover postage) along with your name and address to:

The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta,
1607 - 90 Avenue S.W., Calgary, Alberta T2V 4V7

For further information call Mel Nagler in Calgary at (403) 255-4192

DISCOVERY

Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta

President: **Jay Joffe**
Vice Presidents: **David Bickman, Harriet Libin, Mel Nagler, Azriel Presma**
Treasurer: **Henry Guttman**
Secretary: **Zena Drabinsky**

Directors: **Arnold Cohen, Emanuel Cohen, Jack Edelson, Bertha Gold, Allan Gurevitch, Sheila Gurevitch, Morris Hanson, Ida Horwitz, Barb Joffe, Sid Macklin, Therese Nagler, Judy Parker, Edythe Pearlman, Tiby Presma, Mel Polsky, Dinah Spindel, Jack Swizer**

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.

Please address all communications on editorial and circulation matters to:
Discovery
c/o The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta
1607 - 90th Avenue S.W.
Calgary, Alberta, Canada
T2V 4V7

© 1997 by The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta (a non-profit, registered society). Donations gratefully accepted. Supplement to the Jewish Free Press.