

JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY of Southern Alberta

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WINTER 1998



December, 1948: Calgary's Jewish war orphans and their adoptive parents are feted at a banquet, held in the Peretz School auditorium. This photo shows many of the Calgary orphans, as well as several Edmonton orphans and some friends. Left to right, standing: (?), Saul Glin, Fred Manus, Robby Waisman, Esther ?, Yale Katz, Ebie ?, Mike Garbusz, Moishe ?, ?, Mark Janasz, Molly Hollander, Oscar Kirschner, Ben Katz. Seated, left to right: ?, Elyse Schwartzpele, Elliott Zuckier, Abe Goldstein, Helen (Macklin), Clara Candle, Saul Blayways, ?, ?, Rochelle Schwartzpele, ?, Izzy Averbach, Klara Kagen, Paul Kagan. Photo - Oscar Kirschner. Please help us add or correct names

Jewish War Orphans, Adoptive Parents to be Recognized at Calgary Ceremony

Fifty years ago fifteen young Holocaust survivors came to live with adoptive Jewish parents in Calgary. These Jewish war orphans will be focus of this year's community Yom Hashoah (Holocaust) remembrance service on April 23, 1998. The orphans, and the Calgary families who took them in, will be honored.

Robby Waisman, now of Vancouver and one of the original orphan group, will be featured speaker at the service. Waisman, working with the Vancouver Holocaust Centre, will bring with

him an exhibit of photos, documents and artifacts relating to the young holocaust survivors.

The Jewish Historical Society is conducting oral interviews with those still living in Calgary, and is collecting archival resources of their European lives and post-war Canadian experiences.

The new Calgarians were teens and young adults, a small part of the 1123 war orphans who came to Canada as part of a Canadian Jewish Congress relief program. It should be kept in

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Their generosity is gratefully acknowledged.*

Jewish War Orphans ...

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mind that all were children during the terror-filled war years.

Although liberated from the concentration camp horrors, the "older" orphans were homeless and desperate. They lived as refugees in various transit centers and displaced person - DP - camps. Some stayed for vocational training programs, but many left the camps to live sordidly in western Europe's cities, where they haunted relief agencies and embassies for the "papers" that would open the door to some sort of future life.

Canada had closed the doors to Jewish refugees in the pre-war and wartime years, with the federal government exercising an anti-Semitic policy well-documented by Abella and Troper in their book *None is Too Many*. (Only 500 Jewish refugees made it through Canadian bureaucratic barriers during the war years.)

A breakthrough came in 1947, when the government approved the admission of one thousand Jewish war orphans, with all costs for selection, transportation, and continuing care to be borne by the Canadian Jewish Congress. The orphans had to be no older than eighteen.

Congress official Saul Hayes was sent to major Canadian centers to organize local groups, who were to find suitable foster homes. Many families came forward; many expected younger children and preferred girls, and were a bit disappointed to learn that the Canadian-bound orphans were mainly male, and mainly older teens. (Those younger children who had survived had been re-united with distant relatives or welcomed by agencies in Palestine/Israel.)

Nonetheless, homes were found and the teen orphans began arriving in Halifax in September, 1947. Most went to Montreal or Toronto. The first destined for Calgary and Edmonton, came in early 1948. They moved in with local Jewish families (some with younger children and others childless or "empty-nesters,") with whom they had difficulty communicating their fears and problems.

A few orphans were unhappy with their situations and moved to larger Jewish centers. Others were able to find long-lost relatives and re-unite with them. Most stayed, and soon

became acclimatized to their new families and the community. They learned English, found jobs or began businesses, married and raised families. Today they are largely indistinguishable from other Jewish men and women of their age.

But they do have scars, both physical and psychological, the nightmares and memories of indescribable horrors, heightened by being victimized and brutalized as children.

The Calgary orphans remember their hosts as warm and caring. "The Jews of Calgary opened their hearts to us," recalls Oscar Kirschner. The young men and women formed strong bonds of friendship here, maintained over fifty years.

The photo on page one of this issue shows the Calgary and Edmonton orphans some time after their arrival in Alberta, finally smiling, free and at home. This photo, and others, will be on display at the Yom Hashoah memorial and tribute.

Please join us there.

Here is a list of the Jewish Congress war orphans who came to Calgary, including their local adoptive parents. We apologize for any omissions; corrections would be welcome.

Oscar Kirschner - Rose and Morris Hector

Elliott Zuckier - Ida and Cecil Horwitz

Max Candle - Ida and Charlie Switzer

Ben Katz - Gizika and Herman Weisz

Yale Katz - Rose and Max Torchinsky

Esther ? - Lily and Nate Horodezky
Juliette Jacobs - Mary and David Austin

Alyse and Rochelle Schwartzpele - Rebecca and Peter Block

Lucia and Mark Janasz - Betty and Ted Riback

Robbie Waisman - Rachel and Harry Goresht

Ebie ? - Dorothy and Charlie Smith
From Edmonton, as adults - Saul Glin, Leon Cohen;

From Winnipeg, as adults - Bill Schwartz, Mickey Sander, Steve Blitz

Sources: *JHSSA Archives, Oscar Kirschner, Elliott Zuckier, Sol Glin; Abella and Troper, None is Too Many; Martz, Open Your Hearts; Gutkin, Journey into our Heritage; Belkin, Through Narrow Gates.*

- By Jack Switzer

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We wish to acknowledge generous special gifts from Calgary B'Nai Brith Lodge #816, and the Al and Mona Libin Foundation.

Calgary Jewish History on TV

The JHSSA is pleased to have taken part in the recently aired feature on the Calgary-based Shumiatcher family on the History Channel. Film-maker David Paperny produced his family's story "Something from Nothing," as the first episode of the series *A Scattering of Seeds*, depicting the vital role of immigrants in Canada's history.

Paperny, great-grandson of Judah Shumiatcher, a Rumsey-area homesteader and Calgary's first Hebrew teacher, has donated a videotape of the program to the JHSSA archives.

Charles Waterman – Always a Leader

Charles Waterman might well be Calgary Jewry's man of the century.

He is best known for his devoted leadership of the Calgary Talmud Torah, which later bore his name. But he should also be remembered as a pioneering farmer, an enterprising and successful businessman, patriarch of a large family, and a Jewish leader who depended more on action and deeds than on words and rhetoric.

He was a man of small stature, physically unimposing, and never considered himself an "intellectual." Nonetheless, Charles Waterman is recalled as a man of vigor, foresight, and great spiritual strength.

His life can be studied by dividing his many years into four segments - his life in Romania, his homesteading years, the early business-development period, and the community service years.

Romania—Fighting the Anti-Semites, 1877–1900

Charles Simon Waterman (originally Wasserman) was born in Suchova, Austria, (part of Galicia) on Sept. 15, 1877. He was the second of six children born to Sholom and Chaya Waterman, and received a traditional cheder education.

He left home at 13 to work for an innkeeper in a small Romanian town, and was later invited to work for a wine merchant in the larger city of Jassy (*spellings vary*), whose population included 40,000 Jews. The city was well known for its rich Jewish culture, including Hebrew and Yiddish publishing.

Romania, the eastern arm of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was notoriously anti-Semitic, and the many incidents of harassment and pogroms raised Waterman's Jewish consciousness. He was greatly influenced by the dynamic leadership of Theodore Herzl at the first World Zionist Congress, held in Switzerland in 1897, an event well reported in Romania's Jewish press.

In 1898, Charles Waterman was 20, an ardent Zionist devoted to helping his fellow Jews protect their lot and improve their future. The famous Jassy pogrom of 1898 involved him in a bloody introduction to anti-Semitic politics.

Charles Waterman describes the pogrom and trial in his own words:



Charles Waterman at his Western Canada Importers office, 10th Avenue and First Street S.E., 1927. Photo - Max Rubin

"The circumstances were in the city of Jassy, Rumania. A pogrom started on the Jewish population, by the students and peasants. They were robbing and killing and beating up Jewish people. We got to know what was going on in the downtown area. We were on a private street and we heard that they were moving our way.

"On the street where I was working, at a wholesale distributing place of wine, there were many young Jewish boys working, some in machine shops and construction. Word spread about what was going on. Ten or twelve of us organized ourselves with hard wood and iron bars, so that if they came, we would keep them moving, so they would not hurt anybody on that street.

"It was a gravel street, and there were good sized boulders and stones. We were standing a little bit off the road, so that when they passed, we would let them get by and we would come behind them and chase them.

"And it didn't take long. There was a big mob of fifty or sixty yelling in Romanian, 'kill the Jews,' and 'Jews, go

to Palestine.' We didn't want to start a battle with them, so we just went behind them throwing stones. They were students and peasants, an organized group.

"As they were running on, there were some people standing outside of a big rich home. Some workmen stopped them and asked them what are they running for, and as they stopped, we came to clash face to face. They tried to drag us into that yard where these people were standing and a fight started.

"And as they started to hit us, we started to fight back back with the tools which we had in our hands. One of them fell down bleeding. They phoned the police and the army from the house.

"That man died. It would not be definitely known who hit him as there was such a turmoil. As the police came and tried to investigate, they pointed on us and arrested us all. And out of the ten, they picked four of us for hitting that man, I was one of them. The

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Charles Waterman ...

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one who was killed was the one who stopped the mob asking, "Why do you run? Are you afraid of these few Jews?"

"We were under arrest for three months, before a jury trial. The Jews of Jasny put up four of the best lawyers for us, and with all the witnesses that we had. Even a colonel stated that there was such a turmoil that no witnesses could be reliable, and it was self-defence.

"The jury was anti-Semitic, and there was a mob outside shouting 'hang the Jews.' They sentenced us to five years imprisonment. An appeal was made to a higher court in Bucharest; it took three months before we came to the next trial, and the Supreme Court liberated us. The trial cost the Jews of Jasny over a million Rumanian francs at five francs per dollar.

"After the liberation I didn't want to stay any more in Romania, and seeing that the future of young people in these countries was gloomy, and the Baron de Hirsch had taken a great interest in our liberation. Four of us that were in this demonstration were helped to go to the United States.

"I was chosen as leader of the group, as I was the first one to organize the group fighting the demonstrator, and in June of 1900 we all left for the U.S."

New York, Montreal, and a Prairie Homestead, 1900-1921

Charles Waterman continues to tell the story of his life in Canada: (*Material in brackets is inserted by the editor:*)

"I decided (*late in 1900*) to leave New York and go to Montreal, as I had an uncle and cousin there from my home town who said it would be better for me on business than being a workman. (*Waterman worked in Montreal as a peddler, from a horse and wagon, serving farmers north of the city, where he became known as 'le petit juif'—the little Jew. He saved enough to open a clothing store.*)

"In 1902 I sent for my brother Noah to come, and a year later I sent for Max, who was in England at the time. We worked together until 1905, saved up some money, and decided we should go west.

"We all got homesteads, next to each other, for which we each paid \$10.00. As we had intended to bring

over our parents, we booked the fourth quarter-section, one that was open and not filed for, for our father.

"In May of 1906 we all went out to our land. We bought two teams of horses, wagons, implements, cooking utensils, a tent. The homestead was 46 miles east of a town called Olds. Half the way was prairie road, the other half had no road at all.

"We put our tent up alongside a big slough near a lot of trees in the center of our section.

"We stacked prairie hay near the Red Deer River, where trees afforded the crop some protection. We cut a lot of these trees, and built a barn, shelter for the cattle in winter, and shade for them in summer, as well as protection from the mosquitoes.

"We bought 17 cows, 12 with calves, and 12 without. It took two days on horses to get the cows to our farm. Max and I were the cowboys. The first winter we stayed in the tent, but we had shelter for the cows.

"Our horses were expensive. We paid \$400.00 for a team of horses, two breeding mares and two geldings, all young horses. We cut fence posts, brought barbed wire from Olds, and built corrals for the livestock.

"It was a hard winter, but we all survived. We lost no cattle, and we didn't get sick in spite of the fact that one winter night a storm lifted the tent off its pegs, and we had to go out in our fur coats and tie the tent down again.

"In the spring of 1907 we broke (*plowed*) twenty acres of land and we seeded it with wheat. It was a fairly good yield. We were the only ones within twenty miles who had plowed ground. We took half a sack of wheat to an exhibition at Olds and got first prize for it. In 1907 we broke more land, which was prepared for seeding in 1908.

"In the same summer (*1908*) we brought our family from Europe—father, mother, and three sisters, and we built a house. We had to haul the lumber the 46 miles from Olds. It wasn't easy. We got a \$4000 loan from the Baron de Hirsch (*Jewish Colonization Association*) on 5 per cent interest, which helped us to continue to improve the land and make a living.

"Most profit was from dairy; the money from grain was spent on more machinery, a bigger house, and conve-

niences.

"In 1910 a settlement of French aristocrats arrived, ten miles from our farm. (*One was Colonel Trochu, after whom the town was named.*) They took up land and were in need of seed grain and a few cows. By that time our name, Waterman Farms, got to be well-known, and they came to buy whatever they could from us.

"That helped us to buy a tractor, break more land, and got us into real farming.

"In 1907 the Guttman family came and settled two miles from us. They were a family I knew from Montreal and were from the city in which I was born. There was a father, four sons, and two daughters. On the second of June, 1912, I married one of the Guttman girls, Ethel Guttman.

"From then on, in 1912, my two sisters got married to two brothers named Nelson (*nearby Jewish homesteaders*), and the youngest got married to Israel Miller. The two sisters moved to Edmonton. The youngest who married Miller, went to live on a farm in Alliance.

"In 1912 the Canadian National Railway started a branch line from Edmonton via Trochu to Calgary, and people started settling in Trochu and opening stores. It helped us out. We did not have to go into Olds anymore for everything.

"Between 1907 and 1912 we bought school land that the government had available. Each brother bought another quarter section adjoining.

"After 1914, when Max got married to Bessie Katzin, daughter of a neighboring farmer who came out in 1913, we decided that each man should work for himself. Up to then we had farmed together. We split up the livestock and the equipment.

"Noah wasn't married and he sold his share to me and Max. Noah wasn't able to do much physical work, so he moved to Calgary in 1914 and started in insurance.

"During the First World War the government encouraged farming and ranching. We bought more machinery and farmed big. We sold grain by the carload to be shipped overseas.

"The good farming of the war years helped us a lot to get on our feet. I

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The Waterman family, Trochu, 1917. Left to right: Charles and Ethel Waterman, with children Freda and Lil; Esther Silver, Bertha Dattner, Esther Miller. Photo - Glenbow Archives, NA-3306-1.

Charles Waterman ...

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built a house for myself. Max built for himself. My parents had one separate. Three houses took a lot of money. That's the way it was going until 1921, when we decided to leave the farm.

"The children were growing up. Freda was seven, Lil was five. (*There were to be four children—Freda, Lillian, David, and Phyllis.*) Since it was not possible to stay on the farm and give the girls a Jewish education, we decided to rent the farm on shares, to leave the equipment and move into Calgary.

"It was a risky undertaking. I did not know what I would do for a living, since the farm income would not be enough."

Exporting Tzedakah and Importing Knives—the 1920's

Charles Waterman tells how he came to start his family's major business enterprise, Western Canada Importers.

"In the year of 1922 I started this little business of Western Canada Importers by coincidence. After the war in Austria and Germany they were starving. My father-in law, Shmuel Guttman, had a family friend (*Mr. Friedmann*) in Vienna who wrote that he was simply starving. With the

money he had he could not buy food. He wanted to have preserved food sent to him for the critical period.

"At that time the Guttmans were living in Calgary, and he consulted me as he did not know how to go about it. I told him when people are starving we must help them regardless of our own condition.

"We sent them pastrami, salami, matzohs and matzah meal, in metal containers.

"When the stuff came to them, it was before Pesach, and they were thankful. He wrote a letter that he didn't want anything for nothing. He was a broker representing factories and gave us a list of products that he sold. We could barter with food in exchange for merchandise.

"It was with lines that I knew (*including Henkels knives*) and I thought this would be a good thing to go into business with. I made up an order of things which I thought suitable from that list of things: scissors, razors, pocket knives, pliers. I requested samples just to see what the merchandise looked like.

"They came in a few parcels, and I took them and went to some sporting goods and hardware stores to get their opinion. When they looked at it, and

saw that there was a scarcity of this merchandise, they were anxious to buy the stuff from me.

"When they (*our relatives*) didn't need food I would send a \$20 US bank-note in a plain envelope, because there were no banking connections. In 1925 I went to Europe, to Vienna, to see what I could buy, and from there on Western Canada Importers got established.

"I went to Europe every second or third year as the Canadian manufacturers would sell me nothing. I went to Austria, Germany, Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and England. Musical instruments came from Germany, tools from Switzerland and England."

The Community Service Years, 1925–1970

Charles Waterman managed to make a living, and more, as an importer and distributor of European hardware, meanwhile extending his interests to many areas of the Jewish community and using his growing financial and personal influences to effect real changes. A portion of the office space at Western Canada Importers was reserved for Hebrew School, Zionist, and other Jewish community uses.

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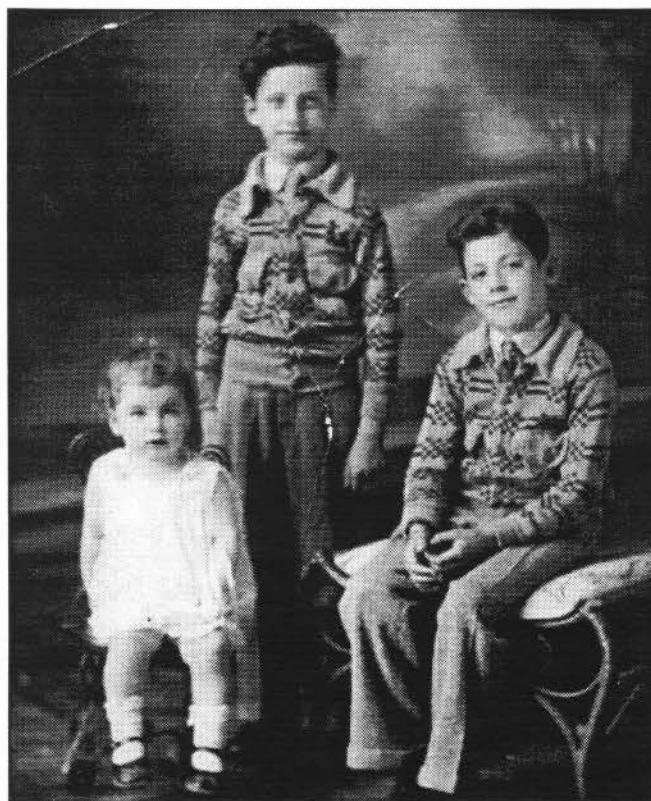
New Photos



Wilder's Confectionery, Drumheller, c. 1930. At right are owners Gertie Wilder (nee Chertkow) and Jack Wilder. The 25 cent sale on the cash register was for a sundae. Photo - Gary Gutman, Vancouver and Henry Gutman, Calgary.



The Gofsky sisters in front of their Calgary home, 1930's. Left to right: Rose Gofsky, Becky Gofsky Estrin, Jenny Gofsky. Source - Esther Starkman, Edmonton, daughter of Becky Estrin)



Goldenberg children, Lethbridge, c. 1926. Isabella (Davids), Sidney, Alex. Source - Esther Starkman, Edmonton.

Charles Waterman ...

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In 1927, when organizers began fund-raising for a Jewish Community Centre, several prominent men made pledges, but it was Charles Waterman who came forward with the first actual payment.

Waterman, an early Zionist, travelled to Palestine in 1935, buying land for Jewish development, a small orange grove. He travelled to Israel every year after 1955, maintaining a guest house on a kibbutz.

The Calgary Hebrew School came to be his major Jewish interest. It was his philosophy that every Jewish child not only deserved, but was entitled to a Hebrew education, regardless of the parents' ability to pay. He encouraged development of the Talmud Torah into a full Jewish day school.

The United Palestine Appeal, (*later the United Israel Appeal*) benefited from his philanthropy and fund-collection abilities. He played a major role in completing the House of Israel community building (*and its Hebrew School wing*), and in forming Beth Israel congregation.

In 1948 Waterman began his long tenure as president of the Talmud Torah. In 1958 he selected and personally purchased (*for \$13,500*) the Glenmore Trail land now occupied by the school. He was the first to sign as a bank loan guarantor for the school's

construction costs. His gift of \$7,500 (*towards the \$175,000 total cost*) was not the biggest donation, but it was was, again, the first to be recorded.

Friends recall that Waterman put aside part of every day to phoning associates (*and strangers*) to make donations to Jewish community fund drives. He gave and helped widely, but his passion was the Hebrew School. He made an annual Hannukah ritual of personally presenting to each student a signed card and some "Hanukkah gelt."

Waterman retired from active leadership of the Hebrew School executive but was able to oversee the school's next major developments - junior high grades and a gymnasium. He began learning Hebrew when he was in 80's, and became fluent in the language he had nourished for many decades.

Charles Waterman died in Calgary in 1970, at the age of 91. Ethel Waterman had predeceased him in 1959.

A grand-daughter once interrupted his dinner-table conversation: "Zaida. Isn't there anything else to talk about except the Talmud Torah?"

Charles Waterman quietly answered, "No."

Sources: JHSSA Archives, papers and photos donated by Phylis and Al Rubin, Dave Waterman.

Did You Know?

Brief items of interest about southern Alberta Jewish history:

- Jean Shulman (later Jean Libin) was the first woman in Alberta to hold a steam engineering license. She qualified, during World War II, in order to run the boilers and equipment at the Shulman family's dry-cleaning business.

- The first full-time religious leader of the Lethbridge Jewish community was Rabbi Goodwin, who came to Alberta from Jerusalem in 1911. The Lethbridge Herald reported that, "in addition to his ecclesiastic duties," the rabbi would run after-school Jewish classes and "prepare meats according to Hebrew requirements."

- Morris Shumiatcher, as a law student, won an essay contest sponsored by the Japanese government and spent the summer of 1940 travelling in Japan. He published stories of his Japanese experiences under the pseudonym of Cyril Morris.

- Calgarian Samuel Helman had the largest private classics library in the city. Two thousand of these books were donated to the University of Calgary library.

- Lil Wener's brother Max Friedman was a speech-writer for U.S. president John F. Kennedy. He may have written Kennedy's famous "Ask not what your country can do for you ..." speech.

- The south Mount Royal Home built in 1949 for Martha and Harry Cohen was the first "split-level" house to be erected in Calgary. The then-unique plan was designed by the Cohens.

- The Calgary Zionist Association was formed in 1907, and held an annual "Purim Masquerade" to raise funds.

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JHSSA News

"We Can Copy" Sponsors Discovery

This issue of Discovery is sponsored by We Can Copy and its parent company West Canadian Industries. We Can Copy is a major supplier of printing and copying services to the JHSSA, and we are grateful for its support of our work.

The We Can Copy branch at Elbow Drive and Heritage Drive does far more for the JHS than merely photocopy. They print, from our computer discs, the 2400 copies of Discovery needed for each issue. WCC designs, typesets and prints many certificates, forms and stationery items for us.

The firm also provides many other graphic services. For instance, for the recent Jewish Center 18th anniversary display, WCC photocopied large newspaper pages and attached them to foam core display boards.

Their most frequent assignment for us is to laser-copy historical photos, a process as accurate and much cheaper and faster than conventional photographic methods. In fact, they are often able to enhance the quality of indistinct pictures.

Thank you again, to company president George Brookman and the friendly staff at We Can Copy for their generosity and help.

New Acquisitions Welcomed

Recent donations to our archives have been most welcome and extremely useful to our researchers.

The complete set of Community Council News, from 1962 to 1980, has been supplied by the Calgary Jewish Community Council. Material from this collection was displayed at a recent Jewish Centre 18th anniversary exhibit.

Joe Spier has donated an important set of minutes and correspondence from the House of Israel Association, (predecessor to the CJCC) including a copy of the original charter.

Al Rubin has donated several Calgary Hebrew School files, including records of the 1959 Talmud Torah building fund drive.

Also received were historical photographs of the Starkman, Gofsky, and Estrin families from Esther Starkman, Edmonton, and Harry and Mary Gofsky, Vancouver. These wonderful family pictures have been copied, indexed, and placed in our growing archival photo collection.

Local Jewish Genealogy Group Planned

Tracking down your Jewish ancestors is only one objective of a genealogical society a Calgary woman hopes to organize.

Florence Elman, who has worked in Jewish genealogical studies for 20 years, hopes to organize a Calgary group which can join forces with those already flourishing in other Canadian Jewish centers.

She says Jewish genealogy is more than just tracking a family tree. For Diaspora Jews, it can involve re-connections with long-lost relatives. Holocaust survivors, and victims, are still being traced and their stories recorded. And prevention of "Jewish" genetic diseases can be effective only with accurate genealogical research.

In every Alberta city there are genealogists who have been struggling

alone with specific research projects. With the growing amount of available resources, all can profit by combining their knowledge, efforts, and talent, Elman adds.

The Jewish Historical Society already has a growing collection of genealogy material and hopes the addition of a specialized genealogical study and research group will enhance the overall "heritage" resources available to the Jewish community.

The group is being organized as a branch of the JHSSA.

If you are interested in joining a Jewish genealogical group, or just want more information, please call the JHSSA office, Mondays, 253-8600, or Florence Elman at (403) 850-4337; her e-mail address is haflo@cadvision.com.

We invite you to donate or show us your photos. They need not be limited to individuals or family groups; anything of historical interest is welcome - pictures of old homes, businesses, work groups, etc. may be equally compelling. Your photos can be returned to you within days of their receipt.

Book of Heritage

A Book of Heritage certificate has been presented to Betty Gurevitch to honor the memory of her late husband, Curly Gurevitch. A page in the Book of

Heritage, on display outside our office, has noted the event.

Any important occasion can be memorialized in the Heritage book; your gift is handsomely recorded in the book and is accompanied by a special certificate.

You can also honor special events by donating a book to the Harry B. Cohen Genealogical Library or having the JHSSA send a historical picture card to the recipient. Please call Tiby Presma at 281-3910 for information on the Book of Heritage, library gifts, or photo cards.

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