

# JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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AUTUMN 1997



Morris Cohen and Chiang Kai-shek in Taipei, Taiwan, 1953. Source - Charles Drage: *The Life and Times of Two-Gun Cohen*, 1954.

## Two-Gun Cohen: the Calgary Years

Few Canadians have heard of Morris "Two-Gun" Cohen, the British-born Jewish farm hand who befriended the Western Canadian Chinese community, got initiated into a secret Chinese society, commanded a Chinese-Canadian work battalion in World War I, and later joined Sun Yat-sen in China as an aide and bodyguard, packing two pistols and saving the Chinese president's life at least twice.

He became a general in the Chinese army, and served Sun's successor, Chiang Kai-shek, as an advisor and foreign agent.

A small but important part of his colorful life was spent in Calgary.

Morris Cohen was born in England in 1889, the son of poor Polish-Jewish immigrants. Various escapades led to his being sent at ten to a school for delinquent boys, where he stayed six years. His parents sent him, in 1905, to a friend, Abe Hyam, a homesteader in the Jewish farm colony at Wapella, Saskatchewan.

A cowboy friend taught the new Canadian to ride, gamble and shoot. He was a

quick learner, and tired of farming after a year. He made his way to Winnipeg, to Moose Jaw, and then to Saskatoon, working at various jobs and perfecting his skills in gambling and salesmanship.

In 1909 he befriended a Saskatoon restaurant owner, Mah Sam, when he apparently rescued the elderly Chinese man from a robbery attempt. Mah later got Cohen out of jail - he was arrested on a gambling charge - and the two formed a strong friendship, enhanced when Cohen defended the local Chinese community against the city's bullying police chief.

Mah, a local supporter of the rebellious Chinese Nationalist party and its leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen, invited Cohen to join him in 1910 for a trip to Calgary, where the two men went to a meeting of a Tong, a secret society. Sponsored by Mah, Cohen was admitted to membership, a very rare event for a non-Chinese.

Cohen, in the heavily-embellished 1954 Charles Drage biography that he largely wrote himself, described the Cal-

## Annual Meeting, October 20, to Feature Jewish Humor, JHS Resources

Humor in our local Jewish heritage will be featured at the 1997 annual general meeting, set for 7:30 pm at the Calgary Jewish Community Centre. The society's varied resources and services will also be displayed at the meeting.

These resources include our archival files - mainly consisting of family and organizational papers and histories - our photo collection, our cemetery headstone data, historical artifacts, and the extensive Harry B. Cohen Genealogical Library, containing both Jewish history and genealogy reference works.

Heritage Certificates will be presented to a number of western pioneers. The honorees include Rose Hector, Sheila Fromson, Al Rubin, Carl Safran, Dave Waterman, Sophie Kohn, Dr. Max Vogel, Frank Askhin, Samson Heilik, Leo Milner, Alec Sherwood and Jack Vinet. If you know of others who are 80, please call Dinah Spindel at 252-4035 so they can be included.

The society's new publication, a complete collection of *Discovery* issues, will be for sale, as will our very popular photo history, *Land of Promise*, and our new lapel pins.

Refreshments will be served. All are welcome.

gary event:

"That night we went to a grocery store in a back alley. ... Mah took me up the stairs; at the top there were more guards, but this bunch was armed and didn't

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*We gratefully acknowledge the generosity of  
Mel & Reata Polsky and Dave & Ruth Waterman in sponsoring this issue of Discovery*

## Two-Gun Cohen ...

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bother to hide their rods. ... After a while heavy double doors were thrown open, and I found myself in the biggest room I'd ever seen ....

"There must have been a couple of hundred Chinese there wearing their best suits and sitting silent and solemn ... The whole lot turned their heads as one man and stared at me. I stood there feeling kind of conspicuous while Mah took the floor and said his piece. I didn't understand Cantonese, but I could see he was giving me a bit of a boost. When he finished there was some sort of a vote, and I was formally asked if I'd join the lodge.

"Having agreed, I was initiated. It may sound silly, but even now I am unable to tell you how it was done. ... I took an oath not to reveal any of their secrets and that oath still binds me. Anyway I walked down those twisty, shabby stairs and out of that poor little grocery shop a full-blown member of the Tsing Chung-hui, pledged to devote my life to the service of Sun Yat-sen, the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty and the liberation of the Chinese people ... I wasn't much over nineteen...."

Morris Cohen says he returned to Saskatoon and, bankrolled by Mah, worked as a professional gambler, albeit an illegal one. He moved to Edmonton in 1912, and did well financially as a real-estate salesman in the booming city.

It was in Edmonton that he first met the exiled Sun Yat-sen, touring Canada to raise funds and support for his revolutionary Nationalist movement. The Chinese leader spoke to a large rally, and was followed at the lectern by Cohen, who made a brief speech in English. (*One source states Sun and Cohen first met in Calgary.*)

Cohen was asked to accompany the politician as a bodyguard for the remainder of his North American tour. He was armed, but the two-month trip was uneventful. Along the way, he purchased weapons for shipment to his Chinese friends. He returned to Edmonton as a gambler and realtor, and represented the Chinese community in various ways.

"I made it my business to see that every single Chinese male was on the Voters List. ... I persuaded the (legislature) to bring forward an amendment to the Chinese Immigration Act, abolishing the very unfair Head tax and permitting them, in certain cases, to bring their wives over from China to join them." (*These were Federal issues - editor.*)

Cohen apparently attended the first Calgary Stampede, in 1912. He travelled to England and Belgium briefly in 1913 on land development business.

Some of Cohen's Chinese companions

had joined Sun Yat-sen in China and soon became high-ranking officers in the Nationalist army. Cohen decided he could use military training, and in March 1916 joined the Canadian army as part of the 218th Infantry Battalion, partly made up of immigrant Irish railway workers and locally called the "Irish Guards of Edmonton."

An officer friend helped Cohen take the rank of acting sergeant and he was sent to drill-instructor school at Sarcee Camp, just outside Calgary's south-western limits.

Sergeant Morris Cohen ran afoul of the Calgary police on several occasions. Police records show that on July 8, 1916, at 11:55 pm Morris Cohen, soldier, Sarcee Camp, was arrested for misconduct and resisting arrest. His bail was set at \$25. His birthplace is listed as Russia (*others records say England*).

In October, 1916, Sergeant Cohen was again arrested, this time for inciting a riot.

The riot was of major proportions and made for big news. On the night of October 11, as many as 200 soldiers from Sarcee Camp rioted in downtown Calgary. They first broke windows at the 7th Avenue East city police station, and demanded the release of several soldiers who they felt had unjustly been arrested and jailed on liquor charges.

Told the offenders had been transferred to mounted police custody, the mob, joined by many civilians, moved west to the barracks of the Royal North West Mounted Police, on Seventh Avenue and 4th Street West. They gained entrance to the building and wrecked it. Several mounties were injured and one soldier was shot in the arm.

The crowd moved to the downtown retail area, and looted the Martin sporting goods store, presumably looking for weapons. By this time military police and senior officers had arrived, the city police were finally organized, and the rioters were subdued.

Morris Cohen says he was not involved, that he had heard of impending trouble, and that it was German-Canadians that were being targeted. (*That was the objective of another 1916 soldier riot, one which victimized several Jewish families - editor.*)

"I went into Calgary that night, but I went to see a show and when the riot started I was in the theatre. I sauced one of the usherettes so that she'd remember me, and I kept the stub of my ticket as more evidence.

"By the time I got to the spot the police were just chasing the rioters off; no one had been hurt but there was plenty of damage to property and obviously there was going to be trouble for someone.

"Sure enough when I got back to camp an investigation had started and every sol-

dier who'd been on liberty that night was lined up before the dicks. Sure enough too they picked on me as one of the ringleaders. The next thing was a court-of-inquiry. A detective took the stand and testified that he saw me at the back of the mob urging them on and shouting, 'Come on boys; let's give it to 'em.' "

Thirteen soldiers, including Morris Cohen, were charged with rioting and brought before the civilian Calgary police court. The Calgary Daily Herald, on October 28, 1916, gave the following account of Cohen's trial, under the sub-headline "Sergt. Cohen Shows Surprising Knowledge of Court Procedure."

"The most interesting part of the cases is the active participation of Sergt. Cohen, of the 218th. The sergeant is a non-commissioned Irish Guardsman, who had the successful passage at arms two weeks ago with Detective Tom Turner at the King George Hotel. At that time Cohen came through with flying colors. (*Dates here are confusing; Turner was the arresting officer in Cohen's July 8th arrest - editor.*)

"Sergt. Cohen ... conducts a cross-examination of very painstaking kind. He is watching every step and he is displaying a certain familiarity with court proceedings. He even makes use of the expression 'my learned friend' when referring to the prosecutor.

"But this morning he so astounded everyone in the courtroom that even the court stenographer gasped, and looked up his dictionary, while (Police) Chief Cuddy reached madly and blindly for his smelling salts.

"Sergt. Cohen was cross-examining Detective Symons. He did not want to call the witness, or any other witnesses, plain liars, Sergt. Cohen informed the court. But he did think that they were displaying 'pulchritudinous terminological inexactitude.' "

Two days later, the Herald reported: "Sergeant Cohen was discharged, there having been considerable conflicting evidence in his case."

Cohen was the only one of eleven found not guilty that day; two cases were remanded. He is quoted, in the Drage book, as saying "they acquitted the whole boiling lot of us."

A Herald editorial (Oct. 12) had reflected the active nativism of the city's entrenched establishment. "The only relief we have from the odium of the incident lied in the fact that the ringleaders were apparently foreigners, not Canadians."

The 218th became a railway construction battalion. "Our change of name didn't make much difference to our behavior in Calgary, and when we went overseas at the beginning of 1917, the town wasn't entirely sorry to see the last of us," Cohen recalled. In Europe, he was seconded to

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## New Photos

**Photo Archives Growing**—We still welcome your old photographs (and other material). Your original photos will be laser-copied on archival bond and returned to you within days. Photos of our early Jewish history will enrich our family history files, provide data for genealogical and historical research, and enhance future *Discovery* photo pages. Our photo archives are now being indexed and catalogued for better access. Below is a sample of recently-donated photos.



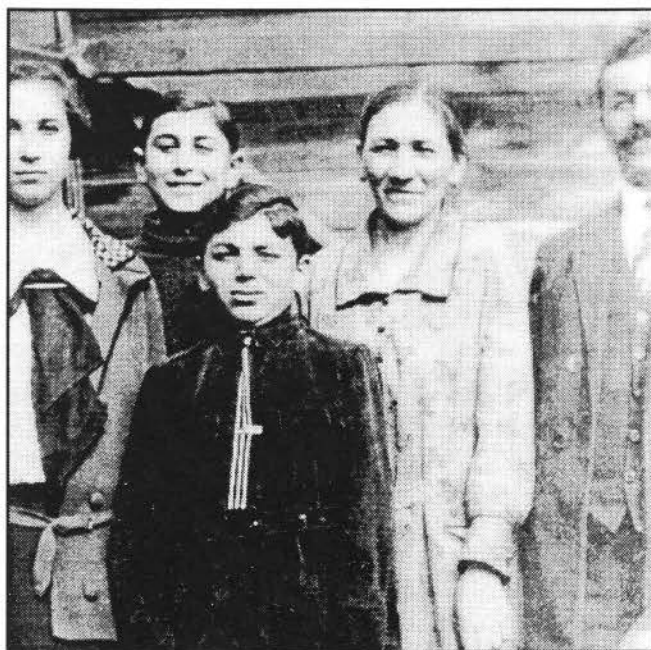
Charlie Switzer (left) is shown in 1912 at 14 with his uncle and aunt, Abraham and Bella Singer. Their son, Hymie Singer, is on the chair. Photo – Frances Switzer Panar, Vancouver.



Pat Bercuson (later Pat Hector), c. 1917. Source: Ellen Dietz Barbarie, Vancouver.



Mel Polsky at age 5, 1924. Source: Mel Polsky.



The L. Dvorkin Family, Calgary, 1926. Left to right: eldest daughter, Mona, son Harry, parents Basha and Laba (Leo). Front: David Dvorkin. Leo Dvorkin was a Calgary kosher butcher from 1926 to 1943. Source – Helen Birns, Muriel Lainoff.



## Harry Edelson – Pioneer Jewish Stockbroker

*Jack Edelson was interviewed by Bertha Gold in 1996 as part of the JHSSA Oral History project. Following is that section of the interview about his father, Harry Edelson, in Jack's own words. Material in italics has been added by the editor.*

My dad, Harry Edelson, was born as Harry Jashunski (*Jashunsky in Canada*) in Warsaw in 1886. His father was editor and part-owner of a Jewish newspaper in Lodz called Letcher Folksbund—the Jewish People's Gazette.

My grandparents and their three children—two sons and a daughter—moved from Lodz to St. Golins, Switzerland, because of the Russian-Japanese war. They stayed about nine years before they moved back to Lodz, but my Dad went to Berlin to look for work.

In 1914 my dad was employed as a manager of the wine and liquor stock at Kaplinsky's restaurant in Berlin. This restaurant formed part of a building that was six stories high and one block square. It employed a thousand people. One floor was reserved for the Kaiser—Kaiser Wilhelm—when he came there for dinner with his entourage.

After the First World War my dad went to Rotterdam where he met a Jewish man from London, England, who had twin daughters. One of the twins, Leah, was my mother, whom he married and took back to Berlin. I was born in Berlin on October 17, 1920, at the Professor Strouslein Clinic.

My mother's folks had immigrated to Canada, and in 1921 my folks decided to come here as well. After much difficulty, they travelled from Berlin to Calais, to Liverpool, and then to Halifax. My dad registered with the government and was sent to Crossfield, near

Calgary, to work on a farm. From there he went to Gleichen and then to Nanton, Strathmore, and to Rockyford. I think my mother and I stayed in Calgary while he was working on the farms.

It was about this time—1921—that oil wells were being drilled in Turner Valley, and there was an oil boom in this area, and my dad became fascinated with the oil brokerage business. He would come back to Calgary and sell shares for a 25 per cent commission. His first customer was our landlady. He sold her enough stock so that we didn't have to pay for six months' rent for our one room at \$25 a month. That was on 8th Avenue East between First and Second Street.

In 1923 my Dad became quite friendly with Sam Hanen, who advanced him \$800 to open up an oil brokerage office in the Maclean Block on 8th Avenue near Centre Street. He named it Dominion Oil Exchange. In a few weeks the government made him stop using the name Dominion because people thought it was a government operation. He changed the name to Imperial Oil Exchange. Again they stopped him, and eventually he called it Harry's Oil Exchange.

He sold his shares as a member of the Calgary Stock Exchange in 1924, and opened up a ten-pin bowling alley next to the Hudson's Bay Store on 8th Avenue West. It was an automatic ten-pin bowling alley, one of the first that Brunswick built. A chap by the name of Josh Henthorne, who was rather a celebrity in Calgary at that time, became manager of the bowling alley. The venture was short-lived—it just didn't catch on.

In 1926 dad bought a house which became our home, at 905 - 4th Avenue S.W. It cost him \$2750.



Harry Edelson, circa 1930. Source – Jack Edelson.

He also purchased the seven lots across the street next to the Imperial Laundry. He built a stucco bungalow, and wanted to build other houses on that acreage, but soon after Andy Baxter bought the bungalow and the lots—it later became the Crystal Swimming Pool and the skating rink.

My dad brought his brother Simon over from Poland in 1928, and soon after Simon was joined by his girlfriend Tola. They were married in the 4th Avenue house; that picture is in *Land of Promise* book. Simon and Tola moved to Toronto and later to New York, where they lived for their lifetime.

In 1929 my dad financed a hockey team and an all-girl baseball team. The hockey team had the Bentley boys and Sweeney Schriener, Al Hilgert, and Ernie Carr. The girl's baseball team won the provincial championship (*the picture is in Land of Promise*) with Harry Diamond as secretary treasurer and with Pete Egan, the manager.

This was quite a baseball team. Fannie Diamond (*later Fannie Gal-*

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**Dominion Oil Exchange, Calgary, Alberta**

Harry Jashunsky (Edelson) brokerage ad from *The Alberta Oil Examiner*, June 12, 1926.  
Source: Glenbow Library

## Harry Edelson ...

*Continued from Page 4*

lay, the only Jewish player) was the catcher and Rose McCool was the pitcher. Her brother played goalie for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

My dad went to Europe in 1932 to promote the idea of taking a native Indian hockey team to London and Paris. The Cunard line gave him free passage along with a chauffeur, to promote his hockey team. While he was in Paris he took the train and went to see his parents and sister in Lodz, with the idea of getting them to come to Canada, because there were rumblings of anti-Semitism in Germany.

Anyhow, they wouldn't hear of it, and they stayed, and that was the last my dad saw of his parents and his sister and family.

Back in Canada, in 1933, my dad became interested in a patented slot machine called Tap-it. As gambling slot machines were illegal, this had to be more of a skill type of machine, where if you got two out three scores, your reward would be life savers, so they said. Anyhow, he took this machine to Chicago to promote it at a trade

show, and I went with him.

We stayed in the Sheraton Hotel. At the hotel, my dad was visited by a Mr. Levine who said he was working for Al Capone, who had heard of my dad's machine and was interested in how it worked, and that Mr. Capone was interested in getting the concession for the state of Illinois. After the visit my dad got a call from the chief detective of the hotel and was advised to stay away from Levine.

The machine didn't go over, and in 1936 my dad tried to get the Alberta government to approve this machine, but it was denied because they thought it was nothing more than a gambling device. My dad gave over the rights to Van Duzen who had amusement machines in Edmonton, and then again in Calgary, but the machine never was accepted.

I haven't said too much about my mother, Leah Edelson. As I mentioned, she was born in 1902 and came from London, England. When I was about 14 years old my mother and father separated, and

she went back to her parents in Winnipeg.

In 1937 my dad officially changed our family's surname from Jashunsky to Edelson. It was his mother's maiden name. The reason for this change was, and I had this difficulty even in public school, was that our non-Jewish friends had great difficulty in pronouncing it.

Dad spoke a number of languages fluently, and he served as an interpreter at the Kananaskis Internment Camp, where the RCMP sent so-called "influential Nazi sympathizers" early in World War II. He stayed until they found a military replacement to do the translating.

In 1946 Dad found out from a New York Jewish newspaper that his cousin Joseph Edelson was a cantor in one of the largest synagogues in South Africa. Dad brought him over here and he performed a concert at a hall on 17th Avenue and 4th Street West (*the Shrine Temple*). Joseph Edelson went to Toronto and then on to New York, where he became a well-known cantor.

Joseph Edelson was the only one of a large family to survive the Holocaust. He was apparently allowed to live because the German officers liked to have him sing operas. This was written up in an article in the New York Times. He made several recordings.

In 1946 my Dad went back into the stock exchange business in Vancouver. He bought a building on Pender Street next to the Bentall Building. He employed as many as twenty-seven people dealing in the oil business. In 1954 he sold the Vancouver brokerage business, because he lost a big lawsuit, involving Central Gas. I think it cost him \$185,000.

In 1962 my Dad became president of the Calgary Stock Exchange. He later retired, and died in Calgary in 1980, at the age of 83.

# The Old Cemetery

By Harry M. Sanders

Immediately north of the Shaw Cable station on Macleod Trail, sheltered behind a row of trees and shrubs, stands the Chevra Kadisha cemetery. It is Calgary's oldest Jewish burial place, and one of the earliest manifestations of Jewish community life in this city.

Established in 1904 as the "Hebrew Burying Ground," the cemetery originally lay outside the city limits. (Cemetery Hill was annexed to Calgary in 1907.) Initially part of Union Cemetery, the city partitioned this area and sold the original 931' x 26' portion to the Jewish community for \$160.00.

Visually, it is unique among Calgary's graveyards. Tall, jet-black monuments rise Manhattan-like in the oldest portion, set so closely together that the visitor cannot avoid treading upon some of the graves. The Hebrew inscriptions give the place an old-world feel. Epitaphs differ from the familiar "Ever Loved, Ever Remembered" variety. Translated, some of the common ones include "a simple and straightforward man" and "a friend of the worker."

Every August during Historic Calgary Week I lead tours through Calgary's historic graveyards and this year some 50 historic hikers trekked through the Jewish cemetery with me. Since well over half of the participants identified themselves as non-Jewish, we started the tour with a basic discussion on Jewish burial practice and mourning customs. Non-Jewish participants learned they had already been introduced to elements of Jewish cemeteries through television and film. They recalled the last scene in "Schindler's List," in which Holocaust survivors and others pay tribute to Oskar Schindler by covering his grave with pebbles. Jews mark their visit to the graves of loved ones by placing a pebble on the headstone. Similarly, the hand with parted fingers—representing the Hebrew letter *shin*—was found on the headstones of *kohanim*—was popularized by the American-Jewish actor Leonard Nimoy on the TV series *Star Trek*. Nimoy's character, Mr. Spock, uses the hand gesture as a greeting from the planet Vulcan.

Sources that helped me prepare the tour were mostly available through the JHSSA. I re-read Jay Joffe's "The Origins of the Old Cemetery" (*Discovery*, Spring 1991), and also used the JHSSA's cemetery map and its card/photograph file of all cemetery markers. Dates of death led me to obituaries in microfilmed newspapers, and in some cases I found not only obituaries but news items.

Through the graves we visited and the stories we heard, the tour's participants learned a survey history of Jewish life in Calgary and southern Alberta. An unexpected but invaluable part of the tour was Yale Joffe, who knew many of the people whose graves we visited. Mr. Joffe's insights gave the tour a warm and personal touch.

We stopped by the grave of Jacob Diamond, who with his wife Rachel became Calgary's first permanent Jewish residents when they arrived in 1888. We also saw the oldest grave—Goldie Bell, whose death in 1904 precipitated the cemetery's establishment.

Another grave we visited was that of Charles Malkin, an 8th Avenue east grocer whose store is now the site of Olympic Plaza. Malkin, who for years headed the Chevra Kadisha, sold his store in 1929; the new owner was Safeway, and Malkin's property became one of Calgary's original two Safeway stores.

Across the street from that Safeway, where the Calgary Centre for Performing Arts is located today, stood Jaffe's Books and Music Exchange. We visited the grave of Shai Jaffe, who founded this landmark business in 1930. Jaffe died in 1975, years after he sold the bookshop. Jaffe's Books was demolished in 1980.

Next to Jaffe's grave are those of Sam and Bessie Slutker, who owned the Plaza Theatre from 1950 to 1969. Years after she retired, Mrs. Slutker was still recognized across Calgary as "Mrs. Plaza" by thirty-somethings who as children had patronized her theatre.

We visited many other graves, too numerous to mention here, but they included the following: Judah Shumiatcher, early Hebrew teacher and community leader; Elias Sengaus, religious leader and teacher in the Jewish block settlement at Rumsey-Trochu; Rabbi Simon Smolensky, rabbi of the House of Jacob from 1917 to 1935; Charles Waterman, unfailing supporter of the Talmud Torah, after whom the Calgary Hebrew School (Charles Waterman Talmud Torah) was named; Joseph Guttman, pioneer farmer, hotelier, liquor merchant and chairman in 1912 of Calgary's "Hebrew Council"; Morris Fasman, honorary president of the Chevra Kadisha and namesake for the daily prayer hall in the old Shaarey Tzedec Synagogue; and Lucy Lieberman, a young woman who drowned tragically in the Bow River in 1927. Besides individual graves, we

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Leah and Yale Shapiro

## Shapiro Family Holds Calgary Reunion

Five generations of the large Shapiro family recently held a reunion in Calgary. Over 160 descendants of Jewish pioneers Leah and Yale Shapiro celebrated their family's heritage in a weekend of social gatherings, tempered by three family headstone unveilings.

Yale Shapiro was born in 1864 in Suraj, Russia, and married Leah in 1887. They had 13 children; one died in infancy, and another was a victim of the 1918 influenza epidemic.

The large Shapiro family, with some of the sons and daughters already married, completed its immigration to Calgary in 1922. Yale, an innkeeper and flour miller in the old country, devoted his life in Calgary to religious studies and to the House of Jacob Congregation.

The Shapiro family has its Canadian roots in Calgary, but Yale and Leah Shapiro's direct descendants, now numbering 330, live in many cities in Canada, the U.S. and Israel. Many of those attending the Calgary reunion came from other cities.

The Shapiro children and their spouses, from oldest to youngest, were: Solomon (Sonia Zeitsoff), Sarah (Harry Shuler), Reva (Billy Bercov), Ethel (Norman Libin), Shifra (Israel Ravvin), Rae (Sam Friedman), Morris (Bessie Shumiatcher), Edith (Sam Davis), Joe (Rose Olyan), Bob (Sara Jaffe), and Vera (Sam Himelfarb.)

Leah Shapiro died in 1935, at 71. Yale Shapiro died in 1957 at the age of 94. Vera Himelfarb is the only second-generation survivor; she is still active in Calgary Jewish communal activities.

A family tree and history booklet was prepared for the reunion by Murray Davis, Rick Dvorkin, and Len Himelfarb. A copy has been donated to the JHSSA Archives.



## Jewish Centre Celebrates Chai

This month marks the 18th anniversary of the Calgary Jewish Community Centre's Jerusalem Road building.

The Centre has become the true focus of Calgary's Jewish communal life, housing a wide variety of cultural, social, athletic, educational, and religious activities. It is home to many Jewish organizations (including the JHHS.)

Land was purchased in 1970, but the ceremonial groundbreaking did not take place until July, 1978.

The Centre and its adjacent seniors' complex, were officially opened on October 28, 1979, at a ceremony attended by many notable Calgarians. Proudest were the many pioneering men and women whose hard work and commitment to the Jewish community made the building a reality.

The 1979 campus replaced the badly outdated and poorly situated House of Israel building near downtown an 18th Avenue and Centre St. South. Construction of the old building began in 1929, and its lower floor opened to community uses in 1930. The depression and war delayed completion of the upper section until 1949.

Major users Beth Israel Congregation and the Talmud Torah vacated the House of Israel building in favor of their own Glenmore Trail locations early in the 1960s, following the migration of Calgary Jews to more southerly districts. A revived and professionally-staffed Jewish Community Council felt that Calgary's Jews needed a modern, centrally-located facility, one independent of existing religious and educational institutions.

The new Calgary Jewish Community Centre was so popular that a building addition was opened in 1992. Continuing improvements have made the CJCC into what may be Canada's best-utilized Jewish Community Centre.

**OUR NEWEST GIFT CARD - Leah (Lizzie) Gelfond and her friend Hanna Goldenberg take time off from their jobs at Calgary Tent and Awning. Photo taken at the Calgary Exhibition 1911.**

*Photo courtesy Rae Smithens, daughter of Leah (Gelfond) Kaplan.*



## The Old Cemetery ...

*Continued from Page 6*

also spoke about the monument to the many babies who did not live past infancy, the military cenotaph, and the *genizah*, wherein are consigned old religious articles such as *siddurim*, *talisim* and *teffilin*.

Two of the most recognizable names on our cemetery tour were Sheldon Chumir, prominent lawyer and Liberal MLA, and

Arnold Churgin, a familiar name to anyone who has bought fine shoes in Calgary.

Every year the size of the tour group grows larger. I hope to see you next August when we visit the old cemetery again.

*Portions of this article have previously appeared in The Calgary Sun and the Jewish Free Press.*

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

- |   |   |
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## JHSSA News

### Area Pioneers Pass On.

Two Calgary-area pioneering Jewish residents died recently, and are being mourned by their families and the community.

**Alan (Curly) Gurevitch** was born in 1916 at the Rumsey Jewish farm colony, fought overseas with the Canadian Army, and was active in many Jewish organizations, including the JHSSA, in which he served as a founder and director. Before his death last month, Curly donated many of his papers to the JHSSA Archives.

**Charlie Switzer** died at 98, after living continuously in southern Alberta since 1912. He was a founder and active member of many Calgary Jewish organizations. Charlie was the first of hundreds of relatives "brought over" to Canada from Poland by his aunt and uncle, Bella and Abraham Singer.

### Office Hours Extended

The JHSSA office at the Calgary Jewish Centre is now open during normal business hours all day Monday, nearly doubling the previous hours. This extension will meet the criteria of the Alberta Archives Association, and allow us the benefits of full membership in the organization.

Members who require services on other days should contact an executive member or call the Society's voice-mail

service, at 253-8600. Faxes can be sent to (403) 253-7195.

### Two New Photo Cards Available

Two new scenes from our Jewish history have been added to our collection of gift cards. One is a 1911 Calgary Exhibition photo, featuring Leah Gelfond and Hanna Goldenberg in a "balloon." The photo was donated by Rae Smithens, Leah Gelfond Kaplan's daughter. (See photo, page 7.)

The other new card shows Mordecai and Rachel Hanson, in Grodno Russia, circa 1900, prior to their emigration to Western Canada. Dr. Morris Hanson supplied the charming photo.

These new cards, as well as the originals—Jewish women harvesting at Trochu, 1917, House of Jacob exterior, House of Jacob interior, 1943 Talmud Torah kindergarten class, and the 1908 Anna Block skating photo, can be sent to your friends to honor social events. Minimum donation (tax deductible) to have a card sent out is \$5; call Tiby Presma at 281-3910.

### Book Sales Strong

Nearly 700 copies of *Land of Promise* have been sold, ranking the book as a best-seller for community histories. Only one thousand copies of the book were printed. *Land of Promise* can be purchased for \$50 per copy, at the CJC front desk, or through Mel Nagler, at (403) 255-4192. Mail orders

should include \$5 for postage costs. Fifty copies were purchased by the Harry B. Cohen Foundation and donated to area libraries as well as Jewish institutions throughout Canada.

### Discovery Reprinted as Single Volume

All 19 issues of *Discovery*—including this one—are being reprinted and bound as one volume. Our first *Discovery* was in 1990. The book will be for sale at our Annual General Meeting, October 30, 1997.

### Two-Gun Cohen ...

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supervise a Chinese labor group at the battle front. He returned to Edmonton in 1919.

The *Encyclopedia Judaica* presents the following account of Cohen's career in China:

"Cohen joined Sun Yat-sen as an aide in 1922, and later was also advisor to his successor, Chiang Kai-shek. Cohen helped organize the Kuomintang Army, and from 1926 to 1928 functioned in all but name as the Nationalist war minister. He took part in military campaigns against both Communist rebels and the Japanese, and carried out several secret missions to Europe to purchase arms and organize support for the Nationalist forces. In 1941 he was taken prisoner by the Japanese ... and two years later he was repatriated to Canada."

In 1944 Cohen visited both Calgary and Edmonton, giving speeches on behalf of the beleaguered Chinese government. In Calgary, he and his new bride, Montreale Judith Clark, were guests of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Singer.

After the war, he lived in England, and returned to the Orient several times. The Canadian *Encyclopedia* states: "Following the Communist victory in 1949, Cohen, persona grata in both Beijing and Taipei, made efforts at reconciliation - all of which failed."

Morris Cohen died in England in 1970, apparently in poverty.

Sources: Charles Drage, *The Life and Times of Two-Gun Cohen; 1954; Calgary Public Library - Local history Department; Glenbow Alberta Library; JHSSA Archives, Canadian Encyclopedia; Encyclopedia Judaica. A new biography, Two-Gun Cohen, by American journalist Daniel S. Levy, is now available. Mr. Levy conducted extensive research in western Canada, and was assisted in Calgary by Gena Rotstein.*

— by Jack Switzer

## DISCOVERY

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