

**In the Company of Gentiles:  
Exploring the History of Integrated Jews in British Columbia,  
1858-1971**

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## **Abstract**

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From 1858 until 1971 society in British Columbia (BC) offered Jews a context of coexistence, characterized by periods of harmony and contention. By way of five microhistories focusing on the lives of Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Hannah Director, Leon Koerner, Harry Adaskin, and Nathan Nemetz, this study examines various modes of integration for Jews within particular periods of BC history. Each microhistory explores the boundaries that were crossed and fostered by Jews whose careers and social contributions led them outside the confines of the established Jewish community. These Jews represent the vanguard of Jewish integration for each era to which they contributed. Due to the fact that British Columbia's Jewish population has historically been relatively small, the experience of integration, as expressed by individual British Columbian Jews, is significant. This study assumes that individuals are expressions of society; that social shifts are reflected in and affected by individual action; and that, in history, there exists a dialectical relationship between society and individuals.

The theoretical framework of this thesis comprises approaches adapted from social history and sociology. This study asks: What allowed for Jewish integration to take place in British Columbian society? What was it about the Jewishness of each individual that allowed for his or her integration? And finally, what can be stated about the overall nature of Jewish integration in British Columbia during this 113 year period?

This study contributes to Canadian Jewish history by demonstrating how Jewish individuals who contributed to the betterment of society facilitated Jewish integration in British Columbia. This dissertation argues that Jewish integration in BC is the result of a dialectical relationship between overarching social structures and social values and individual action. And it exposes how the nature of integration varies among individuals and over time. Until recently, Canadian Jewish history has focused mainly on Jewish history as it has evolved within secular or religious communal Jewish institutions. This study does not revisit the institutional history of BC Jewry nor does it offer a history of BC's organized Jewish community. Rather this study attempts to broaden modern Canadian Jewish historiography by examining the lives of relatively unknown Jews whose social contributions illuminate the historical paths to integration in BC. By focusing on the historical nature of Jewish integration in British Columbia, this study demonstrates that a part of the distinctiveness of Canadian Jewish history lies within its intricacies.

They came from all over  
To our beautiful B.C. shore  
First with the gold rush  
And from Europe  
And after the Second World War  
Holocaust survivors came  
Men, women, children  
Veteran Jews from the prairies  
And from oppression in Hungary  
And the former Soviet Union  
From Shanghai, Chile  
In the Middle East,  
North and South Africa  
And Eastern Canada,  
From all over the world  
To live in peace,  
From all walks of life  
Some from trouble and strife,  
They came and established  
Themselves and contributed,  
Organizing, leading, educating,  
Caring and performing mitzvahs  
Leading and lending their talents,  
Building a strong community  
And leaving a legacy  
For generations to come.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Miriam Joy Bromberg. *Creating Community Images of Vancouver's Jewish History: 25th Anniversary of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia*. (Vancouver, BC: Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia 1997).

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Figure I Map of the Province of British Columbia

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The gold rush era beginning in 1858 was decisive in shaping British Columbia's history; not so much for the discovery of gold, but rather because the era initiated a mass immigration of Canadians, Americans, Europeans and Asians to the region. All in search of wealth and opportunity, these peoples would lay the social foundations of the future province of British Columbia (BC). The social interactions and conflicts that occurred between indigenous peoples and settlers, and between various settler groups, have been widely studied. However, one particular group of settlers involved throughout British Columbia's history is commonly overlooked: British Columbia's Jews.

### **Thesis and objectives**

By way of five microhistories, focusing on the lives of Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Hannah Director, Leon Koerner, Harry Adaskin, and Nathan Nemetz, this study examines various modes of integration for Jews within particular periods of BC history between 1858 and 1971. By analyzing Jewish history in British Columbia as it was expressed through the integration and contributions of individual Jews to general British Columbian society, this dissertation endeavours to understand the historical nature of social relations between Jews and their non-Jewish compatriots, and thus add a new dimension to how Jewish history is explored both within British Columbia and Canada as a whole.

Each microhistory is based upon the lived experiences of individual Jews whose careers and social contributions led them outside the confines of the established Jewish community. As such, each microhistory represents a fusion between gentiles and Jews, and in a sense each of the microhistories represents the vanguard of Jewish integration for its era. In fact, from their generation, they were often the first to make the contributions they did. Cecelia Davies Sylvester was the first known Jewish socialite in BC and a prominent volunteer; Hannah Director was the first Jewish female chair of a BC school board; Leon Koerner was the first Jewish lumber-baron and philanthropist in BC to have immigrated from abroad; Harry Adaskin was the first prominent Jewish musician and professor in BC, and a founder of UBC's music department; Nathan Nemetz was the first Jewish Chief Justice of the province. Importantly, most of these figures were also at the vanguard of Jewish integration in BC. In fact, the level of integration experienced by the aforementioned historical figures was not necessarily experienced by the Jewish community as a whole. Koerner, Adaskin, and Nemetz, in particular, achieved levels of integration far beyond the majority of BC Jewry during their respective eras. Inasmuch as these individuals only represented a small selection of similarly integrated Jews, they can be considered what microhistorians refer to as "normal exceptions."<sup>1</sup>

In broad terms, this study assumes that individuals are expressions of society; that social shifts are reflected in and affected by individual action, and that there is a

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<sup>1</sup>Sigurdur Gylfi Magnusson, "What is Microhistory?" *History News Network* August 5, 2006. <http://hnn.us/articles/23720.html>

dialectical relationship between society and individuals in history.<sup>2</sup> By extension, in examining the existence of links between Jewish British Columbians and the province's mainstream society, this dissertation argues that Jewish integration in BC has historically resulted from a dialectical interaction between diverse social structures, values and cultural practices that were interpreted and expressed through localized experience and individual action. Furthermore, although generalizations may be made about community- and/or group-level integration, the nature of integration in the province has varied historically among Jewish individuals and over time, especially for those Jews who achieved anomalous levels of integration. This study will show that the historical figures did not integrate in exactly the same way or for exactly the same reasons. For the purposes of this study, integration may be defined as a wide-ranging reference to the social incorporation of individuals into the social, economic, and political structures of larger society, see *Integration* section in this chapter for further discussion.

This study does not revisit the institutional history of BC Jewry nor does it offer a history of BC's organized Jewish community. Rather it attempts to broaden modern Canadian Jewish historiography by examining the lives of relatively unknown Jews whose social contributions illuminate historical paths to integration in BC. It is an attempt at understanding the role of integrated Jews in both shaping the Canadian Jewish experience and the experience of Canadian Jews with non-Jewish Canadians. The

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<sup>2</sup> This is arguably a combination of components of *Leviathanology* and *Radical Individualism*. See Alf Lütke, "Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?" in *The History of Everyday Life. Reconstructing Historical Experiences and Ways of Life*. Edited by Alf Lütke. Translated by William Templer. (Princeton, NJ, 1995) p.143. To paraphrase Sahlins paraphrasing Sartre, Winston Churchill was British to be sure, but not every Briton was Winston Churchill.

central discussion questions of this dissertation include: What was it about the specific history of each of the individuals, including (but not limited to) their attachment to Jewish religion and culture, which allowed for integration to take place? What characteristics of general society allowed for Jewish integration? What was the nature of Jewish integration into British Columbia? As a social history, each chapter explores a combination of relevant themes, including some of the following: social mobility, ethnic and religious identity, family and gender relations, business structures and entrepreneurship, and patterns of rural and urban life.

This study focuses on the secular contributions of Jews in British Columbia, to the exclusion of religious and communal contributions within the established Jewish community. However, the emphasis on secular achievements in no way argues for the superior quality of such endeavours.<sup>3</sup> The exploration of secular endeavours adds another dimension to the relatively new discipline of Jewish Canadian studies. Furthermore, this study also acknowledges that from the beginning of Jewish settlement in BC, Jews were immune from the kind of race based anti-Asian sentiment that was a prominent feature of BC social and political life. Since racism is not the central focus of this study, there is little effort to compare the discrimination that was experienced by Asians, First Nations or other visible minorities in BC and that experienced by BC's Jews.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to arguments put forth by Glazer and Moynihan. See Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1971), p.363.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion on racism in BC see Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871*. Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 2001; Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003. W. P.

## **Jews in British Columbia**

In 1858, the first Jew, a merchant by the name of Alexander Phillips, disembarked the S.S. Panama in Port Victoria. Like thousands of other migrants, Phillips was enticed to British Columbia to seek his fortune in the Fraser Canyon and Caribou gold rushes of 1858 and 1863.<sup>5</sup> A total of 117 Jewish families immigrated to the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia during those years.<sup>6</sup> Although the majority of these Jewish migrants originated from Polish and German speaking lands, most had been acculturated to Anglo-society, either in Britain or in the United States (US). Like other migrants, these first Jewish settlers came mainly by way of California, sailing from San Francisco.<sup>7</sup> Many established themselves in Victoria; while others—motivated by the prospects of gold, fur trading, and the expansion of the railway—moved to less central areas on the mainland—to places such as Yale, Barkerville, Prince Rupert, Prince George and Trail.<sup>8</sup> Most were merchants, traders, and/or wholesalers who serviced the gold fields. Wherever they went, they readily integrated into the life of the burgeoning colony and contributed to the greater community. Victoria's Jews were members of the merchant middle-class and belonged to a variety of organizations and associations within the general community, including the Masons and the Odd Fellows. At the same time, many maintained connections to Judaism and made concerted efforts

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Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978.

<sup>5</sup> Jewish Historical Museum and Archives, *History of the Jewish Community in British Columbia* (2007).

<sup>6</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, "Introduction," *Western States Jewish History and the Scribe: Pioneer Jews of British Columbia*, WSJH: XXX VII, The Scribe: XXV, no. WSJH: 3 and 4, The Scribe: 1 and 2 (2005/5765): p.23.

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Johnston, "Chapter 6: Native People, Settlers and Sojourners," In *The Pacific Province: A History of British Columbia*, ed. Hugh J. M. Johnston (Vancouver and Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1996), p.165.

<sup>8</sup> Jewish Historical Museum and Archives, *History of the Jewish Community in British Columbia* (2007).

to establish formal Jewish institutions, such as British Columbia's first Jewish burial society, which consecrated the region's first Jewish cemetery in 1860, and its first synagogue, Congregation Emanu-el, erected in 1863.<sup>9</sup>

As gold prospects declined, so too did immigration. By the 1870s the province's Jewish community had levelled off, and would not show significant increase until the mid-1880s.<sup>10</sup> During what was commonly known as the 'open door' era, beginning in the 1880s lasting until the First World War (WWI), Canada experienced its largest immigration wave.<sup>11</sup> Among Canada's new immigrants were thousands of Eastern European Jews escaping pogroms and other atrocities of Tsarist Russia.<sup>12</sup> The city of Vancouver was incorporated in 1886, following the completion of the Canadian Pacific Rail (CPR) terminating in Port Moody, thus marking a shift of the province's economic centre from Victoria to Vancouver. Now accessible by train, Vancouver attracted new settlers from all over the continent, including a proportionate number of Jews.

Like the Jewish community in Victoria, Vancouver's Jewish community was first established by Anglo-acclulturated Jews. However, by the end of the nineteenth-century Vancouver's entire Jewish community numbered less than one hundred and was dominated by Eastern European Jewish migrants, giving that city's Jewish community a

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> As gold prospects fluctuated so too did the number of immigrants and the viability of many of the businesses servicing it. Barbara Schober, "British Columbia," In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit, Michigan: Macmillan Reference, 2007), pp.186-188.

<sup>11</sup> From 1896 to 1914 more than two million immigrants arrived in Canada and formed one of Canada's greatest immigration waves. By 1901 immigrants made up twelve percent of the total Canadian population. Graham Chandler, "Sellin' the Prairie Good Life," *The Beaver: Canada's History Magazine*, August/ September 2006, p.26.

<sup>12</sup> During this period Canadian Jewry experienced a fourfold population increase. Pierre Ancil, "Interludes of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Quebec in the Interwar Period," In *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation*, ed. Alan T. Davies (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), p.138.

different character than Victoria's. Unlike the Jews that arrived during the gold rushes, Jewish newcomers from Eastern Europe brought with them "strong currents of Orthodox Judaism, Zionism, and socialism."<sup>13</sup> Initially, two strata of Jews existed within Vancouver's Jewish community: Anglo-aculturated Jews, who lived in Vancouver's west-end neighbourhood and worked as professionals, businessmen, and politicians and were able to integrate into Vancouver's middle-class; and Eastern European Jews, who congregated in the Strathcona neighbourhood, worked as petty traders, and did not fraternize with the wider non-Jewish community (i.e. general community).

By 1919, Vancouver Jewry numbered 600 families and was dominated by the Eastern European cultural and religious ethos. The strong institutional character of Vancouver's Jewish community as well as the occupational realms in which the majority of Jews found themselves in meant that there was very little integration on the part of Vancouver Jewry during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup> However, integration did occur among Jews residing elsewhere in the province. Jews living in remote localities, places such as Prince Rupert, Prince George, Nelson, and the Peace River District, often bonded with the general communities amongst which they lived.

In Canada, as in England, the US and elsewhere, immigration would come to an abrupt halt during WWI, only to resume again during the inter-World War period. However, what had once been a torrent was now a trickle. By the end of WWI, Canada's

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<sup>13</sup> Schober, *British Columbia*, pp.186-188. Also see Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), pp.19-23, Tables 9-11.

<sup>14</sup> Between 1901 and 1931 Vancouver's Jewish community grew from 214 members to 2440 members. Small enclaves, totalling no more than 340 Jews, resided elsewhere in the province. Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, p.23, Table 11; Schober, *British Columbia*, pp.186-188.

desire for immigrants was reduced and immigration restrictions took precedence.<sup>15</sup> From the end of WWI until after World War Two (WWII) Jews continued to journey to British Columbia, migrating mainly from within Canada and the United States. During the Depression era, anti-Jewish sentiment became conspicuous in both British Columbia and the rest of Canada; as a result very few Jewish immigrants were admitted.<sup>16</sup>

In response to an upturn in the economy and an increased need for manual labourers following WWII, Canada slowly began allowing in non-European immigrants. The increased cultural diversity marked a historical shift in Canadian policy vis-à-vis immigrants and minority groups. The progressively multicultural character of Canadian society helped facilitate the introduction of the policy on multiculturalism in 1971 by Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government. The changes leading up to the introduction of multiculturalism affected all of Canada's minority groups, including Canadian Jewry, and all sectors of public life across Canada and BC.

The number of Jewish residents in BC grew steadily from the postwar period until the 1970s, when the province's Jewish population surpassed 10,000.<sup>17</sup> More recent Jewish newcomers to the province included former military personnel, Jews from the Canadian Prairies, and more than four hundred Holocaust survivors.<sup>18</sup> During this time, members of BC Jewry experienced significant upward mobility, as well as widespread

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<sup>15</sup> Immigration restrictions were introduced from 1918 until the mid-twenties, when they were officially combined to form the Revised Immigration Act of 1927; the act included a clause stating that immigration regulations would not be subject to legislative procedure and could be formulated and implemented by Orders in Council issued by the Privy Council. *Ibid.*, p.62.

<sup>16</sup> Irving M. Abella and Harold Martin Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), p.336.

<sup>17</sup> Schober, *British Columbia*, pp.186-188.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.186-188.

occupational diversity.<sup>19</sup> Jewish history in British Columbia has been characterized by the establishment of its own internal communal institutions, as well as by the contributions and integration of its members into to the broader community, these last two factors being the focus of this study.

### **British Columbia: The Colonial Frontier**

In comparison to Jewish history elsewhere in Canada, particularly in Eastern Canada, Jewish history in British Columbia is atypical. This stems from the province's distinctive place in Canadian history as discussed by historian Jean Barman, who links British Columbia's historical distinctiveness to its geographic remoteness.<sup>20</sup> Established as two separate crown colonies, Vancouver Island in 1849 and British Columbia in 1858, the two colonies were amalgamated in 1866 and subsequently joined Confederation in 1871.<sup>21</sup> Separated from the rest of Canada through seemingly endless chains of mountains, the region's isolation moulded the very character of British Columbian society. As a consequence of its remoteness from Eastern Canada, the history that characterized the early beginnings in Eastern Canada, namely that of the fur trading empire of the St. Lawrence was only weakly linked to BC history.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the region's isolation ensured that the area west of the Rockies and north of the forty-

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp.186-188.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Barman, *The West beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p.539.

<sup>21</sup> Tina Merrill Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p.15.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.15; Sir George Simpson, *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson's Journal* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1968), pp.338-339. North Westers established themselves in the far west in the early nineteenth century, but they did not form any kind of permanent settlement.

ninth parallel was settled by Europeans one hundred years after European settlement occurred everywhere else on the continent.<sup>23</sup>

When the Pacific North West was finally settled by Europeans, its geography necessitated that settlement occur from west to east, rather than the other way around; this resulted in initial migration from California, as well as from Britain through the Isthmus of Panama.<sup>24</sup> Although north-south trade links were favoured in BC, and although California was the place of origin of many of the region's migrants, the socio-political standards of the Pacific North West frontier were not modeled on the established framework of the American West.<sup>25</sup> Culturally, the region was an extension of metropolitan/colonial British society and thus was guided by British forms of authority, including British cultural norms and standards. The best way to describe the region's early British history is to define it as a colonial frontier.<sup>26</sup>

Eventual improvements to transportation were accompanied by increased settlement. As mentioned earlier, the transcontinental railways in both the US and Canada were not completed until 1869 and 1886, respectively. Therefore, early inhabitants prior to these dates came to the region either partially by train and stage coach, or by steamer. Often, early settlers were adventurers and fortune seekers who were prepared for the frontier life and who did not necessarily hold closely to the fixed

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<sup>23</sup> Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871*, p.15. Loo noted that BC only entered the "ambit of the European world in the mid eighteenth century."

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15; Barry Gough, "The Character of the British Columbia Frontier," *BC Studies* 32 (Winter 1976), pp.28-40.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.28-40.

social boundaries of the societies from which they came.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to settlement in Eastern Canada, when significant settlement in BC did occur, it was heterogeneous in nature. The population included British, continental Europeans, Asians, Americans, Jews, and indigenous peoples.<sup>28</sup> Jewish migrants to British Columbia were of varied origins and often shared prior American and British social experience. Unlike the Eastern provinces, British Columbia did not have to contend with entrenched homogeneity during its initial formation period. Unlike the Eastern provinces, BC was less ethnically and religiously homogenous. Therefore, despite the existence of historically tempered ethnic and racial tension, the region's plurality gave way to a more fluid and flexible social setting and allowed for liberal advancements during periods when similar endeavours would have been less plausible elsewhere in Canada. It is this unique historical mixture that will form the basis of this study's exploration into Jewish contributions and integration in British Columbia.

### **Historiography**

Modern Jewish Studies—with its multidisciplinary approach to a wide range of subjects, including culture, literature, history, theology, law, sociology, fine arts and biblical studies—has its roots in early-nineteenth-century Germany and the *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. This movement, instigated by a group of German Jewish scholars, attempted to create the 'science of Judaism.' The aim of the movement was slightly apologetic in nature. It was an attempt to demonstrate that Jewish culture could and

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<sup>27</sup> Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-7.

should be analyzed by the same methods used to analyze other peoples, namely the Greeks and the Romans. European Jewish intellectuals were not alone in this pursuit. Their English and German colleagues employed similar arguments for promoting the study of their own cultures. However, while English and German studies became well-established over the nineteenth century, the pioneers of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* failed to create an equivalent counterpart.<sup>29</sup> Instead, during this same period, the teaching of Jewish culture in the Western university setting remained within the realm of Christian theology.<sup>30</sup>

In Canada, the earliest Jewish studies courses appeared in 1844 at King's College (Toronto) and in 1849 at McGill College (Montréal). At King's College, Jacob Maier Hirschfelder taught Hebrew and gave instruction in the biblical tradition under the rubric of 'Oriental literature.' Similarly, Abraham de Sola taught courses on Hebrew and Oriental languages to McGill students who were mainly interested in furthering their understanding of Christian theology.<sup>31</sup> At that time, and until after WWII, the mindset of Canadian Jewry was to encourage the respectability of Jews and Judaism in the eyes of their Christian neighbours. The courses at McGill and King's College were no exception.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Goodman, "The Nature of Jewish Studies," in *The State of Jewish Studies*, eds. Shaye J. D. Cohen and Edward L. Greenstein (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1990), pp.1-4.

<sup>30</sup> Hebrew University established the first Institute for Jewish Studies in 1925. Jewish culture had of course been studied continuously in rabbinic circles for millennia. Michael Brown, "In Comparative Contexts: Canada," In *Teaching Jewish Civilization: A Global Approach to Higher Education*, ed. Moshe Davis (New York: New York University Press, 1995), pp.46-49.

<sup>31</sup> Interestingly, De Sola was more the exception than the rule. With de Sola's death in 1882, McGill subsequently hired Christians to teach in all areas related to Judaism. This would only change again in the mid twentieth century. *Ibid.*, pp.46-49.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp.46-49.

The link between the establishment of Jewish studies in Canadian academia and the advent of bureaucratic encouragement of multicultural values in Canadian society is not a coincidence. This development was indeed a direct by-product of the shift in Canadian social policy.<sup>33</sup> As ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism gained political legitimacy, Canadian ethno-cultural groups sought to strengthen their own communities. This included academic study of their communal traditions and cultural creations.<sup>34</sup> Today there are several academic programs in Jewish studies across Canada. The oldest of these developed during the 1960s and early 1970s out of the existing courses offered at the University of Toronto and McGill University, as well as at York University.

Considering that the study of Canadian Jewry is a relatively new field, and that a majority within the Canadian Jewish community trace their ancestry to the Eastern European Jewish immigrants of the ‘open door’ era, it is understandable that the vast majority of scholarship on Canadian Jews—both recent and old—has focused on the history and integration of the Yiddish speaking Eastern European immigrants in Québec, Ontario and to some degree in the Prairies. Limited study and scholarship has been done on the history of Jews in British Columbia. A selection of the most comprehensive volumes pertaining to Canadian Jewish History, including works by: Sack (1945, 1975), Rosenberg (1939, re-published in 1993), Tulchinsky (1992, 1998), and Menkis and

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<sup>33</sup> In the United States, the development of Jewish studies in the twentieth century may be linked to the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and the advancement of rights for women, Blacks and other minorities.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46-49.

Ravvin (2004) contain sparse information on BC's Jewish history, let alone a broad analysis of it.<sup>35</sup>

David Rome was the first to write on the history of Jews in BC. Known as one of Canada's great compilers of Jewish Canadian history, Rome wrote his M.A. thesis on the early Jewish pioneers who moved to the Pacific Northwest from California with the gold rush migration of 1858. The study, entitled *The First Two Years: A Record of the Jewish Pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast 1858-1860*, was published as a book in 1942; it traces the lives of the early members of Victoria's Jewish community and significant events pertaining to that community. At the time that Rome wrote his thesis, his supervisor was interested in collecting previously unrecorded historical data on a variety of cultural and ethnic communities in British Columbia. Knowing that Rome was Jewish, the thesis supervisor suggested that Rome investigate the history of BC Jewry for his M.A. thesis. Rome's study was noteworthy for its period, in that it was the first time that local Jewish history was recorded for consumption by the general public. Rome's thesis, and then later his book, introduced the study of Jewish history at the local level. Full of archival data and historical insights, *The First Two Years* remains a significant oeuvre for all scholars of BC Jewish history.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Benjamin G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada: From the Earliest Beginnings to the Present Day*, 2v (Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1945); Benjamin Gutelius Sack, *Canadian Jews, Early in this Century* (Montréal: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1975), p.95; Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p.424; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Pub, 1992), p.341; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Branching Out: The Transformation of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1998), p.470; Richard Menkis and Norman Ravvin, *The Canadian Jewish Studies Reader* (Calgary: Red Deer Press, 2004), p.493.

<sup>36</sup> Myer Freedman. Interview with David Rome. Tape # 19-75:02 Vancouver, BC: JHSBC Oral History Project, February 7, 1975.

In BC, Cyril Leonoff may be considered the pioneer archivist-historian of Jewish history in the province. Although Leonoff was trained and made his career as an engineer, his passion for history led him to found The Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia (JHSBC) in 1971. Under Leonoff's guidance, the JHSBC subsequently founded *The Scribe: Journal of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia* in 1978 and the Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia in 2007. One of his main works, *Pioneers, Peddlers and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, published in 1978, is a historical "who's who" of Jewish BC. In this work Leonoff lists the contributions of individuals, places, and institutions of BC's historical Jewish community, making it an invaluable archival resource. In 2005, and under the auspices of *The Scribe*, Leonoff was also involved in the publication of *Pioneer Jews of British Columbia*. This work was published conjointly with *Western State History*, a journal that focuses on Jews from Western North America. The issue is essentially a compilation of articles from both journals, dealing with early Jewish pioneers in BC. The articles are biographical and provide many historical details about the places and activities of the times.

Several theses pertaining to Jewish history in BC have been written since the 1980s. Christine Wisenthal Boas wrote an M.A. thesis in 1987, entitled, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in BC, 1858-1914*. This work deals specifically with the first two waves of Jewish immigration to BC. The study makes some interesting comparisons between the integration of the first and second migrations of Jews to British Columbia, namely the Western European Jews who came to BC via

California in the mid to late nineteenth-century and the Eastern European Yiddish speaking Jews who arrived at the turn of the twentieth century.

Jean Miriam Gerber's thesis, *Immigration and Integration in Post-War Canada: A Case Study of Holocaust Survivors in Vancouver, 1947-1970*, was published in 1989. Gerber's study surveys the experience of a group of Jewish Holocaust survivors who settled in Vancouver following WWII. It analyzes the effect of postwar Canadian immigration policy on the integration of survivors into the Jewish community. The study shows that, due to restrictive immigration practices and attitudes within the Canadian Immigration Department, Holocaust survivors had difficulty accessing institutions and social networks within mainstream Canadian society. Thus, they were forced to rely upon Jewish communal institutions in order to establish themselves in Canada. The study also investigates the identity and social affiliations of the survivors.

In 2006, Ronnie E. Tessler wrote an M.A. thesis entitled *Living in Yehupetz: Constructing Jewish Identity in the West Kootenays*. She wrote about how Jewish heritage and practices have been adapted and changed by an informal group of liberal individuals living in the Kootenay region of British Columbia. She concluded that the Jews in this area identified strongly with cultural aspects of Judaism, but were actually religiously pluralistic. Each of these theses provides interesting glimpses into BC Jewry.

As pioneering and important as these studies have been, each gives only a partial portrayal of BC Jewish history. Each of the studies has focused on certain types of Jews, i.e. early pioneers and early immigrants, holocaust survivors, or liberal Jews in the Kootenays. Furthermore, each study focuses on specific time periods rather than long term. In turn, the narrow focus of each study restricts the possibility for gaining a full

picture of the lived experiences of Jews in BC. By encompassing over a century of Jewish history in BC, focusing on Jews of different backgrounds, who experienced different levels of integration in different eras, this thesis attempts to add another dimension to the work that has already been done on Jews in BC.

### **Sources, methodology, and theoretical framework**

While this study attempts to partially redress the limitations of existing work on BC Jews, it nevertheless contains its own limitations. Perhaps the most obvious limitation is related to primary sources. British Columbia's Jewish population has been small and sparsely distributed for most of its history, and, consequently, so too has the number of primary sources relating to it. Most research material for this study was found in archival records located at: the British Columbia Archives, the City of Vancouver Archives, the Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia, the Prince George School Board, the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, and the Vancouver Public Library. Although some of these facilities have expanded their collections in recent years (the Jewish Museum and Archives only opened to the general public in March of 2007), the available primary sources pertaining to Jewish integration are still relatively small. Moreover, they centre on only a few individuals.

Correspondingly, the nature of primary sources associated with these individuals has been limited. Perhaps the most important type of sources for this study have been oral histories, the majority of which originate from a collection of interviews conducted by the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia over a thirty year period and carried out by people who remembered the individuals at the centre of the study. The

oral histories used in this research have often emphasized shared memories and communal solidarity, and in this way they have been invaluable in providing a glimpse into lived experiences, values, and goals of historical figures at the vanguard of Jewish integration in BC. Some of the biases that might accompany oral histories have been somewhat mitigated by analyzing a variety of other primary sources whenever possible. These include diaries, monographs, correspondences, personal ephemera, including photographs and genealogies, and records of small Jewish communal institutions collected mostly by local historians. Contemporaneous newspapers were also used to gauge the thoughts and feelings of general society prior to, or following, a particular event.

The reader will remember that the primary goal of this analysis is to map the historical evolution of Jewish integration in British Columbia over the course of a little over a century. Thus, the primary documents were used as a means of unravelling the identities of each historical agent and evaluating Jewish integration in each era. As such, primary sources were treated as reflections of history and were used to deconstruct historical social values and mores, as well as those held by their owners. In order to discern the identity and social context of the individual agents, a series of background questions are used to analyze the sources, including: Who/what is the source describing? Why and by whom was the source recorded? What technologies were used to produce the source? What social conventions and biases was the source conforming to? Who was the intended audience for the source? Who has access to the source now?<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Annette Kuhn, *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*, New ed. (London; New York: Verso, 2002), p.8.

The limited number and nature of primary sources relating to Jewish integration in BC over the past 113 years, along with the questions that could be asked of those sources, aligned this study with the growing field of microhistory.

### ***The Microhistorical Approach***

Over the past several decades, the use and discovery of sources previously excluded from historical collections or inaccessible to researchers has led historians to write about new subjects or, re-read and re-interpret archival sources, and generally form new ways of understanding the past.<sup>38</sup> One important trend has attempted to expand beyond a macro-focus to include studies of the past done on the small scale.

Since the 1970s, a number of historical works in Britain, Germany, France, Italy and the US have legitimized the understanding the past through the lived experiences of ordinary people.<sup>39</sup> As Jacques Revel noted, people no longer expected history to provide “lessons, precedents, or ways of understanding the present but, rather [they looked to history as] a refuge against the uncertainties of the moment.”<sup>40</sup> In the English speaking world, a ‘new social history’ emerged. This history became concerned with social movements and their relationship with issues of gender, race, and/or sexual orientation.<sup>41</sup> In the US, such explorations often emphasized cultural anthropology and interpretive

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<sup>38</sup> John Brewer, “Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life.” *Center for Advanced Studies Series 5* (2010): p.10. [http://www.cas.uni-muenchen.de/publikationen/e\\_series/cas-eseries\\_nr5.pdf](http://www.cas.uni-muenchen.de/publikationen/e_series/cas-eseries_nr5.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Brewer, *Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life*, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> Jacques Revel, “Introduction,” In *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, edited by Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (New York: The New Press, 1995), p. 34.

<sup>41</sup>See: John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story From Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994); Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape For A Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (London: Virago Press, 1986).

strategy such as “thick description.”<sup>42</sup> “Thick description,” a form of “microscopic analysis” advocated by Clifford Geertz, uses marginalized people to investigate the surrounding culture.<sup>43</sup> Geertz asserted that by describing a phenomenon in detail, cultural analysts could then begin to reveal the extent to which broad sweeping conclusions were transferable to other places, times, settings and people.<sup>44</sup> In Germany, France and Italy, historians developed the microhistory model in opposition to the long-term serial studies that characterized the Annales School.<sup>45</sup> Although microhistory thrived in these places, there are still relatively few North American microhistorians.<sup>46</sup>

Microhistory was initiated in the mid-1970s in Italy by Carlo Ginzburg.<sup>47</sup> Ginzburg and others began to critique conventional social history, i.e. the large-scale quantitative studies of the Annales School, which they believed lacked concern for the qualitative experiences of ordinary people. Such studies emphasized the average individual and “relegated the subordinate classes to number and anonymity,”<sup>48</sup> and concluded with broad all-encompassing narratives.<sup>49</sup> By reducing the scale of observation, microhistorian pioneers such as Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi urged

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<sup>42</sup> Sherry B. Ortner, “Introduction,” *The Fate of ‘Culture’: Geertz and Beyond*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999), pp.1-13; Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory,” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*. Burke, Peter (ed.) (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), pp. 93-113.

<sup>43</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*. (New York: Basic Books), 1973, pp. 5-6, 9-10.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 9-10.

<sup>45</sup> François Furet, «Pour une définition des classes inférieures à l'époque moderne.» *Annales ESC* (1963), p. 459; Brewer, *Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life*, p.3

<sup>46</sup> Jill Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* (2001) 88 (1): p.129; Magnusson, “What Is Microhistory?” <http://hnn.us/articles/23720.html>; Richard Brown, “Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge,” *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 23 (Spring 2003): pp.9-12.

<sup>47</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, First published in Italian as *Il formaggio e i vermi*, 1976, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore, 1980).

<sup>48</sup> Furet, « Pour une définition des classes inférieures à l'époque moderne,» p. 459.

<sup>49</sup> Carlo Ginzburg, “Microhistory: Two or Three Things I Know About It,” *Critical Inquiry* 20 (1993), p. 20; Brewer, *Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life*, pp.1-16

turning away from the idea that all societies should be judged according to one single standard. Instead, they argued, historians should understand the power of individual agency, and the possibility that the experiences of individuals need not fit within the norms established by a broad narrative.<sup>50</sup> When microhistorians focus on individuals, they tend to use “outliers,” i.e. individuals who did not follow the paths of their average fellow compatriots; people who were the “normal exception.”<sup>51</sup> By focusing on individuals otherwise anonymous in the historical processes, microhistory became concerned with the margins of power rather than the centre of it.<sup>52</sup>

Through the 1980s and 1990s the practice of microhistory diversified and today historians have different interpretations and definitions of microhistory. In Italy, microhistory is known as *microstoria*<sup>53</sup> and its focus varies slightly between episodic or cultural microhistory, as developed by Carlo Ginzburg,<sup>54</sup> and systemic or social microhistory, as developed by Giovanni Levi.<sup>55</sup> Cultural microhistory uses minor historical episodes to reveal aspects of the past that would otherwise be overlooked.<sup>56</sup> Social microhistory reconstructs individual and family social relationships within one geographical setting, with the intention of understanding the lives of ordinary people

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<sup>50</sup>Brewer, *Microhistory and the Histories of Everyday Life*, p.6

<sup>51</sup> Magnusson, “What Is Microhistory?” <http://hnn.us/articles/23720.html>

<sup>52</sup> George G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century*, (London/Hanover: New England University Press, 1997), p.108.

<sup>53</sup> See: Gene Brucker, *Giovanna and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); Judith C. Brown, *Immodest Acts: The Life of a Lesbian Nun in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: the Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*; and Giovanni Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist*. Lydia G. Cochrane, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

<sup>54</sup> Brad S. Gregory in his article “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” *History and Theory*, 38 (1999): p.102.

<sup>55</sup> See Levi, *Inheriting Power: The Story of an Exorcist*.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” p.102.

through their social interactions.<sup>57</sup> Microhistory takes the form of *Alltagsgeschichte* (the study of the everyday) in Germany<sup>58</sup> and post-Annales cultural history in France.<sup>59</sup> Both concern themselves with understanding the past by discerning the values, beliefs, and feelings of ordinary men and women through their social relationships.

Despite their differences, all forms of microhistorical research share some similar principles. Levi notes that all are founded on the “belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved...phenomena previously considered to be sufficiently described and understood assume completely new meanings by altering the scale of observation. It is then possible to use these results to draw far wider generalizations....”<sup>60</sup> According to Revel, microhistory wanted “a total history, but this time built from the ground up.”<sup>61</sup> Although a microhistory may focus on one individual person, place, or event, it is always done on the small scale. Scale is the common denominator. Microhistory provides a glimpse into a long lost history, beyond the anecdotal, while still maintaining a link to a macrohistory. Indeed, Richard Brown notes that although microhistory may challenge a macrohistory, it does not eliminate the need for macrohistory.<sup>62</sup> After all, without macrohistory how could microhistorians

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.102.

<sup>58</sup> See: David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Lüdtkke “Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?” pp.15-16.

<sup>59</sup> See Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History*. (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Natalie Zemon Davis, *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975); and LeRoy Ladurie, *Montaillou: The Promised Land of Error*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: George Braziller, 1978).

<sup>60</sup> Levi, “On Microhistory,” pp. 97-98.

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Revel, “Microanalysis and the Construction of the Social,” in *Histories: French Constructions of the Past*, edited by Jacques Revel and Lynn Hunt, translated by Arthur Goldhammer, (New York: The New Press, 1995), p. 497.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

contextualize their subjects? Microhistories can, and often do, reflect historical changes on a macro level.<sup>63</sup> Alternatively, microhistory may conflict with a macrohistorical view of history.<sup>64</sup> Either way, microhistory adds a new layer, or an alternate interpretation, to history, thus promoting a re-examination of certain macrohistorical perspectives. Ultimately, microhistory broadens the existing understanding of the past.

Like all methodologies, the microhistorical approach contains inherent limitations. Although microhistories are intended to illuminate the larger picture they cannot adequately account for everything, and reducing the historical scale is not necessarily the only or most accurate way to explore and understand the past. While they “tell a good tale,”<sup>65</sup> microhistories may be criticized for ignoring national history and the full nature of state power.<sup>66</sup> Microhistories can also be criticized for advocating leftist portrayals of history, e.g. by emphasizing the costs of progress and emancipation in the modern period.<sup>67</sup> Microhistory has been seen as an “experimental” methodology because its practitioners often draw upon a variety of social science theories, explore a range of areas, and have a narrow focus.<sup>68</sup> It is often considered to lack a firm grounding in particular theories; although this does allow for latitude of interpretation,<sup>69</sup> the microhistorical approach has not quickly integrated into mainstream historical trends, as evidenced in North American historiography. Microhistories often employ “thick

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<sup>63</sup> Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” p.157.

<sup>64</sup> Brown, “Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge,” p.15.

<sup>65</sup> J. H. Elliott quoted in Felipe Fernandez-Armesto, *The Millenium: A History of the Last Thousand Years* (New York: Scribner, 1995), p.15.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” 106-108.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-108.

<sup>68</sup> Levi, “On Microhistory,” p.93.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Damton, *The Great Cat Massacre and other episodes in French Cultural History*. (New York: Basic Books, 1984), p.5.

description”<sup>70</sup> of individuals or events to understand real human behaviour. Microhistory’s uses of “thick description” as well as its difficulty incorporating individualized histories into broader narrative histories are also sometimes seen as weaknesses. Microhistory’s greatest weakness perhaps has to do with how typical the individual histories of its subjects are. Do the subjects of a microhistory really demonstrate the “normal exception”?<sup>71</sup>

While this study is not immune from any of these weaknesses, the individual microhistories at the centre of this work are used as tools to investigate deeper historical questions that would be difficult to answer using other historiographical approaches. The focus on five individual agents may seem limited. These individuals are not meant to be wholly representative of the broader Jewish experience in British Columbia. Instead, this study will argue that the lived experiences of Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Hannah Director, Leon Koerner, Harry Adaskin, and Nathan Nemetz, represent some of the “normal exceptions” of their respective eras. By assessing the ways in which these figures reflected (or challenged) macro-scale historical changes and the manner in which they reinforced (or crossed) social boundaries, this study offers insights into some of the complexities of Jewish life and Jewish integration in general BC society from 1858 until 1971.

Although this study is, broadly speaking, a social microhistory, it does not subscribe to one particular microhistorical method. Rather it is based on four general notions endorsed by most social microhistorians. First, it focuses on the qualitative

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<sup>70</sup> See Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Towards an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” pp. 3-31.

<sup>71</sup> Gregory, “Is Small Beautiful? Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life,” pp.106-108.

experiences of everyday people, whose lives have remained largely obscure from history. Second, this study, like all microhistories, assumes that broad social “processes are the products of dynamic practices to which ordinary people contributed,” i.e. it acknowledges the possibility for individual agency.<sup>72</sup> Third, this study attempts to illustrate that the “lived experience[s] of individuals within dense, complex networks of social and political relations”<sup>73</sup> reveal that alternate, perhaps parallel, histories can exist alongside over-arching histories, such as those of BC’s organized Jewish community. Finally, like most microhistories, this study employs concepts and theories from the social sciences in its attempt to reconstruct the relationship between “individual actions and experiences with material life, institutions, and processes.”<sup>74</sup>

This discussion oscillates between two kinds of historical agents: 1) *collective agents* in the form of the public sphere as represented by the broader community of British Columbia, as well as its government and institutions; and 2) *conjunctural agents*, as represented by the five microhistories.<sup>75</sup> As conjunctural agents, the historical relevance of each historical figure does not depend upon the power bestowed upon them by the public, but rather upon the manner of their actions under certain circumstances. Each individual was selected because of their relationships within a particular historic

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<sup>72</sup> Lüdtke, “Introduction: What Is the History of Everyday Life and Who Are Its Practitioners?” pp.15-16

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., pp.15-16

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., pp.15-16

<sup>75</sup> Marshall David Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p.334, 157. Conjunctural agents can be contrasted with *systemic agents*, i.e. those individuals whose historical powers are prescribed by public office. Examples include Napoleon or Winston Churchill, whose respective positions allowed for their ability to direct and speak for the actions and reactions of not only their own countrymen but much of Europe. Their positions amplified their talents and everything they said and did.

juncture.<sup>76</sup> The histories of each conjunctural agent will be dissected through the use of several concepts including: Jewish identity (Jewishness), integration general society, and social contributions. The concepts of *deductive macrosociological theory* and *institutional completeness* and civic engagement will be employed to varying degrees.

### ***The Microhistories***

The chronology of this thesis spans from the beginnings of Jewish settlement in British Columbia until the advent of Canadian multiculturalism, and it is intentionally divided into five identifiable historical eras. These include: the gold rush and the early Confederation era (from 1858 until 1899), the WWI era, the WWII era, the post-WWII era, and the dawn of the multiculturalism era beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Each microhistory focuses on one individual from each era. The microhistories of each conjunctural agent are matched to the eras leading up to the time in which their contributions took place. The microhistories focus on the lives and contributions of Cecelia Davies Sylvester (1848-1935), whose contributions reveal the socio-historical character of the gold rush and the early Confederation era; Hannah Director (1886-1970), whose most outstanding contribution to BC society demonstrates the changes taking place in the WWI era and early inter-World War era; Leon Koerner (1892-1972), whose initial contributions commenced during the WWII era and mirror the closed nature of British Columbian society during the interwar and WWII eras; Harry Adaskin (1901-1994), whose contributions reflect the anomalous position of Jewish musicians during the interwar and WWII era. Adaskin's microhistory also reflects the changing

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.157.

times of the post-WWII era and provides a link to the early period of multiculturalism and the contributions of Nathan Nemetz (1913-1997), whose contributions epitomize the challenges and successes of this era faced by secularizing Jews.

The selection criteria for each microhistory were based upon the public contributions of each of the historical figures. Each conjunctural agent was a pioneer in the public domain because he/she contributed to an aspect of general society that had previously been unexplored by Jews. Other similarities between the microhistories include the ethnic background of each individual, their social status, and the proportion of their adult lives (at least thirty-five years) spent in British Columbia. The microhistories vary in terms of each individual's period of activity, their place of origin, and the types of social contributions made. Dissimilarities also exist with respect to gender, geographical location and public reputation. Perhaps most importantly for this discussion, the microhistories also differ in terms of individual expressions of Jewishness and levels of integration.

The first microhistory will look at the contributions of Cecelia Davies Sylvester. Davies Sylvester arrived in Victoria at the age of sixteen, with her parents and five siblings, in 1863 at the peak of the Caribou gold rush. She quickly became a part of the social life in Victoria. Throughout her lifetime Davies Sylvester was a mother of eight, a well-known socialite and hostess to Victoria's elite, and an avid participant in public affairs. She served as an early member of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire. She worked for the pioneer French Catholic hospital, and then served on the executive board of the Royal Jubilee Hospital when it opened in 1890. She also contributed to

fundraising efforts on behalf of Temple Emanu-el.<sup>77</sup> This chapter pays particular attention to the religious leanings of Victorian society, to Davies Sylvester's place in Victoria's British-influenced social hierarchy, as well as to the nature of West Coast Jewry.

The second microhistory involves Hannah Director (1886-1970), a first generation Canadian from a family of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who settled in Montréal in the late 1800s. She and her husband, Isidor Director, settled their family in Northern British Columbia in 1908. In 1917, Hannah was elected chair of the Board of School Trustees in Prince George. Not only was she the first Jewish woman to hold such a position, but she was the first Jewish woman elected to public office in Canada.<sup>78</sup> This chapter explores topics such as: BC's education system, women's suffrage, small town pioneer life, and Jewish participation in BC civic politics.

The third microhistory explores the life and times of Leon Koerner (1892-1972). Hailing from a prominent Jewish family involved in the lumber industry in Czechoslovakia, Leon Koerner came to Canada as a refugee in 1939. Despite Canada's antisemitism during this period, Koerner was admitted into the country and he proceeded to make significant inroads into the transformation of the lumber industry in British Columbia.<sup>79</sup> He later became one of the province's greatest philanthropists. This

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<sup>77</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, "The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island," *Western States Jewish History and the Scribe: Pioneer Jews of British Columbia* WSJH: XXX VII, *The Scribe*: XXV, no. WSJH: 3 and 4, *The Scribe*: 1 and 2 (2005/5765), p.87.

<sup>78</sup> Sarah H. Tobe, "Hannah Director's Album of Memories," *Western States Jewish History and the Scribe: Pioneer Jews of British Columbia* WSJH: XXX VII, *The Scribe*: XXV, no. WSJH: 3 and 4, *The Scribe*: 1 and 2 (2005/5765), p.224.

<sup>79</sup> Canada's relations with Jews in the years immediately preceding and during WWII were some of the most antisemitic years in Canadian history. Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*.

chapter will focus on anti-Jewish sentiment in the Canadian and British Columbian public sphere and its effect on Koerner's Jewish identity. Jewish philanthropy as it relates to *tsedaka* and *gmilot-khesedim* will also be explored.

The fourth microhistory discusses Harry Adaskin. Adaskin's achievements in BC were a direct result of his accomplishments and the reputation that he built prior to arriving in the province, and consequently, this chapter focuses mainly on Adaskin's life in Toronto. Reared in a traditional Orthodox home and given a good music education, Adaskin used his talents to launch a musical career that propelled him from the status of poor immigrant into that of a middle-class university professor. This chapter explores the evolution of Jewish musicians in Canada and it focuses on how music allowed for Jewish integration into Canadian general society at a time when other professions did not. Although the chapter on Adaskin overlaps with the other chapters in terms of historical time frame, Adaskin's history as a Jewish musician provides an interesting contrast to the histories of other Jews, especially during the interwar and WWII eras. Adaskin's history also links the evolution of WWII era Canadian society to post-WWII era and early multicultural Canadian society.

The final microhistory revolves around Nathan Nemetz (1913-1997). Like the other personalities, Nemetz migrated to British Columbia. Born in Winnipeg in 1913, Nemetz moved to Vancouver in 1923 at the age of ten with his parents and younger brother. They were part of Jewish emigration from the Prairies beginning in the years following WWI. As an adult, Nemetz led the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC) in the fight against the Covenants Act, which prohibited certain ethnic groups from buying

property in “restricted areas.”<sup>80</sup> In 1973 Nemetz became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia. As Chief Justice, he experienced firsthand the type of discrimination that existed in Vancouver at that time. This microhistory examines the changes which were taking place in Canadian policy with respect to minorities, ethnic groups and immigrants. This chapter explores decisions made by Justice Nemetz that influenced and shifted jurisprudence in British Columbia during the 1960s and 1970s.

The lived experiences of these five individual Jews will not only illustrate the various historical paths to integration in BC for Jews, they will show just how variable and historically contingent integration is as a phenomenon. The microhistories will also provide an historical understanding of social relations between BC Jews and their non-Jewish compatriots as well as reveal that the histories of individuals may differ from over-arching communal histories, while simultaneously existing alongside them.

## **Key concepts**

### ***Who is a Jew?***

According to *halakha* (Jewish religious law) a Jew is someone who is born of a Jewish mother or who converts to Judaism under the supervision of the Orthodox rabbinate. More liberal streams of Judaism, such as the Reform and Reconstructionist movements, include patrilineal descent in their definitions of authentic Jewishness. Regardless of which religious stream one follows, genealogy has proven to be a constant element in Jewish tradition: “Jews define themselves by their ancestors.”<sup>81</sup> Throughout

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<sup>80</sup> Jewish Historical Museum of British Columbia, *Ties That Bind*, Permanent Exhibit, (Jewish Historical Museum of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia: 2007-2008).

<sup>81</sup> Raggatt, “Mapping the Dialogical Self: Towards a Rationale and Method of Assessment,” p.37.

Jewish history, one could be a descendant of Abraham and thus be Jewish, or one could become a Jew by becoming a disciple of Moses (converting) and symbolically acquiring Abraham's lineage. Each of the individuals at the centre of this study may be defined as Jews according to the *halakhic* definitions.<sup>82</sup> However, just because the individuals discussed here fall under the *halakhic* definitions of who is a Jew does not mean that their Jewish identities have evolved along traditional expressions of Judaism.

### ***Jewish identity***

As Stuart Hall has noted, "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past" and, one might add, the present.<sup>83</sup> In this thesis, identities will be considered as intrinsically unstable because of their continuous interplay with "history, culture, and power."<sup>84</sup> Although identities may have historical roots, a person's socio-cultural identity, like history itself, undergoes constant transformation and in being subject to the continuous interplay of culture and power, can be exposed to the influence of communal associations and historical memory. In essence, a person's life story, and thus identity exhibits states of multiplicity and conflict, rather than integrated unity.<sup>85</sup> Therefore, identity is in continuous production rather than a completed process.

Answering the question of who is a Jew is different than understanding Jewish identity. There is no doubt that Jews are defined by Judaism, but the extent to which

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<sup>82</sup> Seth Kunin ed, *Themes and Issues in Judaism*, (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), p.2.

<sup>83</sup> Stuart Hall, "Culture, Identity and Diaspora," In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. Jonathan Rutherford (New York: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p.225.

<sup>84</sup> Silberstein, "Mapping, Not Tracing: Opening Reflection," p.3.

<sup>85</sup> Raggatt, "Mapping the Dialogical Self: Towards a Rationale and Method of Assessment," pp.23, 37.

they allow it to define them throughout their lives varies from Jew to Jew. Following the emancipation of Jews in the West during the late-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it became possible to leave Judaism behind while remaining ethnically Jewish. One could identify with another set of beliefs or no beliefs at all, as exhibited in the Canadian census.<sup>86</sup> For this reason, Jews are often categorized as members of an ethno-religious group.<sup>87</sup> However, membership in the ethno-religious group, whether self-ascribed or socially assigned, produces a variety of identities—from religious to secular and everything in between.

The terms ‘Jewish identity’ or ‘Jewishness’ are useful for exploring Jewish life.<sup>88</sup> Within the context of this discussion, identity-determining factors are diverse. They may include anything from *kashrut* (kosher) observance to choosing Jewish friends, to patterns of philanthropy and even disassociation with Judaism. This research rests on the notion that, at least for academic purposes, although these attributes may be transitory, they are no less authentic than religious markers of Jewishness. As anthropologist Seth Kunin notes, changes among Jews and within Jewish culture “are closely related to

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<sup>86</sup> The Canadian census has historically allowed for the possibility of defining oneself as religiously Jewish but of different ethnic origins; the option to identify one’s ethnicity as Jewish while claiming another belief system, or no belief system at all is also equally possible. From the state’s perspective, a person’s Jewishness may find expression religiously, culturally, or socially.

<sup>87</sup> i.e. members of a social group bound together through a shared ancestral religion, historical memory, essential culture, and a collective association with a specific territory. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1987), p.32.

<sup>88</sup> Essentialist conceptions of Jewish identity are based on the idea of a unified shared culture that reflects a common historical experience. Laurence J. Silberstein, “Mapping, Not Tracing: Opening Reflection,” In *Mapping Jewish Identities*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2000), p.1; Esther Benbassa, Jean-Christophe Attias, and Patrick Camiller, *The Jews and Their Future: A Conversation on Judaism and Jewish Identities* (London; New York: Zed Books, 2004); Robert P. Amyot and Lee Sigelman, “Jews without Judaism? Assimilation and Jewish Identity in the US,” *Social Science Quarterly* 77, 1 March 1996; Jacqueline Goldberg, “Social Identity in British and South African Jewry,” In *New Jewish Identities: Contemporary Europe and Beyond*, eds. Zvi Y. Gitelman and A. Barry (Kosmin and András Kovács Budapest; New York: Central European University Press, 2003), pp.5-22; Raggatt, “Mapping the Dialogical Self: Towards a Rationale and Method of Assessment,” p. 37.

transformations in the wider cultural context [and] a full understanding of the transformations can be gained only by placing them in this wider context.”<sup>89</sup> It is with the wider cultural context in mind that the history Jewish integration in British Columbia’s will be explored.

### ***Mapping vs. Tracing***

The term “mapping” is used in this discussion in reference to identity and integration, as opposed to the term “trace.” Tracing integration and identity suggests an inherent sequence, continuity, and development, while the term “mapping” allows for the construction of an identity that may be modified in numerous ways, including isolation or reversal and re-connection.<sup>90</sup> This discussion will explore how the identities of five Jewish individuals were inextricably linked with the unfolding social elements of their particular milieus. Their identities, once mapped out, will help to reveal how their integration was possible.

### ***Integration***

As the title of this work indicates, this discussion is primarily based upon the idea of integration. But what is integration? In reference to social relations, the Oxford English Dictionary defines the term as “the bringing into equal membership of a common society those groups or persons previously discriminated against on racial or

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<sup>89</sup> Seth Kunin, ed. *Themes and Issues in Judaism* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2000), p.2.

<sup>90</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1989), p.22; E. H. Erikson, *Identity and the Life Cycle* (New York: International Universities Press, 1959).

cultural grounds.”<sup>91</sup> It was first used in this way in 1940 in reference to South African society, i.e. integration as opposed to segregation. Webster’s dictionary defines integration as “a unification and mutual adjustment of diverse groups or elements into a relatively coordinated and harmonious society or culture with a consistent body of normative standards.”<sup>92</sup> Lockwood refers to the notions of “social integration” and “system integration,” social integration being the ways in which individuals in a particular society interrelate and system integration referring to the ways in which the institutions of a particular society relate to one another.<sup>93</sup> Both social and system integration are mutually influential. But what happens when someone who is considered to be outside the dominant group becomes indistinguishably integrated into the dominant host society? Integration is as much a sociological concept as it is a historical phenomenon. This discussion will use the integration model developed by sociologist Elliot Barkan to help understand the historical occurrence of Jewish integration in British Columbia.

Barkan breaks down the general concept of integration, as described above, into a six phase model, entitled “A Six Stage Model: From Contact to Assimilation.” Barkan’s model includes six overlapping phases of: *contact*, *acculturation*, *adaptation*,

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<sup>91</sup> J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner eds, *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.1065.

<sup>92</sup> Philip Babcock Gove ed, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* (Springfield, Massachusetts, USA: Merriam-Webster Inc, 1961, 1993).

<sup>93</sup> D. Lockwood, *Explorations in Social Change*, (Houghton Mifflin, 1964); Gordon Marshall and John Scott, “Assimilation,” *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford University Press (2005). *Oxford Reference Online*. University of Ottawa. 7 February 2011  
[www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t88.e100](http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t88.e100).

*accommodation, integration, and assimilation.*<sup>94</sup> Designed to be used in the analysis of the incorporation of ethnic group members into multicultural, immigrant receiving societies, Barkan's model is relevant for understanding the integration of Jews in British Columbia.

Barkan argues that members of historically and culturally diverse ethnic groups manifest comparable responses to their incorporation into pluralistic societies, as well as experience similar phases of incorporation, albeit at different rates and with different stopping points.<sup>95</sup> Barkan explains that although not all ethnic experiences are uniform, enough commonalities exist to allow for a delineation of a variety of patterns and exceptions. Some members of an ethnic group rush to *integrate*; others approach it slowly; for some *assimilation* is the only option, while others fear it, and for some

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<sup>94</sup>The classic model of assimilation was first put forth by Robert Park in 1950; this model was later revised by Milton Gordon; later additions and conceptualizations followed including works by Ibid; Ewa Morawska, "In Defense of the Assimilation Model," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13, no.2 (Winter 1994), pp.76-98; Matt Bowskill, Evanthea Lyons, and Adrian Coyle, "The Rhetoric of Acculturation: When Integration Means Assimilation," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 46, (2007), pp.793-813; John Higham, *Send these to me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America*, 1st ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1975), p.259; Nathan Glazer et al, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, p.363; Morroe Berger, *Freedom and Control in Modern Society* (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954), p.326; Lawrence H. Fuchs, *The American Kaleidoscope: Race, Ethnicity, and the Civic Culture* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1990), p.618; Philip Gleason, *Speaking of Diversity: Language and Ethnicity in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p.314; Louis Wirth, "The Problem of Minority Groups," In *The Science of Man in the World of Crisis*, ed. Ralph Linton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), p.532; Milton Myron Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.276; Minako Kurokawa, *Minority Responses; Comparative Views of Reactions to Subordination* (New York: Random House, 1970), p.376; Oliver Zunz, "American History and the Changing means of Assimilation," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 4 (Spring 1985), p.63; Robert M. Jiobu, *Ethnicity and Assimilation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p.269; W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1945), p.318; Herbert Gans, "Comment: Ethnic Invention and Acculturation, a Bumpy-Line Approach," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12 (Fall 1992); Robert E. Park and Ernest W. Burgess, *Introduction to Science of Sociology* (Chicago: 1921, 1969); Robert Ezra Park, *Race and culture* (Glencoe, Ill: Free Press, 1950), p.403; Park and Herbert A. Miller, *Old World Traits Transplanted* (New York: 1921); Kathleen Neils Conzen et al, "The Invention of Ethnicity: A Perspective from the U.S.A," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 12, no1 (Fall 1992), pp.3-41.

<sup>95</sup> Barkan, *Race, Religion, and Nationality in American society: a Model of Ethnicity--From Contact to Assimilation*, pp.38-76.

*acculturation* is far enough. In other words, not all individuals experience all phases of Barkan's model.

The first phase of Barkan's model is the *contact* stage and it can be applied to newly arrived immigrants as well as to newly conquered peoples. In this phase the mother tongue is still the predominant language; the sense of group consciousness is nominal and individuals' sense of self is usually based on place of origin or regional village; individuals tend to cluster together in the same neighbourhoods or regional locations with others with whom they share kinship, religious and other cultural associations; there is little interaction with general society and citizenship may not yet be an option. Individuals who remain in the contact phase are often transients (e.g. naval personal, businesspeople, or visitors) who eventually move on to another destination or return home.

The second phase involves a process of socialization marked by "intercultural borrowing"<sup>96</sup> otherwise known as *acculturation*. During *acculturation*, individual ethnic identities and communities are formulated and enhanced by an array of communal institutions and native language publications. Although *acculturated* individuals adopt elements of the dominant culture and language, the focus of most group members is away from the place they are living and towards their homeland. Individuals tend to determine their social status in relation to ethnic group standards, continue to work in homogeneous settings and participate in local communities through communal

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<sup>96</sup> Babcock Gove, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*.

organizations and the maintenance of ethnic ties. At this stage middle-class business people, labour activists, and other local leaders may emerge.

During the third stage of *adaptation* individuals are just as likely to be local as they are to be foreign-born. For native-born individuals, whose mother tongue is that of the general society, *acculturation* is especially high. When the *adaptation* phase occurs, members of ethnic community institutions favour the dominant society and culture rather than that of their homeland. Nevertheless, individual social status is still determined by the standards set by the local community. Incidents of discrimination and rejection by dominant society are less pronounced and more infrequent, but institutionalized racism may still exist. Those who maintain what Barkan refers to as exclusivist beliefs, i.e. elitists, militants, or separatists, often stay at the *adaptation* stage of interaction with core society.

During the fourth stage of *accommodation* members of the ethnic community are predominantly third and fourth generation. The more urban, educated, and/or professionally trained refugees and immigrants can reach this stage rapidly, without spending time at the earlier phases. During the accommodation phase individuals have little use of the mother tongue and ethnic-language publications are rare. Furthermore, individual participation in ethnic community affairs is limited, while involvement within general society is high, especially in politics. Individual conflict with general society is infrequent and not institutionalized, (if it does exist it is confined to specific regional locations). At this stage people experience occupational, class, educational, and geographical mobility, intermarriage, and even changes in religious affiliation. Dual or multiple identities are common, and often result in competing loyalties. These

conflicting loyalties can often result in a sense of marginality, which in turn increases the struggle to *assimilate* into the dominant society. The permeability of ethnic boundaries has resulted in the deterioration of the *institutional completeness* of the original ethnic group. At this level, individuals may have an “academic or nostalgic interest or curiosity about their ethnic past,” but as Barkan notes, this interest has a limited impact on the overall vitality of the community.

Barkan’s *integration* phase occurs when a person moves away from the boundaries of an ethnic community and “begins to associate on a regular basis with members of the larger society... [and] participates in external organizations,” such as public service groups, charitable, professional, business, or fraternal organizations.<sup>97</sup> Such an individual has achieved a high degree of inclusion in general society, yet cultural identity markers still remain, be they behavioural or symbolic, for instance linguistic expressions, traditional foods, or episodic religious or festival observances. On a structural level, ethnic institutions hold only a nominal importance in the lives of *integrated* individuals. In terms of residential location, and membership association in general clubs, members of ethnic groups are dispersed amongst the general population and intermarriage is not uncommon. Individual status is determined by the goals set by the core society, and for the most integrated individuals the primary identity is to be found with the identity of general society; although some integrated ethnic group members still prefer to perpetuate group bonds and activities.

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid; Elliot Barkan, “Race, religion, and nationality in American society: a model of ethnicity--from contact to assimilation,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 14, no.2 (Winter 1995), pp.38-76.

Barkan's *assimilation* phase is the cumulative result of blending into larger society: socially, culturally, institutionally, and in terms of identification. Assimilation is equivalent to the shedding of ethnic identity where the individual is no longer attached to a clear set of ethnic patterns, and is now indistinguishable socially and organizationally from the mainstream. Assimilation does not necessarily result in an individual's ancestral amnesia, but it does negate their identification with the ancestral ethnic group. People who have *assimilated* are no longer perceived by the core society as distinct, nor do they perceive themselves as such, although they may be perceived by their ancestral ethnic group to be wayward members.

In summary, this study views integration in two ways: First in a general sense and second in reference to a specific stage in Barkan's model. Generally, integration refers to the social incorporation of collectivities or individuals into the social, economic, and political structures of larger society. Furthermore, social incorporation is comprised of a multistage and multidimensional set of overlapping processes that are strongly tied to individual and collective identities. The processes which make-up integration in this general sense are well described by sociologist Elliot Barkan. Barkan's theory is complex and multistaged and one of the phases in his model is specifically referred to as *integration*. Such an individual as described by Barkan's model has achieved a high degree of inclusion in general society, yet cultural identity markers still remain. Barkan's model also includes the phases of *contact*, *acculturation*, *adaptation*, *accommodation* and *assimilation*. The fact that Barkan's model includes the term integration as one of its phases is indeed confusing. In this study, when the term *integration* is italicized it will specifically refer to Barkan's model. The other terms

referencing Barkan's phases will also be italicized. When "integration" appears in normal font, it is in reference to the general idea of social incorporation at any stage of Barkan's model.

Any one of Barkan's phases may occur simultaneously within the same ethnic group or even within the same family. Each phase does not necessarily lead to the next phase; nor does reaching the final stage of *assimilation* rule out the possibility of returning to one of the earlier phases.<sup>98</sup> Participation in any integrative process is contingent upon the individual's degree of willingness, as well as that of general society. Furthermore, each of the processes results in "cultural, associational, attitudinal, [and] identificational" changes which are experienced by individuals, but not necessarily by collective groups as a whole. These processes are the consequence of adjustment repeatedly experienced by numerous peoples in multicultural, immigrant receiving societies, who find themselves in the position of having to constantly define themselves in relation to mainstream society.

The general concept of integration in conjunction with Barkan's phases will form the main framework through which each microhistory is explored. However, it is important to note that as useful as Barkan's phases are, they risk being too rigid in their categorization of integration. Few, if any, conjunctural agents in this discussion exemplified Barkan's phases exactly. Nor did they necessarily remain at the same phase

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<sup>98</sup> See Nathan Glazer's article regarding Marcus Lee Hansen's 1937 thesis on Third Generation Return, that is the idea that the first generation emigrates, the second assimilates, and the third generation returns to its origins. Nathan Glazer, "Ethnic groups in America: From National Culture to Ideology," In *Freedom and Control in Modern Society*, ed. Morroe Berger (New York: Van Nostrand, 1954), pp 66, 69-72; Marcus Lee Hansen and Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Immigrant in American History*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1940), p.230.

for the duration of their entire lives. Rather their lives reflected a combination of these different modes. Therefore, in this study Barkan's phases act as general, rather than precise, indicators of the relative level of integration of each historical figure. Subsequent theories, such as *deductive macrosociological theory* and *institutional completeness*, although applicable at multiple points throughout the dissertation, will be referred to only occasionally as the theoretical foundation for certain conclusions and postulations.

### ***Deductive macrosociological theory***

Peter Blau's *deductive macrosociological theory* stipulates that the "social structure of complex societies and communities entails multiple group affiliations with intersecting boundaries."<sup>99</sup> In other words, in modern and post-modern western societies, individuals often find themselves affiliated with numerous social groups that intersect at different points: people live in a neighbourhood, have an occupation, belong to an ethnic group, are religiously affiliated (or not), and have a socio-economic status.<sup>100</sup> Social affiliations intersect, individuals are subject to the pressures of each group, and eventually must choose which pressures to submit to. Blau suggests that people find friends (and life partners) in accordance with their strongest in-group preferences. This, in turn, limits their appreciation of their social connections with members from other groups. This theory relates to our discussion since each era is accompanied by shifting

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<sup>99</sup> Peter Blau, Carolyn Becker, and Kevin M. Fitzpatrick, "Intersecting Social Affiliations and Inter-marriage," *Social Forces* 62, no.3 (1984), pp.585-606.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.585-606.

social affiliations. The degree of importance placed on religious, ethnic, national and regional identities changes with the socio-historic circumstances.

### *Institutional completeness*

The degree to which social affiliations intersect is subsequently related to what Raymond Breton refers to as *institutional completeness*, a concept which refers to the formal and informal communal networks and institutions that may exist within any given ethnic group. Formal institutions cater to the religious, educational, political, recreational, national, professional, assistance, media and creative needs of the community. Informal networks include unofficially formed friendship groups and cliques within a community. Of course, inter-group relations may result in the expansion or consolidation of group boundaries, depending upon the degree to which social affiliations intersect. Breton states that *institutional completeness* is at its maximum when all services can be performed within the confines of the ethnic community. The Hutterites, Amish and Hassidic Jews are good examples of communities with extremely high levels of *institutional completeness*; where member needs for education, employment, food, clothing and social assistance are met by the community without requiring social support from outside. The degree to which *institutional completeness* exists within an ethnic community varies and depends on the dedication, energy and willingness of its members.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Raymond Breton, "Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants," *The American Journal of Sociology* 70, no.2 (1964), pp.193-205.

Breton argues that, as opposed to the existence of only informal networks, the presence of even one formal organization in an ethnic community increases the likelihood of in-group relations. Coupled with Blau's notion of social tendencies towards homogamy, higher *institutional completeness* also presumably increases the likelihood of homogamy. When a community exists without formal institutions, Breton argues that interpersonal networks quickly extend outside the community boundaries. Formal communal institutions influence in-group interaction by providing the social links—including places of employment, education, worship and creative outlets in particular.

Breton found that religious organizations have the greatest impact on maintaining in-group relations. In general, formal organizations help to sustain group identity by promoting culture and nationality. Communal organizations may also unite the group against some outside element or divide the community into sub-groups, which also has the effect of keeping personal relations within group boundaries—even if on opposite sides. Breton concludes that as the number of immigrants increases so does the presence of formal organizations; and that the greater the difference between the ethnic group and the dominant society, the easier it is to develop formal institutions.<sup>102</sup> The impact of formal institutions on individual identity depends on whether individuals become members of such associations. Breton's concept of *institutional completeness* is particularly relevant when exploring the microhistories of conjunctural agents such as Hannah Director.

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

### ***General society***

This thesis investigates the socio-historical factors that contributed or hindered the possibility of Jewish integration into mainstream society. Throughout this discussion, the terms general society, core society, and mainstream society are used interchangeably. General society may be defined as the central group of people within a society who dominate, shape and guide the formation of the public sphere and who define the overall cultural characteristics that occur within it. They also determine civic religion, and influence the establishment of class distinctions, social norms, values and mores.<sup>103</sup> Although often initiated by a governing group of people, members of general society may share divergent, similar, or mixed ancestry. Irrespective of origins, all aspire to live within the established set of dominant social standards.

### ***Social contributions***

The five microhistories represent various areas of social contributions. The term “social contributions” will be defined as those actions which benefit the public and affect the well-being and development of members of general society. Social contributions may come in the form of civic engagement or professional engagement. Civic engagement, a term used by social workers, is generally limited to those efforts

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<sup>103</sup> Angus Stevenson, “mainstream *noun*,” *The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition)* Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. University of Ottawa. 8 February 2011 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0493210>>For discussions regarding the terms “public sphere,” “public space” see: Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1989), p.301; Don Mitchell, “The end of public space? People's Park, Definitions of the Public, and Democracy,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 85, no.1 (1995), p.108.

which enhance the quality of civic life, activities such as volunteering and philanthropy or political contributions.<sup>104</sup> These forms of civic engagement are known respectively as social engagement and political engagement.<sup>105</sup> However, since the quality of civic life, indeed of society in general, may be improved via numerous avenues—everything from advancements in medicine and technology to achievements in creative arts—the term social contributions is better suited to this discussion.

The purpose of this thesis is to provide a retrospective portrayal of Jewish contributions and thus integration in British Columbia between 1858 and 1971 and to do so by exploring and analyzing a selection of microhistories of five individuals from different eras, using sources that are both written and visual. From historical, sociological, and literary perspectives, the breadth of the Canadian Jewish experience is becoming evident. Until very recently, there has been an overarching sense within the study of Canadian Jewry that the so-called peripheral communities of Calgary, Vancouver, Halifax, and even smaller locales were “just not large enough to give them

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<sup>104</sup> Civic life relates “...to the duties or activities of people in relation to their town, city, or local area.” Angus Stevenson, “civic adjective,” *The Oxford Dictionary of English (revised edition)*. Oxford University Press, 2010. *Oxford Reference Online*. University of Ottawa. 8 February 2011 <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t140.e0151950>>

<sup>105</sup> Amanda Moore McBride, “Civic Engagement,” In *The Encyclopedia of Social Work*, eds. Larry E. Davis and Terry Mizrahi (National Association of Social Workers and Oxford University Press, Inc, 2008); Amanda Moore McBride, Margaret S. Sherraden, and Suzanne Pritzker, “Civic engagement among low-income and low-wealth families: In their words,” *Family Relations*, 55, no.2 (Apr 2006), pp.152-162; R. Wuthnow, *Acts of Compassion: Caring for Others and Helping Ourselves* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991); S. Brint and C. S. Levy, “Professions and Civic Engagement,” In *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*, eds. T. Skocpol and M. P. Fiorina (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1999), pp.163-210; R. D. Putnam, “The Strange Disappearance of Civic America,” *The American Prospect* 24 (Winter 1996), pp.34-48; R. D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

any real weight compared to Toronto” and Montréal.<sup>106</sup> As the study of Jewish Canadian history begins to branch out, "demographic realities" should no longer take precedence in defining the course of Canadian Jewish historiography.<sup>107</sup> This thesis demonstrates that British Columbia has a place in that history. Indeed, part of the distinctiveness of Canadian Jewish history lies in the intricacies of the tales outside the ‘two cities’.

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<sup>106</sup> Harold Waller, “A Community Transformed: The National Picture,” In *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience - A Millennium Edit*, eds. Frank Dimant and Ruth Klein (Toronto: B'nai Brith Canada, 2001), Ch. 10.

<http://www.bnaibrith.ca/institute/millennium/millennium10.html>

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, Ch. 10. If demographic considerations were the true determinants of academic pursuits, the study of Jewish history in Canada would perhaps never have seen the light outside of the Jewish Community. Canadian Jews form approximately 1.1% of the current population. Statistics Canada, *Census 2001*, (Ottawa: 2001).

## CHAPTER 2 CECELIA DAVIES SYLVESTER: A VOLUNTEER

GOLD RUSH AND EARLY CONFEDERATION ERA

Victoria, British Columbia

### Introduction

At the time of her death on November 6, 1935, Cecelia Davies Sylvester (she used both her maiden name, Davies, and her married name, Sylvester) was publicly remembered as “a woman of great personal charm and intelligence [who] had won for herself, during her long residence in Victoria, the esteem and admiration of thousands of citizens in the city.”<sup>1</sup> Davies Sylvester’s granddaughters described her as a gentle person with a happy disposition who loved to fight for a worthwhile cause. One of the longest living pioneers from amongst the gold rush era migrants, Davies Sylvester was known for her “remarkable interest in all matters pertaining to the welfare of Victoria,” Davies Sylvester is said to have often quietly spearheaded many social reforms.<sup>2</sup>

She was also a known socialite who played hostess to local and world dignitaries, entertaining the likes of Sir Henri de Lotbiniere, the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia and the Anglican Canon Arthur Beanlands. When Governor General John Campbell Hamilton-Gordon and his wife, Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks, (also known

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<sup>1</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, “The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island,” *Western States Jewish History and the Scribe: Pioneer Jews of British Columbia* WSJH: XXX VII, The Scribe: XXV, no. WSJH: 3 and 4, The Scribe: 1 and 2 (2005/5765), p.87; “Vital Event Death Registration Cecelia Sylvester” [<http://search.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn21C68FD/view/Genealogy/find%2BSylvester,%20Cecelia%2B%2B%2B%2B/3>], 2009; Family ephemera series 3, Acc. No. 1998-071, Box 1.19-24, 1867-1918.

<sup>2</sup> Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, 87. Family ephemera series 3, *City Pioneer Passes Away – Mrs. Cecelia Sylvester is summoned by death-Funeral Tomorrow*, November, (1935), Acc. No. 1998-071, Box 1.19-24; Joan Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, (1990), p.32.

as Lord and Lady Aberdeen) came to visit Victoria, it was Davies Sylvester's young daughter, Rebecca, who was chosen to publicly present the couple with flowers.<sup>3</sup> Like all "true" Victorians, Davies Sylvester was educated in the arts: she played the piano, danced well, and loved to entertain guests by singing with her husband.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps taking after the examples provided to her by her father, Judah P. Davies, and later her husband, Frank Sylvester, she had a seemingly insatiable appetite for communal contributions.

Civic engagement was the main avenue through which Davies Sylvester both expressed her identity and entered into the public domain. Along with other Jewish and Gentile women of Victoria, Davies Sylvester worked in the French pioneer hospital, which later became St. Joseph's Hospital (1875-1929), located in a log cabin on Superior Street, run by the Sisters of St. Ann.<sup>5</sup> She also occupied a position on the executive committee of the Royal Jubilee Hospital (est. 1858), and she was a founding member of the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire (I.O.D.E. est. 1900).<sup>6</sup> As Cyril Leonoff has noted, "every charitable work in town seemed to hold her interest."<sup>7</sup>

Even in her later years, Davies Sylvester maintained links with a multiplicity of benevolent organizations—including the Women's Auxiliary to Tuberculosis Veterans' Association, Esquimalt Chapter Order of the Eastern Star (O.E.S.), Camosun Chapter

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<sup>3</sup> Davies Sylvester, *Cecelia series 2. Governor General's Medals*, (November 15, 1895), Acc. No. 2001-006 Box 1.17-18. "Then little Ruby Sylvester came forward with a lovely basket of flowers almost as big as herself, and presented it to the Countess. The Governor picked the little girl up and stood her on the desk in front of him, and the Countess kissed her, and with a few pleasant words returned her to the floor."

<sup>4</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33; Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, pp.82-99.

<sup>6</sup> Rome, *The first two years: a record of the Jewish pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast, 1858-1860*, p.78.

<sup>7</sup> Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, p.87.

I.O.D.E., and the Women's Canadian Club to name a few.<sup>8</sup> Well-adjusted to the demands of life on the colonial frontier and the burgeoning province of British Columbia during the Victorian era, Davies Sylvester gained lifelong respect as a community figure in Victoria.<sup>9</sup> Her charitable work and high level of participation within general society and its institutions seems to place her easily within Barkan's *integration* phase.

However, Davies Sylvester's cannot be placed solely within Barkan's *integration* phase and in fact she also exhibited many characteristics of the *adaptation* phase. As a mother of eight, Davies Sylvester "kept a fine Jewish home" and was an active member of the Jewish community.<sup>10</sup> During the course of her lifetime Davies Sylvester also worked continuously towards establishing the foundations of Victoria's Jewish community. She was a long-time member of the Hebrew Ladies Association (est.1864, reorganized in 1890) and she "worked indefatigably to collect money to build the synagogue on Blanshard Street [Congregation Emanu-el]."<sup>11</sup>

In order to understand Davies Sylvester's place as a Jew in Victoria's British-influenced social hierarchy several topics will be examined, including: Victoria's Jewish community, the idea of the colonial frontier, the evolution of text-based law in British Columbia, Jewish participation in community-wide voluntary organizations, Jewish notions of benevolence (*tsedaka*), Jewish women in Victorian British Columbia, and

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<sup>8</sup> Family ephemera series 3, *City Pioneer Passes Away –Mrs.Cecelia Sylvester is summoned by death-Funeral Tomorrow*, Acc. No. 1998-071, Box 1.19-24.OES was a Masonic Order open to female relatives of Master Masons. The Order, established in 1867, was open to men and women with connections to the Masonic Lodge

<sup>9</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.33.

<sup>10</sup> David Rome, *The First Two Years: A Record of the Jewish Pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast, 1858-1860* (Montréal: H.M. Caiserman, 1942), p.8.

<sup>11</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.33.

Davies Sylvester's identity as it was expressed through her family and the ephemera she collected. By discussing the above named themes, this chapter will ultimately reveal the cadence of historical change taking place at different levels of society; in doing so, it will also give insight into how Davies Sylvester and Jews like her achieved meaning in their lives as Jews, while at the same time integrating into general society in Victoria.

### **Early Family Life**

Cecelia Davies Sylvester's level of integration in BC society would have certainly been influenced by her early childhood and family experiences. The actions and experiences of the Davies' family in their extensive travels, business pursuits, charity work and engagement in mainstream bourgeois activities places them within several of Barkan's phases, perhaps most prominently in the *adaptation* and *integration* phases. By the time her family decided to settle on Vancouver Island in 1863, fifteen year old Cecelia Davies had already travelled a fair distance around the globe (for a genealogical outline see Appendix C). Born in Sydney, Australia, on January 22, 1848, to English parents, Miriam (Maria) Harris and Judah Phillip (J.P.) Davies, Cecelia Davies was a middle child of six children. Miriam Harris (1819-1901) was born in London to a Sephardic Jewish family, purportedly of Portuguese origin.<sup>12</sup> Before her own migration to Sidney from England, Miriam Harris had been gainfully employed in

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<sup>12</sup> Modrall, "Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History," In *Wild Roses at their feet*" by Elizabeth Lamont (Vancouver BC: Forbes Evergreen Press, 1971) about pioneer BC women, the author uses Cecelia's grand daughters, Rebecca and Rachel, as a resource and they describe their grandmother as "Irish and she bequeathed to her daughter (Cecelia Davies Sylvester) not only blue-black hair, grey eyes and a happy disposition, but the Irish love of fighting for a worthwhile cause. The same granddaughters described Judah Phillip Davies as Welsh. Perhaps that was because Judah first travelled to Sidney in New South Wales, Australia. Ibid., pp.10-11.

London as an umbrella maker. Shortly following her arrival in Australia, she married a fellow Londoner, Judah P. Davies (1820-1879) in 1843 in Sidney.<sup>13</sup> Although he had been educated at the yeshiva (religious seminary) during his youth, J.P. Davies was more attracted to a career in business than he was to a rabbinical one. Thus, at age nineteen, J.P. Davies travelled to Australia in hopes of gaining his fortune. After some business success, he and Miriam Harris were married.

In 1844 gold became a sought after commodity, as a result of the British implementation of the gold standard. After hearing the news of California's gold rush (1848-1855), the Davies' and their three children, Elizabeth (b.1844), Joshua (b.1846) and Cecelia, set sail for North America in 1849.<sup>14</sup> Unexpectedly, the vessel carrying the Davies' was becalmed and drifted off the coast of Monterey for nearly six weeks. Consequently, when the steamer finally docked, the travel-worn family of five settled in Monterey. J.P. Davies opened a small hotel and the family welcomed the births of Henry (b. circa 1850-3.) and David (b. circa 1850-3). After spending three years in Monterey, the Davies moved to San Francisco, where Phillip Judah (b.1856) was born.<sup>15</sup>

In San Francisco J.P. Davies opened another business, this time a successful wholesale grocery business. Known as caring and charitable man, J.P. Davies' generosity earned him many friends. However, J.P. Davies' business acumen did not override his generous nature. In 1862, when J.P. Davies vouched for the good name of one of his indebted friends, the friend disappeared and left J.P. Davies to pay \$30,000

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>14</sup> The dates of birth and death of Elizabeth and Joshua Davies are February 1844 to November 16, 1866, March 24, 1846 to June 5, 1903, respectively.

<sup>15</sup> Phillip Judah Davies was born October 29, 1856 and died in 1943.

worth in accumulated debts. This betrayal nearly cost J.P. Davies all of his savings, not to mention his good name. Shortly thereafter, the Davies' packed their belongings for what would be their final move to the British Colony of Vancouver Island.<sup>16</sup>

On February 23, 1863 the Sierra Nevada Steamer docked in Esquimalt and the Davies' once again found themselves in new surroundings. In 1863 Victoria was still a small city, where there were more tents than buildings, however the family had no trouble settling in.<sup>17</sup> Almost immediately, J.P. Davies—known to family and friends as J.P.—opened an auctioneering firm, called J.P. Davies & Co. The firm lasted for forty years and was one of the major auctioneering firms in the North West Pacific. J.P. Davies' business sense allowed him to prosper despite the fact that many of his colleagues closed their businesses and left town with the onset of the post-gold rush depression.<sup>18</sup> Being a fairly educated man, J.P. Davies also took measures to ensure that all of his school age children received an education, including his two daughters.<sup>19</sup> Davies Sylvester and her sister Elizabeth continued to study under the tutelage of Mme. Pettibeu, their French tutor from San Francisco, who also happened to move north to Victoria.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Cecelia and her siblings engaged in many activities associated with a Victorian bourgeois childhood.

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<sup>16</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.20; Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, pp.82-83.

<sup>17</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.20.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>20</sup> Mme. V.C. Pettibeu was “one of the earliest Frenchwomen to arrive in San Francisco...in conjunction with two other women in 1853, she opened the first girl’s school in that city. She [later] transferred her activities to BC in the early months of the gold rush and for a time taught in the school instituted by Bishop Demers.” Edith E. Down, *A Century of Service: A History of the Sisters of Saint Ann and Their*

The girls were soon very happy in their new home. They took part in all the gaieties of the time. There were balls at the naval yard, and return dances given by citizens. Periodically, great parties were held at Government House, to which all the young people in the city were asked. Great were the preparations for these events, and long were they remembered. Not less delightful than the dances were the picnics at Cadboro Bay, Cordova Bay, or Esquimalt, where merry parties assembled in the long summer afternoons, driving in great wagons, or cantering across country on horseback.<sup>21</sup>

Davies Sylvester's girlhood days would come to an end with the sudden death of her sister Elizabeth Davies Shultz, in 1866. Davies Shultz was the first Jewish woman to be buried in Victoria's newly consecrated Jewish cemetery, succeeded by Morris Price, who was the first Jewish man to be murdered along the gold trail at Cayoosh in 1861 and later buried in Victoria's Jewish cemetery.<sup>22</sup> The Davies' were devastated by the loss of their daughter, and mourned according to traditional religious rites (*shiva*).<sup>23</sup> After her sister's death, Davies Sylvester took over the task of raising her young motherless nephew, Samuel Shultz.<sup>24</sup> When Davies Sylvester married Frank Sylvester on January 27, 1869, she left her young nephew in the care of her parents and went on to start a family of her own.

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*Contribution to Education in British Columbia, the Yukon and Alaska, 1858-1958*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Victoria BC: Sisters of St. Ann, 1999), p.27; Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.32.

<sup>21</sup> "Pioneer Women of BC," *The Victoria Times*, Sunday, 11 July 1909, sec. Victoria BC, p. AR281 Acc. No: 2005-020.

<sup>22</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1978), p.19.

<sup>23</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, pp.123-124.

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Shultz (b. 1865) was the only child of Elizabeth Davies and Herman Shultz and went on to become the first Jewish member of the Judiciary in Canada. He was married to Maude Squarebriggs, a non-Jewish woman and he was an active Mason; Arthur Daniel Hart, *The Jew in Canada: A Complete Record of Canadian Jewry from the Days of the French Régime to the Present Time* (Toronto: Jewish Publications, 1926), p.575.

Although Frank Sylvester's family heritage and early life were different from those of Cecelia's, his level of integration was quite similar to that of the Davies family. Frank Sylvester arrived on Vancouver Island aboard the SS Pacific on July 17, 1858, and was one of the first arrivals to the Island from amongst a group of approximately fifty Jews, who would become the colony's first Jewish inhabitants.<sup>25</sup> Sylvester was born in England in 1842 to Jewish Prussian parents, Eula and Hyman Silberstein. The Silbersteins first settled in New York City in 1843, at which point the name Silberstein was Anglicized to Sylvester (see Appendix A).<sup>26</sup> By virtue of his emigration to the US as an infant, Sylvester became a naturalized US citizen as a child, his older siblings were not as fortunate. In 1856 Sylvester and his father travelled from New York to San Francisco in search of prosperity and to reunite with Sylvester's elder sisters. In 1858 Sylvester's brother-in-law, Martin Prag, sponsored Sylvester to travel to the gold fields of British Columbia so that he could try his hand at mining and trading.<sup>27</sup> Sylvester instantly earned a respected place for himself in Victoria's burgeoning Jewish community as well as a place in the community-at-large.

As gold prospects declined, Sylvester began to stay more frequently in Victoria. He settled there permanently and in 1864, when J.P. Davies opened J.P. Davies & Co. auctioneering firm, Sylvester was hired as an accountant.<sup>28</sup> In a short time Sylvester

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<sup>25</sup>The first Jew to arrive in British territory in the Pacific North West was Adolf Friedman in 1845. He settled first in Tacoma, then part of HBC territory. He supplied goods to pioneer fishermen. He later moved to Victoria to marry Masha Stusser, a cousin. Friedman, originally from Latvia, sailed to North America via Cape Horn with thirty five Scandinavian soldiers from port Libau. Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*.

<sup>26</sup> See Appendix A for discussion pertaining to revised date of birth.

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>28</sup> "Sudden death of well-known citizen," 1934, sec. 1.9 Miscellaneous photos, sketches and Programs, p. AR281 Acc. No: 2005-020. Frank Sylvester stayed with the firm until 1879, and then went into the feed

proved himself as a reliable employee and became a loyal friend to Cecelia Davies during the family's period of mourning in 1866. He became a permanent member of the Davies family when the couple married in January of 1869.<sup>29</sup> The couple raised five daughters and three sons: Elizabeth Eula (1869-1937), Louise Marion (1871-1955), William Benjamin (1874-1931), Clarence Bertram (1876-1933), Mabel Violet (1878-1945), Jesse Percival (1880-1945), Rachel Valentine (1884-1975), and Rebecca Florence (1889-1979).<sup>30</sup>

It is interesting to note that of all her children, only the youngest two were given Hebrew names (Rachel and Rebecca), and they were named after Frank Sylvester's two older sisters. In Europe it was not uncommon for children to be given Hebrew names in conjunction with their secular names. It is difficult to know if this tradition was dropped by Davies Sylvester. The use of Anglicized names perhaps stemmed from the fact the parents of Sylvester and Davies Sylvester Anglicized their Hebrew and Yiddish names. Sylvester's mother's was Eula Sarah, yet she went by the name of Julia; Sylvester's father's name was Hyman, a name he changed to Henry. Davies Sylvester's parents were known as Maria and J.P. rather than by their Hebrew names.

Although Davies Sylvester's integration into Victoria took place mainly during the early decades of British Columbia's provincial existence, it was the late colonial period that laid the social foundations for general Jewish integration in the future

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business; Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.130.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.32. Frank worked for J.P. Davies & Co. until the death of his father-in-law in 1879, at which point Joshua Davies cut Frank's wages from \$150 to \$75 a month and Frank left abruptly. Afterwards, Frank worked for his son's company Sylvester Feed & Co. Ibid., p.131.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.134, 150-9.

province of British Columbia. Thus, the nature of Victoria's founding Jewish community is as pivotal to understanding the nature of Davies Sylvester's integration as it is to understanding the basis upon which all subsequent Jewish history in BC took place.

### **Jews in early Victoria**

By 1863 the region's Jewish population had reached 242 (see

Table 1).<sup>31</sup> In the middle position, above the petty traders, was the largest group of Jews. This group comprised “moderately wealthy small-scale general and commission merchants, retail store-keepers and saloon proprietors.”<sup>32</sup> The top tier of Jewish society was composed of a more elite group of businessmen. These men worked as large-scale wholesale and commission merchants, auctioneers, and land agents; Judah P. Davies, Frank Sylvester, and the Franklin and Oppenheimer brothers amongst them (see Appendix I).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Christine Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, MA Thesis (Vancouver, BC: Faculty of Graduate Studies, Department of Geography, UBC, April 1987), p.14.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>33</sup> The Oppenheimer brothers, originally from Saar, Germany, settled in New Orleans and San Francisco before arriving in Victoria in 1858-9. Brothers Godfrey and Charles started a supply business, in Victoria and Yale; later, when joined by brothers David and Isaac, the brothers began a chain of supply warehouses throughout the Cariboo; Charles was contracted to build a section of the Cariboo Wagon Road; David and Isaac opened a import wholesale business in 1882. In 1886 they moved to the newly incorporated city of New Westminster. The Oppenheimers were involved in establishing and supplying volunteer fire brigades in Yale and elsewhere. All the brothers were Masons. David Oppenheimer became the second mayor of Vancouver.

Table 1 Total Jewish population in BC, 1858-1871.

*Table 1 includes: total Jewish population, total number of Jews living in households, total number of single Jewish residents, total number of Jewish families and total number of Jewish children.<sup>34</sup>*

Year	Total #	Households #	Single #	Families #	Children #
1858	50	32	19	13	6
1859	99	60	33	27	12
1860	149	76	34	42	31
1861	167	76	35	43	34
1862	217	78	49	57	54
1863	242	106	54	65	58
1864	221	119	29	67	58
1865	208	96	28	60	60
1866	191	88	27	56	52
1867	177	83	24	61	51
1868	144	85	15	43	43
1869	134	58	17	38	41
1870	118	45	12	33	40
1871	93	34	8	26	34

Like Miriam and J.P. Davies, many of Victoria's early Jewish migrants had been born in British territories and came to Vancouver Island via California. Others still, like Frank Sylvester, were Americanized Jews with origins from Prussia, Russia, Poland, or Bavaria (see Appendix I).<sup>35</sup> Despite their cultural differences, these migrants shared in common a fluency in English, a familiarity with British or American culture, a penchant for trade and economic success, and a determination to build a community. As David Rome noted, the Jews who first settled in Victoria "were quite talented."<sup>36</sup> As a consequence of the uncertain and fluctuating nature of the gold market the majority of Jewish pioneers established permanent supply businesses in Victoria, with a minority

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p.19.

<sup>35</sup> Ava F. Kahn and Ellen Eisenberg, "Western Reality: Jewish Diversity During the 'German' Period," *American Jewish History* 92, no.4 (2007), p.457.

<sup>36</sup> Rome, *The first two years: a record of the Jewish pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast, 1858-1860*, p.30.

venturing out into the mining regions during the summer months in order to trade their goods.<sup>37</sup>

Both the middle and elite groups formed the Jewish middle-class of Victoria, and in this capacity they worked alongside their non-Jewish counterparts in the development of Victoria's burgeoning society and economy.<sup>38</sup> Some Jewish merchants further cemented their business interests in Victoria through their membership in fraternal societies such as the Masonic lodges and Odd Fellow societies.<sup>39</sup> Several of Victoria's elite Jewish businessmen also became involved in politics, including Selim Franklin, who served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island from 1860 until 1866; his brother Lumley Franklin was elected Mayor of Victoria in 1866; and Henry Nathan became the first Jew elected to the Canadian Parliament from 1871 until 1874.<sup>40</sup>

Despite the socio-economic hierarchy, Victoria's Jews quickly banded together to form a community, mostly due to their small numbers, common American experience, and occupation in the trade sector. Communal cohesion was enhanced by overlapping family, business and communal ties, as well as seasonal visits to San Francisco, which strengthened links with American Jewry.<sup>41</sup> By establishing themselves in the relatively isolated locale of Victoria, by necessity Jews interacted to a high degree with general society, both for communal and economic purposes. The fact that the majority of Jews

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<sup>37</sup> Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, p.30.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.33.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61. In 1863, it is known that four Jews listed themselves with the Chamber of Commerce: E. Sutro, N. Koshland, S. Goldstone, and J. Rueff.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p.61.

<sup>41</sup> Trips were made to San Francisco by businessmen in need of supplies.

were merchants amplified their *integration* and full participation in general society, even though members also exhibited strong tendencies towards Barkan's *contact*, *acculturation* and *adaptation* phases.

### **Jews in British North America, late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries**

The nature and structure of Victoria's early Jewish community recall the early Jewish communities of Upper and Lower Canada and Nova Scotia of the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Like their western co-religionists, Jews in these regions were part of the property-holding middle-class and were involved in commerce, including importing and exporting, wholesale and retail.<sup>42</sup> Many were of British or American origin, and had travelled north from the American Colonies in search of lucrative economic opportunities. Although political, commercial, and social affiliations among most major ethnic and cultural groups in North America were commonly based on race, religion and/or national loyalty during this period, the remoteness and sparsely populated nature of British North America often necessitated cooperation with people outside of one's own group for economic survival.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, early Jewish merchants in Canada did not operate exclusively within a Jewish world.<sup>44</sup> As a part of the burgeoning commercial sector in British North America, Canada's early Jews sought to align themselves with the dominant community of British administrators and businessmen. They became increasingly fluent in English, and sought to enhance trade

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<sup>42</sup>Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges," In *From Immigration to Integration: The Canadian Jewish Experience - A Millennium Edition*, eds. Frank Dimant and Ruth Klein (Toronto: B'nai Brith Canada, 2001), p.23.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

opportunities through political alignment and cooperation with the British. Although a majority of Canada's early Jews were "men on the move," they also formed close business bonds with other Jews, and many commercial enterprises and partnerships benefitted from a network of family and friends, which sometimes extended to New York, Philadelphia, or Boston.<sup>45</sup> A successful minority also chose to stay and focus on establishing their own local communities.<sup>46</sup> In Lower Canada for example, early Jews initiated the establishment of a permanent Jewish community by acquiring a cemetery and building a synagogue, Shearith Israel, est. 1790.

In sum, many aspects of the experience of eighteenth-century Jews in British North America parallel the experience, nearly a century later, of early Victoria Jews. Early Jewish settlers in both mid-nineteenth-century Victoria and turn-of-the-nineteenth-century Eastern Canada were drawn to the commercial potential of the regions in which they settled. They were largely middle-class traders; by virtue of British dominance, as well as their previous experience in the thirteen colonies, they aligned themselves with British values. In both contexts, these factors affected the nature and level of integration among Jewish settlers.

However, there were also differences between early Jewish settlers in these two regions, specifically with regard to where each community drew its religious inspiration from. For instance, while Montréal's community took its lead from London's *Bevis*

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.19.

*Marks* synagogue, est. 1698,<sup>47</sup> Victoria's burgeoning community of the mid-nineteenth century was directly influenced by American Jewish institutions and practices. That is not to say that Jews in Victoria were not linked in any way to British Jewry. Indeed, prominent Jewish philanthropists such as Sir Moses Montefiore and his nephew, Baron Lionel de Rothschild, became honorary members of the Congregation Emanu-el after donating funds to the community.<sup>48</sup> However, British influence was limited and the strongest religious influence came out of the US.

### **The American tradition: *Minhag American***

Victoria's newly founded Jewish community had an abundance of family and business ties to San Francisco. Victoria's first synagogue was modelled after the traditions of American Jewish immigrants, at that time dominated by Jews from German speaking lands as well as Jews from Eastern Europe. This raises the question of which religious tradition Victoria's Jews followed?

Cyril Leonoff maintains that because the "majority of Victoria's Jewish population belonged to close-knit small town Polish or...Prussian Polish families,"<sup>49</sup> its early Jewish congregants followed the *minhag polin*, the Polish rite.<sup>50</sup> Although this categorization may have been closer to how the congregants themselves thought of the

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<sup>47</sup> For example, London provided financial support and rabbis, defined religious rites and protocol, and effectively categorized all *Shearith Israel* congregants as Sephardic, regardless of their actual historical identity. *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>48</sup> Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges," in *From Immigration to Integration: The Jewish Canadian Experience: A Millennium Edition*, eds. Ruth Klein and Frank Dimant, (Toronto, Ontario: Institute for International Affairs, B'nai Brith Canada, 2001), p.58. Victoria's Jewish community also received its first *khupah* (bridal canopy) from England. Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.29.

<sup>49</sup> Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, p.24. This estimation presumably includes British Jews of Prussian or Polish descent, of which there were several examples.

<sup>50</sup> Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, p.30.

traditions they were following, given the behaviour of the congregation, this categorization is confusing from an analytical perspective. An accurate description would be to say that Victoria's early Jews were following the newly founded and evolving American Jewish traditions of the nineteenth century, which were caught up in reforming and asserting tradition, henceforth to be referred to as the *minhag American* or simply the American Jewish tradition.<sup>51</sup>

American Jewish immigrants of the nineteenth century sought ways to be both Jewish and American. As such, adjustments and reforms were made to traditional religious practices, which fostered a higher degree of integration for Jews who could be placed into any of Barkan's phases. Nineteenth-century Jews in the United States, regardless of their origins or proclivities towards Reform Judaism, displayed uniquely American traits that did not exist in Europe. In the context of this discussion, the term *minhag American* encompasses all changes taking place in Jewish religious culture, including divisions between traditionalists and reformists. The fact that BC's first Jewish community had American roots indicates that it was directly shaped by the evolving nature of the *minhag American*. Indeed, the *minhag American* partially accounts for Jewish integration in nineteenth-century Victoria. In order to understand the basis of the *minhag American*, we first need to appreciate the immigration experience of Jews to the

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<sup>51</sup> The term *minhag American* should not be confused with the title of an English-Hebrew *siddur* (prayer book), *minhag America*, developed by Rabbi Isaac Meyer Wise in 1857. Rabbi Wise was a moderate Reform rabbi, whose intention was to bring unity to the diverse *minhagim*. He argued for a synthesis of traditions, superseding Sephardic, Ashkenazi, and Polish traditions. The *siddur* was widely used throughout the 1860s and 1870s by congregations across the southern and western United States. The *siddur* was not quite the unifier that Wise intended. As the century wore on, divisions arose between traditionalists and reformists rather than between the different *minhagim*. Isaac Mayer Wise, "Rejoinder to Talmid's Thoughts on Deuteronomy 30:6 (1)," *The Occident* 5 (1847): 109. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*, p.313.

US during the nineteenth century, who were characterized for their high levels of integration and assimilation.<sup>52</sup>

### **Jewish immigration to the United States: 1820-1880**

Prior to the 1820s there existed a total of six Jewish communities in New York, Philadelphia, Richmond, Charleston, Savannah, and Newport, Rhode Island. These communities were founded by the descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews in the seventeenth century. Although the majority of the United States' 3000 Jews in 1820 were of Ashkenazi origin, they identified themselves as Sephardic, modelling their identities on those of their Sephardic leaders, who were in turn guided by English Sephardic rabbinical authorities. The net result was that early Jews in America had little sense of themselves as American.<sup>53</sup> Between 1820 and 1880 approximately 150,000 Jews from Central and Eastern Europe migrated to the US.<sup>54</sup> Despite the fact that Jews from Germanic lands represented only a slim majority over the total number of Jewish immigrants from elsewhere, they became the most influential Jewish group and this era has been labelled as the German era of immigration in Jewish American history.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp.1-2, 51.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.33-5. American Jewish immigration is often divided into three separate historical eras based on the types of leading Jewish immigrants who arrived in each period: the Sephardic era, 1654-1820; the German era, 1820-1880; and the Eastern European era, 1881-1920s.

<sup>55</sup> During the nineteenth century between five and ten percent of "Californian Jewry hailed from the French provinces along the Rhine," including the Alsace. *Ibid.*, p.51. A sizeable portion of Jews migrated from the Austrian Empire, including Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia and Galicia. Thousands of others came from parts of Poland, Russia and Lithuania. Historian Hasia R. Diner asserts that Polish Jewry made up a majority of the pre-1880 Jewish immigrants in the western United States. Indeed, she writes that "between 1860 and 1880, more Jews from Eastern Europe than from Germany made their way to all of America." *Ibid.*, p.53 Jews also came to California from Britain or British colonies. Diner explains that the Jewish immigrants from England and Holland were often Yiddish speakers of Polish, Prussian or Russian origin, who had travelled to Britain or the Netherlands before arriving in New York, Boston and California, and

The Jewish immigrants who began arriving in 1820 differed radically from their predecessors. They founded communities in almost every region of every state and as they moved across the continent, their communities took on similar characteristics. They established multiple synagogues of diverse *minhagim* (customs) within the same communities, created institutions for education, philanthropy, recreation and religion.

Bavarian Jewish youth initiated the exodus from Central Europe to North America, circa 1820. Immigration of *hinterberliners*, as Jews from the Prussian province of Poznan were called, started in the 1830s, escalating in the 1840s and 1850s, following the invention of the steamboat.<sup>56</sup> British Jews followed during the gold rush era. They were succeeded by Jewish immigrants from the Alsace, western Russia, Lithuania, Kalvaria and Sulvalk, whose migration was urged on by cholera epidemics and famine in the 1860s. Wherever they came from, Jewish immigrants to North America did not leave because of a weakened identification with traditional Jewish life. Economic improvement and/or escape from debilitating social conditions were the mitigating factors for emigration. While wealthier Jews sought economic opportunities in the newly

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then scattered along the Pacific Northwest or into the South-western states. Ibid., p.54. There were also Sephardic Jews among the British migrants, as well as British Jews of dual Ashkenazi-Sephardic backgrounds, like Davies Sylvester and her siblings.

<sup>56</sup> Of all the Jews from German lands, Prussian Jews suffered the most in terms of civil and economic discrimination and therefore they led Jewish immigration to North America. Ibid., p.44. *Hinterberliners*, confound definitions that place Jews in simple east-west categories (see Appendix E) Ibid., p.15. In 1816 Prussia was home to nearly fifty percent of all Jews in German territories; moreover, the 1793 annexation of Poznan meant that *hinterberliners* accounted for the largest proportion of this population. Abundant poverty and marriage restrictions prompted many to immigrate to America, where their closer association with traditional *yiddishkeit* allowed them to take on roles of religious leadership within coalescing Jewish communities across the continent.

industrializing commercial centres of Europe,<sup>57</sup> poorer Jews tended to immigrate to North America.<sup>58</sup>

Jewish immigrants from Germanic areas of Central Europe<sup>59</sup> often left in small groups of friends or relatives. Once in North America, these networks quickly extended into broader social networks, allowing Jews from Germanic lands to quickly establish themselves socially and economically. Conversely, Eastern European Jews immigrated on a much smaller scale and had fewer support networks. Once they arrived in the US, Eastern European Jewish immigrants banded together with fellow lone migrants.<sup>60</sup> Despite their lack of strong social networks mid-nineteenth-century Eastern European Jewish immigrants often still spoke Yiddish and were more steeped in Jewish religious tradition, *yiddishkeit*, than their co-religionists from Central Europe, especially Bavaria.<sup>61</sup>

Curiously, many of the newly arrived Jewish immigrants ignored their eastern roots and simply categorized themselves as Bavarian (Bayer) or Prussian.<sup>62</sup> In comparison to Jewish immigrants from German-speaking lands, Eastern European Jews

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<sup>57</sup> e.g. Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest.

<sup>58</sup> Unsurprisingly, the first Jewish immigrants were single unemployed poor young men, soon followed in fewer numbers—but for similar reasons—by single unemployed poor young women. Indeed one of the characteristics of the nineteenth century’s immigrant Jewish community in the US was a lack of children and the elderly. *Ibid.*, p.48 In contrast, German Gentile immigrants to North America came from the ranks of wealthier peasantry and small freeholders, while poorer German Gentiles migrated to the industrializing cities. *Ibid.*, p.56

<sup>59</sup> Places such as Bavaria, Hesse, Baden, Swabia, the Rhine Valley, Prussia and Poznan, and even Bohemia, Silesia, and Slovakia.

<sup>60</sup> Glanz. Rudolf, “The “Bayer” and the “Pollack” in America,” *Jewish Social Studies* 17, no.1 (Jan, 1955), p.32.

<sup>61</sup> Due to the slower pace of emancipation of Jews in Eastern Europe. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*, p.25.

<sup>62</sup> “Harriet Levy, who grew up in San Francisco, announced in school that she was German, despite the fact that her parents came from Poland. She later mused: ‘Why Poles lacked the virtue of Bavarians I did not understand...’” *Ibid.*, p.49.

lacked prestige and family networks and therefore they could not advance as quickly in American society. Eager to establish Jewish roots in the New World, just as their predecessors had done a century earlier, they identified themselves with whom they perceived as the strongest group: the German Jewish founders.

Like their American countrymen, nineteenth-century Jews became joiners of voluntary associations and members of clubs, societies and fraternal organizations. They established their own associations such as the B'nai Brith and the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA). They published newspapers, wrote books and founded schools.<sup>63</sup> For the first time, women became involved in communal public life, something that was institutionally impossible within the traditional *kahalim* (communities) of Europe. In America, women's auxiliary associations were often the main fundraisers for building synagogues and other major communal ventures. Women also founded and organized the Jewish Sunday school movement. Not only did women attend synagogue services more regularly than they had in Europe, but more often than not, it was the women's faces that the rabbi saw on a Saturday morning, while the men were working. As women became more involved in synagogue life, mixed seating came to the forefront of community discussions.<sup>64</sup>

One of the most distinctive features of American Jewish history during this era was the absence of educated religious leaders. The lack of ordained rabbis in America persisted until the 1840s, even then only a few came over. Jewish communal

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.5.

<sup>64</sup> Ironically it was the men who argued in favour of or against issues such as mixed seating. Ibid., p.120.

infrastructure was therefore dominated by lay leadership.<sup>65</sup> Although many Jewish immigrants were accustomed to traditional life and aspired to maintain it, the study or analysis of sacred texts and commentary played little or no role in their daily lives. They were not trained scholars infused with the desire or even the knowledge of how to maintain a traditional *kahal* in a different society.<sup>66</sup> Religious behaviour in America was dominated by the prevailing philosophy that religion was a matter of personal choice rather than of communal control. Therefore, once established in roles of religious leadership, Jewish laity perceived itself to have the power to implement religious changes.<sup>67</sup>

Without rabbis to guide them, the laity that dominated the synagogues rejected, accepted or even added to Jewish religious tenets and traditions as they saw fit. Furthermore, westward migration across the continent and the influx of different varieties of immigrants, helped to break ties to established American Jewish centres. Because religion was a private rather than communal affair in the nineteenth-century US,<sup>68</sup> even when traditional rabbis arrived on the scene, they found that the will of the laity dominated the congregations. Rabbis could either go along with popular demands for change to traditional rites or find other congregations to mentor. To complicate matters more, American society witnessed the birth of numerous new religions and sects from the Shakers to the Mormons, making religion in America as plural as it was

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<sup>65</sup> Naomi W. Cohen, *Encounter with Emancipation: The German Jews in the United States, 1830-1914*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1984), p.39.

<sup>66</sup> Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

private.<sup>69</sup> These factors culminated to create a social context which allowed for the emergence of Jews who wished to remain as faithful as possible to tradition, as well as for those who advocated radical reforms. The majority of American Jews fell in between these two poles, choosing to adapt Jewish tradition to some aspects of American culture while restricting others.<sup>70</sup>

The first American Reform congregation was organized in 1824 in Charleston, South Carolina. A dissident group from Congregation Beth Elohim argued for a shorter service, prayers in English, and other minor modifications. When their requests for reforms were denied, they formed their own, albeit short-lived, congregation. As the nineteenth century progressed, congregations across America pushed for similar changes. Between the 1860s and the 1870s, numerous congregations adopted Rabbi Wise's *minhag America* as their primary text, and later joined the Union of American Hebrew Congregations after its founding in 1873.<sup>71</sup>

The push for change was not limited to reformists. Even among traditionalist leaning congregations, modifications were made. Sabbath observance was respected in varying degrees. Some merchants for example, opened their doors only on Saturday afternoons in order to attend Sabbath services in the morning.<sup>72</sup> Although traditionalist rabbis may not have condoned such practices, they did rationalize the innovation of other synagogue services. They admitted that, "in America, Judaism could not remain unchanged." Isaac Leeser, the cantor for Philadelphia's Orthodox shul of Mikveh Israel

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.88.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.116.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.122.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.138. Other Jews organized themselves along the lines of Bohemian, Lithuanian or Russian *khevre*.

and a major opponent of the Reform movement, introduced innovations in his own shul. Leiser faced his congregants like a Protestant preacher; he promoted the use of the catechism for children, weekly sermons, and English translations of the Bible and prayers; he also encouraged women to establish Sunday schools, which was until that point a mainly Protestant phenomenon. Like his Reform co-religionists, Leiser used the Torah rather than the Talmud to justify his actions. Orthodox Rabbi Bernard Illowy, who served in New York's Shaar Tzedek, as well as Orthodox congregations in St. Louis, Cincinnati, and New Orleans, sanctioned the confirmation ceremony. Even Victoria's own rabbi, Reverend Dr. M. R. Cohen (b.1827), originally from Poland, delivered his sermons in English, not Yiddish.<sup>73</sup> Reverend Cohen's choice of English over Yiddish was undoubtedly a result of his time in Sacramento, where he had served the congregation of B'nai Israel.<sup>74</sup>

Despite the innovations, some areas of Jewish practices remained constant, for example, the customs surrounding the burial of the dead remained relatively unchanged. In the US, as in Europe, there were separate burial societies for men and women. Often known as the Khevra Kadisha, the Hebrew Benevolent Association, the Ladies Hebrew Association, Mevaker Holim or Bikur Holim, these associations were established on a voluntary basis in order to perform the prescribed rituals surrounding burial of the dead, and caring for the sick and needy.<sup>75</sup> Although no financial rewards were offered in exchange for membership and initiation fees were quite high, membership in such

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<sup>73</sup> Allan Klenman, "British Columbia's First Rabbi," *Scribe* 11, March 1982, pp.5-7.

<sup>74</sup> In 1873, Harlem's Congregation Hand-In-Hand, considered itself Orthodox while advocating mixed seating Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880*, p.122.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

organizations often placed members in positions of influence and power within the community. The burial society was the first Jewish communal organization to be established within one or two years after arriving in a new region. These associations, particularly the ladies associations, also fundraised on behalf of the communal treasury—by holding balls, theatrical events and picnics. It was the Hebrew Benevolent Association which secured a cemetery, established a social network, a treasury, and held routine religious services in members' homes.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to the burial needs, the benevolent associations also took care of ailing members of the Jewish community. Regardless of religious affiliation, all Jews agreed that the poor needed to be cared for. Indeed, Jews had a long tradition of taking care of the ailing members of their communities, be it in the form of orphanages, stipends for widows, dowries for poor brides, distribution of free *matzot*, or interest free loans, all in the name of *tsedaka* (justice). As the name implies, *tsedaka* was not done purely out of the goodness of one's heart but as a religious obligation to be fulfilled. This desire to fulfil the obligation of *tsedaka* corresponded to an era of volunteerism in the nineteenth-century United States, which in turn shaped Jewish philanthropic activities.<sup>77</sup> Lacking taxes to support their communities, American Jewish communities founded charitable organizations to perform *tsedaka*. As with other American charitable associations, Jewish women played a significant role in the organization and collection of funds for Jewish charitable organizations. As Jews emulated American methods for

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.96.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., p.104.

conducting charity, the concept of *tsedaka* became strongly associated with the idea of doing good deeds rather the traditional concept of doing justice.<sup>78</sup>

Ultimately, American Jews sought ways to be both Jewish and American. If they created new traditions, nineteenth-century American Jews did so as a way of harmonizing Judaism with American life.<sup>79</sup> The organizational principles that allowed for the formation of homogenous European Jewish communities, dominated by rabbinical authorities, were not possible in America. In the United States, individual effort played an equal, if not at times a greater role in shaping Jewish practices than religious tradition did.<sup>80</sup> Correspondingly, American Jews were more predisposed towards the deeper levels of social incorporation, including *acculturation*, *adaptation*, and *integration*.

### **Communal development among Victoria's Jews**

In many ways, the pattern of early Jewish communal development on the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island mimicked the development of other Jewish communities in the nineteenth-century United States, especially in terms of the degree to which communal institutions and practices were inclined to integrate with general society. Many of Victoria's first Jewish arrivals in 1858 were single men of similar European origin and level integration as their American counterparts. They were eager for adventure, in search of their fortunes, and ready to make their mark away from the

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p.104.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p.123.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p.120.

watchful eyes of their older siblings in California.<sup>81</sup> They quickly established the rudiments of a Jewish community which consisted of informal gatherings in homes and/or businesses. By 1859 the Hebrew Benevolent Society was formed, and provided charity to needy Jewish immigrants. As well, it successfully acquired a 1.5 acre plot of land beyond the north-eastern edge of the city for a Jewish burial ground. The Jewish cemetery was consecrated in February of 1860.<sup>82</sup>

As women and families arrived, Victoria's Jewish community began to take root. The ladies auxiliary branch of the Hebrew Benevolent Society was formed and was instrumental in fundraising on behalf of the community, including funds for the construction of Congregation Emanu-el. As the rudiments of Jewish life were established, traditional Jewish notions of charity in the form of *gmilot-khesed* (benevolent kindness) and *tsedaka* both inspired and informed the involvement of Victoria's early Jews in the public sphere of the greater community.<sup>83</sup>

### ***Synagogue life: Congregation Emanu-el***

On June 2, 1863 the Jewish community laid the first cornerstones of the synagogue. Like the opening ceremonies for other North American Jewish congregations,<sup>84</sup> distinguished guests attended the opening ceremony for Congregation Emanu-el, including the mayor of Victoria and the Chief Justice of the colony, members

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<sup>81</sup> Jeanne E. Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p.5.

<sup>82</sup>This parcel of land would remain the only Jewish cemetery in the province until Mayor David Oppenheimer arranged for a separate section of the Mountain View cemetery to be allotted to the Jewish community of Vancouver. Cyril Edel Leonoff, "The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in BC, 1858-1948," *The Scribe* xxviii, 2008, p.50.

<sup>83</sup> Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West*, p.8.

<sup>84</sup> Kahn and Eisenberg, *Western Reality: Jewish Diversity During the "German" Period*, p.469.

of St. Andrews Society, the Germania Sing Verein (Choral Society), the French Benevolent Society, and members of the Masonic lodge. Several of the Congregation's members were also active and founding members of Vancouver Island's Masonic lodges. For that reason, two corner stones were laid, one by the Masons, and one by members of the Congregation.<sup>85</sup> Abraham Hoffman, first secretary to Congregation Emanu-el, in his inaugural address at the ceremony spoke of Congregation Emanu-el one day attaining "the magnitude of a mighty institution, a shrine for the destitute, a school for our youth and the blessing of those that seek the house of God in prayer, [and] might in the turmoil, troubles and anxieties sometimes cast a lingering look upon the religion that our forefathers upheld so faithfully."<sup>86</sup>

Congregation Emanu-el was deemed officially ready for use on November 22, 1863. Its construction had cost the community \$9,196.60. Seventy percent of the contributions to the building-fund were donated by non-Jews. The remaining contributions came from Jews all over the colonies of Vancouver Island and British Columbia, as well as San Francisco and Britain. Despite the generous donations, the Jewish community of Victoria found itself in debt.<sup>87</sup> The accumulated community debt inspired the women to unite their efforts and form Victoria's Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society (HLBS). The Hebrew Ladies became known for their popular annual balls and their successful fundraising efforts.

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<sup>85</sup> Leonoff, *The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria, Vancouver Island*, p.26.

<sup>86</sup> Tulchinsky, "The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges," p.57. PABC File 7b, documents Re: Hebrew synagogue Emmanuel 1862-63. Abraham Hoffman to the Board of Trustees and members of the congregation Emmanuelle 22 November 1862.

<sup>87</sup> Accumulated debt was for \$5152, plus interest Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, 111. Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.26.

Although Victoria's early Jewish settlers had quickly rallied their efforts to build a synagogue, strict religious observance was another matter entirely. Some of Victoria's Jews did not follow religious doctrine strictly. Like their American counterparts, successful entrepreneurs may have kept their businesses open on Saturdays. It is difficult to imagine that those who frequently socialized with non-Jews via community-wide social organizations would have strictly maintained dietary laws when dining outside of their own homes. It is known that Jews like Frank Sylvester, who staunchly supported Orthodox practices within the community, abandoned many religious practices, such as *kashrut* observance, when away from home. According to his diary, Sylvester partook in meals consisting of bacon and beans three times a day when he was on the gold trail.<sup>88</sup>

In early November 1863, the community's first rabbi, Reverend Cohen, complained that the synagogue arrangements were unsatisfactory.<sup>89</sup> He was referring to the fact that the Congregation lacked a proper schedule for Sabbath and Holiday services. Reverend Cohen argued that this kept people from attending synagogue services. The rabbi believed that without a proper foundation, the children of the community would suffer from lack of religious grounding in *yiddishkeit*. In order to do this, he believed that it was crucial that they spend time in the synagogue. Reverend Cohen continued, "the present age demands of us some improvement in our religious affairs and unless some steps are taken in the matter I fear that all your labour...in

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<sup>88</sup> Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, p.119.

<sup>89</sup> Tulchinsky, *The Canadian Jewish Experience: A Distinct Personality Emerges*, p.58. The term "Reverend" was used by rabbis from Britain.

erecting so noble an edifice...will prove 'labour in vain'."<sup>90</sup> Efforts were made to rectify the situation. In fact, congregants entered into a nearly continuous debate on how to "improve" synagogue life, either through innovation or adherence to tradition.

Irrespective of Reverend Cohen's comments, synagogue membership became the main avenue through which Victoria's Jews affirmed their religious and ethnic identities. Even Jews who had abandoned traditions, especially those in isolated locales, were able to nominally attach themselves to Congregation Emanu-el. Observing *kashrut* at home was another way in which Victoria's Jews expressed their Jewish identity, since kosher meat was available from relatively early on, as were Passover *matzot*, which were actually manufactured in Victoria for Jews all along the Pacific Northwest.<sup>91</sup> Essentially, Victoria's Jewish community emphasized its Jewishness as a congregation through religious observance of the life cycle, which was further supported by a communal infrastructure comprised of Jewish benevolent societies. Victoria's Jewish community can perhaps best be described as a blend of traditional adherence and pragmatic abandonment.

One of the more interesting aspects of Congregation Emanu-el is its name. It has already been established that Victoria's Jewish settlers took their lead from American Jewish settlers, particularly those in San Francisco. Yet, the fact that Victoria's first synagogue borrowed its name from the first Reform synagogue in San Francisco, Congregation Emanu-el (est.1849), rather than that city's Orthodox shul of Shearith Israel (est.1851), as would have been more appropriate for a congregation that

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p.58.

<sup>91</sup> Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, p.108.

considered itself Orthodox, is indeed curious. Congregation Emanu-el purportedly received its first *sifrei Torah* (Torah Scrolls) from Congregation Emanu-el in San Francisco, and in reciprocation Victoria's Jewish community decided to name their own shul after the one in San Francisco.<sup>92</sup> The Congregation's *siddurim* (prayer books) were also imported from the US, as opposed to England—where the *siddurim* of earlier Jewish communities in Eastern Canada had come from. It is known that Congregation Emanu-el used the prayer-book known as *Tiflat Yisrael* (Prayers of Israel), which was published by Henry Frank in 1856 in New York. It was said that every Jewish family in the US was in possession of this *siddur*.<sup>93</sup> As already established, Victoria's early Jews came from a variety of different origins (including English Sephardic, English Prussian-Polish, Polish and Bavarian), but the dominant grouping consisted of Jews of Polish or Prussian-Polish origin. However, if Victoria's Jews—dominated by those of mainly Polish origin—were traditional leaning, why choose of the name of a Reform synagogue?

Originally Orthodox in orientation, San Francisco's Congregation Emanu-el first held services in 1849, a time when its membership was dominated by Bavarian as well as Prussian-Polish Jews. As previously noted, both within American and Jewish circles

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<sup>92</sup> According to local lore, the first Torah scrolls Victoria's Jewish community received were sent by Congregation Emanu-el in San Francisco. Rabbi Harry Brechner Congregation Emanu-el, Victoria, BC 11-01-2009.

<sup>93</sup> *Tiflat Yisrael Prayers of Israel* (New York: Henry Frank, 1856). Henry Frank was the first Bavarian publisher and printer who published Jewish theological books in Hebrew with German translations. His books were used in all the theological schools and colleges throughout Bavaria. When he immigrated to New York in 1848 he continued to publish Hebrew texts, but instead of German, English translations were provided. His work, *Tiflat Yisrael Prayers of Israel*, "soon found its way into all Jewish families of the United States." "Henry Frank: The First Hebrew Publisher in the United States," *The American Phrenological Journal* 49 (1869), p.161.

“the successes of Bavarian Jews lent prestige to those with German origins,”<sup>94</sup> and as a result German Jewish culture influenced the flavour of West Coast Jewry throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, many Prussian Jews also adopted the German Jewish label, in hopes of bestowing upon themselves some of the esteem shown to their Bavarian co-religionists. However, cultural rivalries remained, and Bavarian Jews often rejected the Prussian-Polish claims on the coveted German Jewish identity. Among co-religionists in San Francisco’s Congregation Emanu-el tensions came to a head when divisions between congregants caused the Congregation to divide into Shearith Israel and Congregation Emanu-el in 1851.

Shearith Israel became the congregation for Prussian-Polish Jews and was named after New York’s Shearith Israel, the Sephardic Orthodox congregation, est. in 1654. Although the identities of Jews affiliated with Shearith Israel in New York were associated with prestige, that prestige did not automatically transfer to the Prussian-Polish members of San Francisco’s Shearith Israel. Contrarily—as members of the mercantile, banking and even political elite—congregants of San Francisco’s Congregation Emanu-el had garnered enough prestige for themselves to give the Congregation a prestigious identity, although the synagogue did share the same name as New York’s Temple Emanu-el, established in 1845.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Kahn and Eisenberg, *Western Reality: Jewish Diversity During the “German” Period*, p.461.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p.456.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.455. As San Francisco’s Congregation Emanu-el adopted more Reform practices it experienced further division. In 1864 traditionalists broke away to form Congregation Ohabai Shalome. Fred Rosenbaum, *Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu'El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849-1999* (Berkeley, California: Judah L. Magnes Museum, 2000).

As previously mentioned, American Jewish experience of the nineteenth century was characterized by a sense of grappling with tradition. The extent to which a congregation reformed its practices varied from congregation to congregation. Considering the social ties of Victoria's Jews to San Francisco, and the prominence of Bavarian Jewish mercantile success during the era, particularly in both San Francisco and Portland in the 1850s and 1860s, it is understandable why Victoria's early Jewish migrants—an aspiring group of entrepreneurs—would name their own synagogue after the most prestigious Jewish congregation in the Pacific Northwest, particularly if they received their own Torah scrolls from that synagogue.

Like its American neighbours further south, Congregation Emanu-el in Victoria also faced pressure to reform, albeit a couple of decades later. In 1885, a motion was brought forward to introduce music—namely in the form of an organ—into religious services. Two hundred and twenty dollars had been collected by some members of the Congregation for the express purpose of purchasing an organ. Some congregants, Frank Sylvester among them, dismissed the proposition as unorthodox. Indeed, the use of choirs and organs was quite popular in the Reform movement at that time. The matter resurfaced again in May of 1891, when a businessman by the name of Henry Emanuel Levy purchased a small organ and offered it to the Congregation. The Congregation accepted the offer, and the instrument was finally installed.

Correspondingly, 1891 is the year that the Congregation welcomed the arrival of Reverend Dr. Solomon Philo, formerly affiliated with the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. Although rifts developed between the congregants and their new rabbi, at the end of his first year in Victoria his contract was renewed for an

additional two years. After much controversy, Reverend Philo's term in Victoria came to end in 1894, and he went on to found the Reform Congregation Emanu-el of Vancouver.<sup>97</sup> During the same period, the Orthodox shul of Shearith Israel in San Francisco also moved closer to the Reform movement. In 1870 the congregation allowed families to sit together, instead of separating men and women. In June of 1890 the congregation purchased an organ, just in time for the High Holidays.<sup>98</sup> Shearith Israel officially joined the Reform Movement in 1903, thereafter known as Temple Shearith Israel.

British Columbian Jews during the mid-nineteenth century were most closely connected with American Jewish communities along the Pacific west coast, unlike Jewish communities in Montreal and Toronto during this same time period. Due to direct links to San Francisco and the experience of all of Victoria's early Jews in the US, the nature of Judaism in Victoria can only be understood in terms of the events taking place among American Jewry. The term *minhag American* has been used to describe the religious practices of Victoria's Jews, not because Victoria's Jewry ascribed to a particular form of American Judaism, but because all that they experienced religiously could be characterized by the American Jewish experience of the nineteenth century. It is this foundation in the *minhag American*, which makes early Jewish history in Victoria—and later BC—atypical in comparison to the Jewish experience in the rest of Canada during that same time period. American society clearly influenced early BC

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<sup>97</sup> e.g. Rev. Philo did not wear a *Keepah* when teaching Hebrew school, and asked the children to remove their head-coverings as well. Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, 48.

<sup>98</sup> Kahn and Eisenberg, *Western Reality: Jewish Diversity During the "German" Period*, p.456.

Jewry; British influence was also prominent in the area and it continued to grow in the years following BC's entry into Confederation. Ultimately, all Jews along the Pacific Northwest had to reconcile their religious lives with their often integrated public lives. In the case of Victoria's early Jewish settlers, including Cecelia Davies Sylvester, the question remains as to what characteristics of general society allowed Jews to become established members of a fading colonial society?

### **Prosperity, liberalism, and law**

General accounts of Canada's past often neglect BC history because British Columbia developed in different manner and at a different pace than the rest of Canada. Indeed, this distinct history provided the platform for Davies Sylvester's integration into Victoria. Established as the two separate crown colonies of Vancouver Island in 1849 and British Columbia in 1858, the two colonies were amalgamated in 1866 and joined Confederation in 1871.<sup>99</sup> The driving force behind this colonial frontier was the pursuit of economic prosperity and the maintenance of British Imperial power, or at least allegiance to the British Crown. Therefore, what truly made BC historical development unique was not a what at all, but a when.

British development of the Pacific North West in the nineteenth century occurred amidst a comparatively progressive stage of state formation.<sup>100</sup> This advanced stage of state development, implemented during the colonial period, was one of the main factors which affected the potential for rapid Jewish integration, giving BC the historical edge

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<sup>99</sup> Tina Merrill Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), p.15.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

over places like Upper and Lower Canada. Because of the colony's starting point at an advanced stage of state formation, colonial society in the Pacific North West was more entrenched in principles of liberalism and equality than past British colonialist efforts in North America had been.<sup>101</sup>

The British were keenly aware of the necessity of providing regulated systems of governance in order to ensure the sustenance and generation of revenue. From the Crown's point of view, a laissez-faire economy necessitated a "particular form of conflict resolution."<sup>102</sup> With the influx of miners from regions outside of the British dominion, it became necessary to introduce codified text-based law (as opposed to oral law, which would have been more permeable) as a way of regulating society. As James Douglas noted, creating "a great social organization, with all its civil, judicial, and military establishments in a wilderness of forests and mountains, [was] a herculean task."<sup>103</sup> The first elected legislative assembly and an appointed council were created in 1856.<sup>104</sup> Despite resistance from Governor Douglas, who at first continued to rule the colonies according to his own personal discretion, the fact that foundations for adherence to a text-based legal system had been laid, ensured that certain kinds of changes could take place swiftly.<sup>105</sup> Text-based law was a precondition not only for the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p.15. At the heart of the laissez-faire economy is the belief that all individuals are similar in the sense that everyone acts in accordance with their own self-interest. The assumption that all relationships are similarly motivated further inspires equality before the law, and text-based law systems, which in turn produce proscribed results both in terms of social and economic relationships. Ibid., p.159.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>103</sup> Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A history of British Columbia*, 76.

<sup>104</sup> In 1863 the appointed council on Vancouver Island was reconstituted as a legislative council, a separated executive council, composed of heads of government was also created in 1863 on both Vancouver Island and to a lesser extent in the Colony of British Columbia. Ibid., p.76.

<sup>105</sup> In 1859 the colonial government created the Gold Fields Act, restricting gold mining to only those miners who were in possession of gold mining licenses. The Act allowed the crown to control the miners

economic and political dominion of the colonial authorities, but also for equality before the law, and thus integration of foreign social elements.<sup>106</sup> One of the first orders of business was to establish legislation which would act to regulate immigration, commerce, and land purchasing and settlement on Vancouver Island and in British Columbia. Three statutes: the Aliens Act (1859), the Gold Fields Act (1859), and the Pre-emption Act (1859-60) were enacted for those very purposes. In regards to Jewish integration in the region, the Aliens Act will be discussed.

In 1858 alien residents of both West Coast British colonies were allowed to become naturalized British citizens, provided that they resided in the colony for at least three years and obtained a declaration of residence. However, each applicant was required to swear an oath of allegiance, ending with the phrase “and I make this declaration upon the faith of a true Christian, so help me God.”<sup>107</sup> The swearing of such oaths was not acceptable for Catholics, Quakers, and Jews, so it was impossible for members of these groups to become naturalized residents of the colonies. The same oath was used for electing public officials. A similar oath had been used to keep Samuel Hart—who was elected to the Nova Scotia legislature in 1793, and Ezekiel Hart—who was elected in 1807-1808 in Trois Rivières, Lower Canada, from taking their seats.<sup>108</sup>

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in the colony. The Act also ensured that disputes were settled in state commissioned courts rather than at local miners’ meetings (as was the case in California, Australia, and New Zealand). Loo, *Making Law, Order, and Authority in British Columbia, 1821-1871*, p.153.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p.159.

<sup>107</sup> Rome, *The first two years: a record of the Jewish pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast, 1858-1860*, p.47.

<sup>108</sup> Sheldon Godfrey and Judy Godfrey, *Search out the land* (Montréal, Québec, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995), p.240. Samuel Hart converted to Christianity in order to take his seat. Ezekiel Hart was simply ordered to withdraw from his seat in the legislative Assembly of Lower Canada.

In Victoria, the matter came to a head when Selim Franklin (b.1814) was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island in 1860. Originally from London, Selim Franklin had spent some time in San Francisco before making his way to Vancouver Island. In 1859 he served as foreman for the Grand jury of Vancouver Island and that same year he was granted the position of colonial auctioneer, a post which he owed to the fact that he was the only British licensed auctioneer in either colony.<sup>109</sup> The following year he ran for the Government Party against Amor de Cosmos, whom he defeated. When the legislative assembly opened in March of 1860, it was brought to the attention of the Speaker of the House that “Jews could not sit in the House because [although] the Acts of the Imperial Parliament [passed in 1858 in England]...enabled Jews to take the oath without the phrase objectionable to them...only those acts passed before 1852 extended to [the colonies].”<sup>110</sup>

Like the case of Ezekiel Hart, the highlighting of Selim Franklin’s Jewishness was a discriminatory manoeuvre as much as it was a political one. The opposition was driven by a desire to oust Selim Franklin from his seat and replace him with one their own. In order to avoid turning the incident into a cause célèbre, as with the cases of Lionel de Rothschild in London and Ezekiel Hart in Trois Rivières, the Legislative Assembly was immediately assigned to resolve the matter. The issue was partially resolved when Selim Franklin was permitted to take his seat within ten working days of the opening of the Assembly. The matter was completely resolved when the committee decided to revise the Aliens Act to permit the affirmation of allegiance instead of the

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<sup>109</sup> Rome, *The first two years: a record of the Jewish pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast, 1858-1860*, p.54.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

recitation of oaths in certain cases; e.g. Catholics were permitted to take the Catholic oath, as provided for in the Imperial Act, and Quakers and Jews were permitted to make a solemn declaration in lieu of an oath.<sup>111</sup> This sort of decision-making had taken previous colonies in Eastern Canada decades to resolve and in England the integration of Jews into the legislature had taken centuries.<sup>112</sup>

In British Columbia it was the implementation of a legal system, based on textual law and factual evidence and inspired by the implementation of a laissez faire economy, which facilitated the possibility of integrating people who had previously been considered alien in British society. Predictable “rule-bound” results given by the courts also created a kind of economic security and thus inspired trust and public compliance with the Crown. The resolution of disputes through a state-monitored court system, gave the state power to clearly define relationships people had with each other and with the Crown. For this reason, those parties, such as British and American Jews, who best understood the nature of a liberal economy were most able to contribute to and prosper from early colonial society in British Columbia and thus were most integrated into society regardless of race or religion. After all, the second governor of the colony, James Douglas, was the son of a mulatto mother and a British father.

Many of the early Jewish settlers in Victoria were conversant with British culture and British systems of authority. They held well-defined expectations of society and conversely understood its expectations of them. In light of this, Jews were able to integrate into the middle and higher echelons of colonial society and early provincial

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p.51.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p.51.

society. That is not to say that personal prejudices were not publicly levelled against them, particularly from the *Victoria Times-Colonist*, since the newspaper was owned by Amor de Cosmos, the political competitor of Selim Franklin. However, Victoria's Jews gave little heed to descriptions such as "the little Jews on Johnson Street"<sup>113</sup> or accusations of being opportunistic.<sup>114</sup> They continued to attend to the needs of their own community and those of the wider community, and in the process earned a place for themselves in Victorian society. In short, Victorian colonial society created a narrow space through which those who were sufficiently *acculturated* to British social norms could integrate into the overarching social structure. What prompted Jews to take the opportunity to contribute? Although we have seen that part of the answer lay in the character of Victoria's Jewish community, which was based on the *minhag American*, the remaining part lies in the nature of Jewish tradition.

### **Civic engagement**

#### ***Jewish participation in voluntary organizations***

Jews were not only tolerated as a minority in Victoria, but they were accepted as equals into the general community as business associates, members of voluntary associations and politicians. In essence, Jews displayed their cultural and religious identity while contributing to the development of Victoria's wider community. Furthermore, Jews actively joined community-wide voluntary organizations in the name of promoting the improvement of economic, social and cultural conditions of the newly

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.177.

settled colony. They became members of Masonic lodges, the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, the Vancouver Island Chamber of Commerce, the Victoria Board of Trade, volunteer fire brigades, and hospital and orphanage boards. More ambitious Jews entered into elected positions in the political arena.<sup>115</sup> Those Jews who played the more prominent public roles were inevitably well-educated, British-born Jews who qualified for full citizenship rights upon their arrival in the colony—e.g. the Franklin brothers, J.P. Davies and Henry Nathan.<sup>116</sup>

As previously discussed, it was not simply their business acumen that facilitated their integration into Victoria's society; nor was it solely the Jewish ability to understand the vicissitudes of British society, coupled with the capitalist endeavours of the colonial frontier setting of Vancouver Island. It was their moral understanding, inspired by Jewish tradition and set in an era of volunteerism and philanthropy, which provided Victoria's Jews with the impetus to contribute to the social well-being of greater society.

### ***Gmilot-khesedim and tsedaka***

Within Judaism there are two concepts that relate directly to the notion of civic engagement, namely *gmilot-khesedim* and *tsedaka*. In a broad sense *gmilot-khesedim* refers to acts of sustaining benevolence or disinterested philanthropy. More specifically, *gmilot-khesedim* may refer to the giving of loans without interest. The concept is also known simply as *khesed*, kindness. *Tsedaka*, which literally means righteousness, refers to charity or social justice. *Gmilot-khesedim* and *tsedaka* are not only *mitzvot* (positive

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<sup>115</sup> Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, p.111.

<sup>116</sup> Migrants who chose to retain their American citizenship were disqualified from holding positions of leadership. *Ibid.*, p.114.

commandments) but they are a collective responsibility. Jews are religiously obligated to dedicate ten percent of their earnings to *tsedaka*, with the option of giving up to—but not exceeding—an additional ten percent. Jewish tradition proscribes that the *tsedaka* must be made in such a way that the recipients feel no shame, ideally through anonymous donations. *Gmilot-khesedim* and *tsedaka* are considered as opportunities to fulfil religious tenets. This interpretation negates any reason to pass moral judgement on people oppressed by poverty. In this way, *gmilot-khesedim* and *tsedaka* differed greatly from Victorian philanthropy.<sup>117</sup>

In which Judaism, everyone, even those who receive charity, is obliged to give *tsedaka*.<sup>118</sup> Jews demonstrate *khesed* directly through action, not monetary donations. Furthermore, *khesed* may also be directed towards the living and the dead, where the preparation of a deceased person for burial is considered to be the highest act of loving kindness, since the possibility of reciprocity is nil.<sup>119</sup> Wherever their location, it was customary for Jews to form societies for visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, burying the dead, taking care of widows and orphans, and to provide interest-free loans to promote self-sufficiency. According to Jewish tradition the poor make it possible for the rich to perform *mitzvot* and fulfil God's work. And unlike the distribution of charity in Victorian society, *tsedaka* and *gmilot-khesedim* made no distinctions between recipients or expectations of reciprocity.

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<sup>117</sup> Susan M. Chambre, "Parallel Power Structures, Invisible Careers and the Changing nature of American Jewish Women's Philanthropy," In *Women Philanthropy and Civil Society*, ed. Susan M. Chambre (2001), p.172; Susan L. Tananbaum, "Philanthropy and Identity: Gender and Ethnicity in London," *Journal of Social History*, Summer (1997), p.937.

<sup>118</sup> Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, *Encyclopaedia Judaica, Charity*, ed. Thomson Gale, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Detroit, Mich, Macmillan Reference USA in association with the Keter Publishing House, 2007), p.570.

<sup>119</sup> Chambre, *Parallel Power Structures, Invisible Careers and the Changing nature of American Jewish Women's Philanthropy*, p.172.

### *Voluntary associations*

In Victorian Great Britain, many religiously concerned Jews became preoccupied “with ethics and moral improvement rather than the traditional pursuit of learning,”<sup>120</sup> thereby creating a sort of Victorian “civil Judaism.”<sup>121</sup> In the nineteenth-century US, an era of volunteerism and fraternal associations also prevailed. The US was a nation of “joiners.” The argument could be made that in Britain and the US, Jewish civic engagement had replaced traditional Jewish learning. The same argument could also be made in the case of Victoria’s Jewish community.

Victorian values encouraged the promotion of piety and virtue, and the establishment of societies for the less fortunate. At the same time, Victorian values punished displays of vice, profanity and immorality.<sup>122</sup> Consequently, Victorian social assistance, and by extension voluntary societies, distinguished between deserving and undeserving recipients and came with expectations of increased displays of morality from charity receivers.

Canada experienced a proliferation of voluntary societies following the rebellions of 1837 and the conclusion of the debates over the relationship between church and state.<sup>123</sup> Both of these periods of unrest inspired a social emphasis on

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<sup>120</sup> Tananbaum, *Philanthropy and Identity: Gender and ethnicity in London*, p.939.

<sup>121</sup> J. Woocher, “Civil Judaism,” *the United States* (1978) from Chambre, *Parallel Power Structures, Invisible Careers and the Changing nature of American Jewish Women’s Philanthropy*, p.182.

<sup>122</sup> Victorians were concerned with “small morals” i.e. table manners, conventions of dress, appearance, conversation, greetings, and general decencies. For Victorians one’s demeanour directly reflected the legitimacy of moral principles, even if one violated such principles one should always maintain the appearance of upholding them. Gertrude Himmelfarb, *The De-Moralization of Society* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), pp.6, 22.

<sup>123</sup> Darren Ferry, “On Common Ground: Voluntary Associations and the Construction of Community in Central Canada, 1840--1900” (Ph.D. dissertation, McMaster University, Canada), (2003), p.9.

building a cohesive and harmonious nation.<sup>124</sup> Voluntary associations enabled citizens—generally from the middle-class—to participate in the construction of community and nation, by allowing them to provide social services to the more “needy” sectors of society—especially vagrants, widows, orphans and wayward women.<sup>125</sup> In newly developing areas, including British Columbia, existing patterns of work, leisure, religiosity and family involvement had been disrupted. By responding to the erosion of existing communal interactions, voluntary associations filled a niche in Victorian society, unfulfilled by governments of the time. In this way, voluntary associations often became vehicles for the expression of middle-class social identity.<sup>126</sup>

Despite distinctions between deserving and undeserving recipients, part of the appeal of voluntary associations lay in their attempt to provide services by embracing all groups within the community.<sup>127</sup> Voluntary associations projected a community ethos which was inclusive, regardless of class and occupation. Notwithstanding the liberal ethos of the state, the ideology of voluntary organizations emphasized the inherent communal benefit of social interdependence. In so doing, voluntary organizations showed an appreciation for the harmonious whole of the community.<sup>128</sup> In keeping with the principles of social harmony, sectarian differences and party politics were often banned from discussion by association members; thus ensuring fraternal and social

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<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.8-11.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>126</sup> Other voluntary associations developed in connection to working class efforts and different ethno-cultural communities. Increased civic engagement via voluntary associations also aided to increase the impact of public opinion on social policy and to raise social participation in the democratic process. *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

concord.<sup>129</sup> Voluntary associations also often encouraged the demonstration of honesty and hard work. Finally, voluntary associations constructed and maintained a spirit of camaraderie, very often through the pursuit of leisure activities and entertainment.<sup>130</sup> At their heart, voluntary associations reflected intersecting communal values and were thus able to unite the members of the public in order to respond to the varying needs of their communities. By projecting an inclusive community ethos, efforts were made for the conscious inclusion of women into the associations themselves or into sister associations.<sup>131</sup>

***The Hebrew Ladies of Victoria: “Charity is the calling of a lady”***<sup>132</sup>

As Victoria became more established, the roles of middle-class women became centred on the private sphere, and British Columbian women conformed more with Victorian roles for women as “moral guardians.”<sup>133</sup> Due to technological advances and employ of domestic servants, middle-class women increasingly found themselves with excess leisure time. Women began to display their feminine virtues through their benevolent work via membership in voluntary associations. Feminine morality became the key for women to maintain control and power in their own lives and in the lives of others.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p.17.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., pp.12-13.

<sup>132</sup> Hannah More, *Coelebs in search of a wife: comprehending observations on domestic habits and manners, religion and morals*, 7<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1809).

<sup>133</sup> There were few legal rights in place for women in Canada in the mid nineteenth century. Women’s legal rights were subsumed by their husbands or male relatives. Women were denied access to, education, employment, and citizenship rights. Leslie Ann Jeffrey, “Women, politics and prostitution: Prostitution legislation in Canada, 1867-1913” (Ph.D. diss, Carleton University, Canada), (1992), p.111.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., pp.124-25, 134.

For the Jewish women of Victoria, the Orthodox designation of the community meant that traditional divisions separated male and female spheres. Women did not worship together with men, nor did women serve on the Board of Officers for the Congregation Emanu-el during the nineteenth century.<sup>135</sup> Jewish women were active within other spheres of the community, especially via the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society, as previously mentioned. In 1865, the Ladies were asked to organize a second ball to benefit the synagogue fund. The rabbi at the time, Reverend Cohen, suggested that a tea party would be more appropriate for an Orthodox congregation. The suggestion was rejected by the Congregation, and the second annual Hebrew Ladies Ball went through as planned. At a general meeting of the Congregation, gratitude was expressed to the organizers of the ball and specifically to “Miss Cecelia Davies”—only seventeen at the time, who later received a letter of recognition for her “indefatigable work.”<sup>136</sup>

As years went by, women’s roles within the community continued to expand. In fact, their fundraising capabilities were vital for the continued maintenance of the community, especially given the declining Jewish population in the post-Confederation years. Irrespective of its reputation, the Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society was an administrative adjunct of the men’s Jewish organizations. That changed in 1890, when the Hebrew Ladies Association of Victoria was established—with its own constitution, by-laws, and rules of order.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.28.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

Through their voluntary efforts, Jewish women helped build synagogues, religious schools, Jewish charities, and often worked behind the scenes to lay the groundwork for community-wide projects, just as Davies Sylvester did.<sup>138</sup> In Europe, Jewish tradition dictated that men engaged in Jewish learning, and that women preside over the religious sanctity of the home through the supervision of children, the preparation of kosher food, and through personal acts of *tsedaka* and *khesed* that provided social welfare and extended outward into the Jewish community.<sup>139</sup> Within Victoria's Jewish community women's roles did not alter significantly in terms of civic engagement; what changed was the integration of Jewish civic engagement within the greater society. Jewish women more than fulfilled the contemporary ideals of women as morally superior nurturers within the accepted "cult of true womanhood."<sup>140</sup>

Parallels existed between the civic engagement of Jewish and non-Jewish women, such as channelling domestic skills through voluntary efforts, the use of male expertise and business connections to further their voluntary efforts, and the expansion of voluntary efforts in proportion to gains made in women's suffrage; yet, benevolence among Jewish women was also distinctive.<sup>141</sup> Jewish tradition proscribes certain forms of civic engagement; and thus the leisure time of Jewish women was guided by Jewish values, emphasizing the importance of both monetary contributions as well as active efforts. Furthermore, due to its importance within Jewish tradition, civic engagement was seen as a way of emphasizing Jewish identity, while at the same time participating

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<sup>138</sup> Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West*, p.8.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>141</sup> Chambré, *Parallel Power Structures, Invisible Careers and the Changing nature of American Jewish Women's Philanthropy*, p.172.

in general society. Because of their adherence to the Jewish principles of *gmilot-khesedim* and *tsedaka*, Jewish women were often publicly commended, as Davies Sylvester was, for their contributions to their families and the community at large.<sup>142</sup>

### **Davies Sylvester's identity**

As a Jewess living in the Victorian era, Davies Sylvester's potential for making public contributions was dictated as much by her own personal ambition as it was by the period in which she lived. At a time when the role of women was limited to a feminine display of maternal virtues both within the private and public spheres, women's entrance into the public domain very much depended upon male connections. The avenues that Davies Sylvester chose for civic engagement were undoubtedly enhanced by the fact that her father, her husband and eldest brother were publicly respected citizens of Victoria, who were each known in their own right for their own forms of civic engagement.

### ***Judah P. Davies***

Aside from his auctioneering business, Davies Sylvester's father was involved in many social and community concerns, including those affecting Victoria's general community and the Jewish community.<sup>143</sup> J.P. Davies contributed to Victoria's community infrastructure to such an extent that he was known as one of the city's most prominent citizens.<sup>144</sup> Among other things, J.P. Davies co-founded the order of Odd

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<sup>142</sup> Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West*, p.9.

<sup>143</sup> "Sudden death of well-known citizen," AR281 Acc. No: 2005-020.

<sup>144</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.22.

Fellows and was a loyal and well-known Mason.<sup>145</sup> In 1878, J.P. Davies ran for the House of Commons as a Liberal-Conservative candidate in the Victoria riding.<sup>146</sup> As a prominent Victoria Jew, J.P. Davies was instrumental in helping to build Congregation Emanu-el (est. 1863), and held office in the congregation for many years. During a period of time, J.P. Davies headed an organization committee to establish a choir for Congregation Emanu-el.<sup>147</sup>

### ***Frank Sylvester***

Although Frank Sylvester was an avid participant in Jewish life in Victoria, i.e. he observed the High Holidays and associated with other Jewish men for business and camaraderie,<sup>148</sup> when out in the field, Frank Sylvester was far from observant. He is said to have “mixed freely” with the young men of the region, so freely in fact that on occasion he completely abandoned his religiosity. In writing about his travels, he once described the daily non-kosher meals on the road: “Our bill of fare was not much varied—for breakfast we had bacon and beans. For dinner beans and bacon and for supper a fine dish of ‘ditto’...”<sup>149</sup> Frank Sylvester’s pioneering activities on the gold trails gave him the reputation of an adventurer. However, he was equally recognized in

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.20. There were a total of twenty-one founding members of the Masonic order, six of whom were Jewish. The first order of Masons was started in 1860.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.23. He was defeated. Hart, *The Jew in Canada: A Complete Record of Canadian Jewry from the Days of the French Régime to the Present Time*, p.575.

<sup>147</sup> Apparently the choir was a point of tension among the community. J.P. Davies’ main role however, was as auctioneer. Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.22.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p.108.

<sup>149</sup> Frank Sylvester, *1.11 Historical Manuscripts -- “A trip to the Cariboo in 1864”, 1908 (24 pp., 1873-1908)*, Acc. No. 1998-071; Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.109.

Victoria's general community for his sense of entrepreneurship, his generous nature, and his commitment to community service. Frank Sylvester's propensities for community involvement led him to join many of Victoria's voluntary associations.<sup>150</sup> He was a member of the Ancient Order of United Workmen, the Ancient Order of Oriental Humility, the Olympic Baseball Club, and the Sing Verein. Like his father-in-law, Frank Sylvester was also a member of both the Masonic and Odd Fellow lodges. A capable businessman who spoke a smattering of languages, Frank Sylvester was also elected secretary and board member to the financial committee of the Tiger Company, the local fire brigade, and in his later years he held the post of secretary to the British Columbia Historical society.<sup>151</sup> Public appreciation of Frank Sylvester, both within the Jewish community, as well as within Victoria's general community certainly influenced Davies Sylvester's ability to hold a public presence in Victoria, but her reputation as respected matron of Victoria stood long after the passing of her husband in 1909.

### ***Joshua Davies***

Davies Sylvester's eldest brother, Joshua Davies, also held a prominent place in the general community. An unmarried bachelor until the end of his days, Joshua Davies took over the family auctioneering business of J.P. Davies & Co. in 1879 and managed it until his death in 1903.<sup>152</sup> A shrewd businessman, who kept a watchful eye on the books, Joshua was also recognized as a prolific auctioneer. He initiated a profitable mining industry in Nelson and the West Kootenays, where he also worked as the managing

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pp.130, 133.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p.131.

director of the Nelson City Land and Improvement Co., and the Davies-Sayward Sawmill Co. Joshua acted as the director of the Royal Hospital in Victoria for eight years, and in 1890 he acted as its president. He also presided over the Provincial Royal Jubilee Hospital. Like his father before him, Joshua was a Mason and a member of the Odd Fellows, the Pioneer Society, and the British Columbia Benevolent Society. “He was twice grand Master of the Odd fellows.”<sup>153</sup> During this time the club was the largest and the wealthiest in British Columbia. He had numerous business interests but, like his brother-in-law Frank Sylvester, he never involved himself in politics. At a time when business and politics were closely connected, this may have hurt him in the long run, since many of his business ventures eventually failed.<sup>154</sup>

Given the prominence of Davies Sylvester’s father, husband and eldest brother within Victoria, it is possible to understand why she chose the voluntary associations she did. The Hebrew Ladies Association was the auxiliary association from which women could participate in congregational affairs of Congregation Emanu-el. Since both her father and husband were active participants in the Jewish congregation, it is natural that Davies Sylvester also found her place within the Jewish community structure. Davies Sylvester worked for the pioneer French Catholic hospital of St. Joseph’s (est.1875-1929), and she occupied a position on the executive committee of the Royal Jubilee Hospital (est. 1858). Until 1890 Victorian hospitals were voluntary enterprises used as the last resort for the destitute and the homeless. No self-respecting citizen would

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<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p.32.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p.32.

subject themselves to the septic conditions of these so called “chambers of horrors,”<sup>155</sup> which were more like mortuaries than places of healing. “The middle and upper-classes patronized hospitals only as charitable subscribers.”<sup>156</sup> As such, general hospitals were seen as symbols of the civic responsibility of the rich towards the poor.<sup>157</sup> Hospital institutions, including hospital boards, were respectable places for women to display their “innate” nurturing instincts. The fact that Davies Sylvester’s brother Joshua was closely associated with the Royal Jubilee Hospital likely explains why Davies Sylvester began working there. The pioneers of St. Joseph’s hospital, the Catholic nuns of St. Ann’s, were known for their active encouragement of non-Catholics in their associations, including private schools.<sup>158</sup> Davies Sylvester’s participation in the Esquimalt Chapter Order of the Eastern Star (O.E.S.) again reflects the male influence on her role in the public sphere; the O.E.S. being open to female relatives of high ranking Masons. Of course, Davies Sylvester was not entirely dependent upon the men in her life for her chosen avenues of civic engagement, but they certainly did influence her choice of associations.

### ***Davies Sylvester’s Jewish identity***

Due to advancements in photographic technology in the later part of the Victorian era, amateur photography increased, and within Canadian society the family

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<sup>155</sup> David Gagan, *For Patients of Moderate Means: A Social History of the Voluntary Public General Hospital in Canada, 1890-1950* (Montréal, Canada: McGill University Press, 2002), p.23.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.ix.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>158</sup> Jean Barman, “The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-century British Columbia,” In *Children, teachers and schools in the history of British Columbia*, eds. Jean Barman, Neil Sutherland and J. Donald Wilson (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995), p.17.

photograph album became an important document kept by upper and middle-class women.<sup>159</sup> The subject matter of such albums was directly related to the family and family activities. These family albums chronicle social attitudes and behaviours. As we have seen, Victorian notions of morality placed emphasis on keeping up appearances; even if one's actions were not moral, one's behaviour should give the impression of morality. In this way a woman's comportment, clothing and cleanliness were socially interpreted as direct reflections of her feminine respectability.

By the mid-nineteenth century middle-class women began to employ the term "lady" in reference to themselves; a term that, over the course of the preceding century, had only referred to aristocratic women. In its adoption by the middle-class, "lady" came to represent aspirations towards virtuous conduct and appearance rather than title and pedigree.<sup>160</sup> Middle-class women also demonstrated their respectability by wearing feminine dresses—including complicated corsets and petticoats, despite the rugged environment of the frontier. In addition, younger middle-class women preferred light coloured clothing, as dark colours were frequently worn by working-class women.<sup>161</sup> Davies Sylvester's photographs reflect this middle-class status.

Davies Sylvester's photographs, taken over a range of several decades from the early pioneer days to the turn of the twentieth century, are a mixture of individual portraits, family gatherings either at home or in the wilderness, and men at work in business (see Appendix B). There is nothing evidently "Jewish" about these

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<sup>159</sup> Alan Thomas, *The expanding eye: photography and the nineteenth-century mind* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p.49, 57.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, p.63.

photographs. The women are dressed in fine clothes, and looking their best in the rugged setting of Vancouver Island. The photographic settings indicate that family enjoyed both nature and urban life. There are many single portraits of both men and women. In short, the album looks like that of a typical middle-class Victorian family.

Davies Sylvester also kept scrap books, where she collected ephemera of all kinds—from newspaper clippings, to invitations, to school report cards. It seems that Davies Sylvester was very proud of her family, since she saved every newspaper article that was ever written about her parents, siblings, husband, and children, whether they played a central role in the article or they were mentioned only briefly.<sup>162</sup> Davies Sylvester also kept articles pertaining to Jewish culture in general and to Jews in both Victoria and Vancouver, she cut out articles relating to all things Jewish, particularly memorial announcements.<sup>163</sup> She saved wedding announcements of non-Jewish Friends in Victoria. She was fond of the monarchy, and kept announcements marking Victoria Day and visits from the governor general. Davies Sylvester was involved with the general community to such an extent that she received and saved Christmas cards from non-Jewish friends and family. However, there is no indication that the family celebrated Christmas in any way, and in his diary Frank Sylvester recalls that the first time he received a Christmas gift was after he settled permanently in Victoria.<sup>164</sup>

Blau's *deductive macrosociological theory* contends that despite numerous social affiliations, people find friends (and life partners) in accordance with their strongest in-

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<sup>162</sup> Davies Sylvester, Cecelia series 2, *Acc. No. 2001-006*, (1854-1928), Box 1.17-18.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*; Sylvester, *1.11 Historical Manuscripts -- "A trip to the Cariboo in 1864"*, 1908 (24 pp.), *Acc. No. 1998-071*.

group preferences.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, an individual's primary identity is determined by these affiliations. But what was Cecelia Davies Sylvester's primary identity? It is difficult to determine her primary identity solely based on the information contained within her photos and scrapbook. Indeed, the contents attest to her various group affiliations. Like other Victorian women, she valued family life and communal contributions. Within her scrap book, Davies Sylvester placed emphasis on both Jewish and non-Jewish associations, but no one group stands out.

It is necessary to take into account other aspects of her life in order to discern her primary identity. Although the impact of Davies Sylvester's involvement in the wider community cannot be denied, this chapter has established that Davies Sylvester married a Jew, kept a Jewish home, observed Jewish holidays and rituals, and linked herself to the Jewish community through friendship networks, involvement in the synagogue and the Hebrew Ladies Association. All of these factors indicate that her primary group identity was Jewish and place her, at least partially, within Barkan's *adaptation* phase. The actions of her husband also seem to support this notion.

Frank Sylvester is often lauded as a typical Jewish pioneer, and it seems he was also a God fearing one. On December 31, 1866 Frank Sylvester wrote "I thank God I have been permitted till the present to live in health and happiness and trust that He will, in His infinite mercy decree that I may be permitted to continue in health and happiness."<sup>166</sup> Sylvester's belief in God was likely an extension of his attachment to Orthodoxy. As mentioned earlier, he led the opposition committee against the

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<sup>165</sup> Blau, Beeker, and Fitzpatrick, "Intersecting Social Affiliations and Inter-marriage," pp.585-606.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p.128.

installation of an organ in Congregation Emanu-el, a practice associated with Reform congregations. However, his loyalty to tradition is perhaps surprising in light of his leniency towards his own Jewish practices. There can be no doubt that Sylvester was loyal to Jewish tradition and his own primary identity was that of a Jew. Like his wife, Frank Sylvester was also integrated into non-Jewish sectors of Victoria.<sup>167</sup>

Davies Sylvester's Jewish identity was the product of the social environment of the colonial frontier and early provincial life in British Columbia. This chapter has illustrated how she, along with many of her fellow Jews were able to integrate through a variety of modes into early BC society. During the mid-nineteenth century, both Jewish and colonial histories of British Columbia converged to allow for a relatively high level of Jewish integration. The foundations for Jewish integration in the future province were laid during the colonial times of the gold rush era, a period which occurred during a relatively advanced stage of state formation compared to elsewhere in North America. This advanced stage of state development affected the possibility of Jewish integration in the sense that when obstacles arose, they were eradicated at a much faster pace than in other regions in previous eras, including Lower and Upper Canada in the late-eighteenth and the early-nineteenth-century. Therefore, the advanced stage of state development in

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<sup>167</sup> In 1866 Frank Sylvester received his first Christmas present, from a fellow Jew! The event was significant enough to note in his journal. "On Christmas I received a nice silver match box from Hoffman with the letters F.S. cut on the front. This is the first present I have ever received at Christmas." Ibid., p.128. That same year Sylvester attended his first mass on Christmas Eve. The services apparently were not to his liking, although he seemed to have enjoyed the singing in Latin. December 24, 1866 "I went to High Mass at Church till one. Large numbers were present. The singing was very nice. There was a ceremony of Latin prayers rendered by three priests in yellow coats. The ceremony, to my eyes is very ridiculous looking...The Priests also distribute Holy Wafers which are eagerly sought after by devout Catholics." Ibid., p.127. Such associations were atypical for traditional Jews in Eastern Europe. The fact that Frank Sylvester so willingly associated with the non-Jewish sectors of Victoria society and that they too so willingly included him, reflects the symbiotic relationship that existed between the two groups.

British Columbia created a more liberal atmosphere within which Jews could quickly integrate. This in turn, provided early BC Jewry with a rather atypical character.

The possibility for Jewish integration was strengthened by the fact that Jewish migrants to British Columbia were imbued with British and/or American cultural norms and understood the social and economic expectations of a burgeoning liberal society. Upon arriving in Victoria, Vancouver Island's first Jewish settlers formed a relatively small community, composed almost exclusively of merchants. Ultimately, early Jewish residents in BC were both culturally and professionally equipped to deal with a British colonial frontier society and were thus able to enter general society with relative ease. Not only did the talents and occupations of the early Jewish settlers suit the burgeoning colonial frontier society, but in some instances they were desperately needed.

In addition, the early Jewish settlers to British Columbia were steeped in a Jewish culture that was characterized by the *minhag American*, which sought to harmonize Jewish life with American life. Heavily influenced by socio-religious trends taking place in the United States, Victoria's colonial and early provincial Jewish community is best described as a Jewish community with traditional tendencies. For the most part, early Jewish settlers were flexibly observant Jews—like Frank Sylvester—who fought to maintain affiliations with traditional Judaism in their institutions. Although they may have aspired towards tradition, it was always viewed in tandem with the necessities of living in a colonial frontier society. This characteristic lent itself well to the potential of crossing Jewish and non-Jewish boundaries. In relation to elsewhere in Canada, BC Jewry had an atypical communal foundation in comparison to existing

communities in Eastern Canada, simply by virtue of its geographical location and the period of when it was founded.

It has been said that the essence of Jewishness is comprised of three characteristics: compassion, modesty and charity; and that Jewish existence is dependent upon the study of law, performance of rituals, and the practice of charity.<sup>168</sup> It was the value of charity that Victoria's Jews emphasized. Inspired by notions of *tsedaka* and *gmilot-khesedim* and the social necessities of Victorian society, Jews contributed first to their own communal infrastructure and then to the social infrastructure of general society. Civic engagement was the main avenue through which Jews integrated into Victoria, either through politics or voluntary associations. This held true for both men and women.

At first glance, one might think that Davies Sylvester was, as Leonoff has claimed, a "liberated woman,"<sup>169</sup> maybe even an uncharacteristic Jew for her time. But was she really? Jewish values placed women in the home, caring for their family and their community. These values complimented Victorian expectations of women—instillers of social morality and virtue. Cecelia Davies Sylvester's integration was a product of historical circumstances, rather than of personal desire to step beyond Jewish and Victorian expectations. In comparison to some of the other "normal exceptions" in this study, Davies Sylvester was perhaps a more normal rather than exceptional conjunctural agent. Other influential Jews—although not necessarily the majority of the

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<sup>168</sup> Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind*, (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977), p.8.

<sup>169</sup>Historian Cyril Leonoff described Davies Sylvester as a "liberated woman" for her day. Cyril Edel Leonoff, "The Sylvesters of British Columbia," *The Scribe* no. 4, March (5740/1980).

Jewish population—in Victoria during this era integrated in a similar way and to a similar degree, helping determine the overall character of Victoria’s Jewish community.

Although her contributions were somewhat typical of other Jewish and non-Jewish women in Victoria and although Davies Sylvester may not have been a particularly “liberated” woman for her day, her actions demonstrate a convergence of different historical narratives. The margin of cultural openness that existed in the general society and amongst West Coast Jews, combined with the shared need to establish a viable society, ensured that a symbiotic relationship existed between Jewish and non-Jewish sectors of society. If that margin had been closed either among Jews or their Victorian neighbours, the need for co-operation along with that symbiosis would have disappeared.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The integration of Cecelia Davies Sylvester and Frank Sylvester into greater Victoria society had an impact on the primary group identity of their children, if inter-marriage is used as an indicator. Of the eight children, it is known that only two married Jews: Elizabeth Eula married Morris Menkus and May Violet married Abe Ellis. While Louise Marion and Clarence Bertram (aka “Toots”) remained single, the remaining children married non-Jews: Rachel Valentine who married Lorne Campbell, Rebecca Florence who married Lawrence F. McCrae, William Benjamin who married Emily Elizabeth Brooker (aka “Daisy”) and Jesse Percival who married Katherine Sangster.<sup>170</sup> Although their parents remained strongly attached to the Jewish community, the fact that

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p.59.

the Sylvesters mixed freely with the non-Jewish sector of Victoria society influenced their children to take integration a step further.

By the third generation of the Davies Sylvester line, it is difficult to ascertain whether the Sylvesters had many Jewish descendants. It seems that of those who stayed in British Columbia, none remained Jewish. It is known that Jewish descendants came from the Menkus line and resided in the US. However, the fate of the other lineages remains unknown.<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> This outcome was predicted by the chief Rabbi of England when he expressed his fears about Jews migrating to isolated communities: However religiously you may have been brought up...separated as you are from your brethren in faith, surrounded by manifold temptations, and engrossed by the pursuit of wealth and riches, you or your children may in the course of time become indifferent to the duties incumbent upon every true Israelite, and at the end be wholly estranged from the Lord [and religion of your forefathers]. C.E.V Add. MSS. 59, vol. 3, Minute Book, p.16 Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, p.123.

## CHAPTER 3 HANNAH DIRECTOR: PIONEERING JEWESS OF PRINCE GEORGE, CHAIRMAN OF THE SCHOOL BOARD

WWI AND INTER-WORLD WAR ERA  
Prince Rupert, Prince George, Vancouver, British Columbia

### Introduction

Social historian Lois Dobin once noted “Jews in cities and Jews with money are subjects with long pedigrees.”<sup>1</sup> In this chapter the discussion will move away from late-nineteenth-century Victoria to focus on the pioneering efforts of Hannah Director in BC’s northern interior. In 1918, Director was elected chairman of the school board in Prince George. Not only was she the first woman to be elected as a trustee and become chairman of the school board in Prince George, but she also became the first Jewess elected to public office in Canada.<sup>2</sup> This was a significant achievement. In the early decades before World War Two (WWII), only a few Jewish Canadian women were

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<sup>1</sup> Lois C. Dubin, “Researching Port Jews and Port Jewries: Triest and Beyond,” in *Port Jews: Jewish Communities in Cosmopolitan Maritime Trading Centres, 1550-1950*, ed. David Cesarani. (London; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), p.47.

<sup>2</sup> Naomi Pellin, “The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple,” *The Jewish Western Bulletin*, Friday March 2, 1956, sec. Personalities of the month, p.8; Wendy De Marsh, *School District No. 57 (Prince George): List of School Board members*, (Prince George, BC:, 2008), 1-2; Wendy De Marsh, *Prince George Mayors and Councils since 1915*, (Office of the Mayor, Prince George, BC: College of New Caledonia, April 21, 1989), pp.1-2; F. E. Runnalls, “List of Mayors, Aldermen and Board members,” in *A History of Prince George* (Prince George, BC: 1946), pp.177-187; Correspondence with Zanda Golbeck, *Prince George School Board*, (Prince George, BC:, Autumn 2008); City of Prince George, “Public Notice,” *The Prince George Citizen* Tuesday October 8 and Friday October 11, 1918, sec. Announcements, p.5. Although Director was the first Jewess elected to public office in Canada and British Columbia, she was not the first Jew to be elected to public office. That honour fell to Henry Nathan, who in 1871 was elected one of six BC representatives to sit in the Canadian parliament. Nathan became the first Jew to sit in the House of Commons. Schober Barbara, “Nathan, Henry,” *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 15, (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA: 2007).

elected to school boards.<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere in Canada, Jews were either unable or simply did not attain such levels of school board involvement until much later.<sup>4</sup>

This discussion will explore Director's family background, Jews in northern BC, the rural realities for Jews in BC, BC's educational system tied in with *religious exceptionalism*, and women's rights. In order to situate Director's urban frontier experience, this chapter will also include a brief discussion of the rural experience of Canadian Jews elsewhere in Canada, particularly those in Jewish agriculturalist colonies in the West. By virtue of Director's election to the school board, it is clear that she was able to integrate into the public sphere of rural society. How her integration took place is another question. Director's integration may be explained by addressing issues such as her family background, characteristics of BC society, and her own ability to balance her Jewishness with her involvement in general society. Let us begin by introducing Director, a woman who "always kept an eye on the common good and also helped to initiate many a cultural project, whether ... in the name of Protestant, Catholic or Jew."<sup>5</sup>

### **Early family life in Montréal, Sault Ste. Marie, Omaha, and Winnipeg**

Director was a first-generation-born Canadian and the eldest child of Solomon (1862-1929) and Kate Diamond (b. 1861). She was born April 11, 1886, in Montréal.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>In Manitoba, in 1920-1921, Rose Alcin was elected a school trustee in Winnipeg and so was Mrs. S. Hart Green in 1931-1932. Janice Rosen, *Canadian Jewish Congress*, Letter to Cyril Edel Leonoff, (Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress, September 17, 1996) CEL Collection, Jewish Museum and Archives.

<sup>4</sup>For example in Québec, the only legal public school option available to Jews was the Protestant schools; Jewish participation in local Protestant school boards was restricted until the early 1960s. Elsewhere in Canada Jewish participation in public schooling was negligible. The exploration for the reasons behind the lack of involvement of Jews in other provinces is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>5</sup>Pellin, "The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple," p.8.

<sup>6</sup>There is a discrepancy between Hannah Director's birth date as listed in the 1901 census and the Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, 1911; District Number:28; Sub district Saint-Louis; City: Montréal, Quebec; District Number 27; Sub district: Atlin; City: Prince Rupert, British Columbia; In 1901 Director

Kate Diamond originated from Yalta, a northern coastal town on the Black Sea in the Crimea, in the Ukraine.<sup>7</sup> Although Solomon Diamond was raised in Odessa, his mother circumvented his future military duty in the Tsar's army by giving birth to him in Istanbul, Anatolia in Ottoman territory.<sup>8</sup> Solomon Diamond immigrated to Canada in 1881, and his wife followed a year later.<sup>9</sup> They would go on to have eight children.<sup>10</sup>

At the turn of the century the Diamond family lived in the Jewish quarter on St. Laurent Boulevard or the "Main" as Montréal's immigrant Jewish district was known. During the mid-nineteenth century, the district had been occupied by many Jewish immigrants of German origin from Britain and the US.<sup>11</sup> In the decades that followed, as the original Jewish inhabitants became more financially established and moved uptown to Montréal's west-end neighbourhoods, the district became home to recently-arrived and less *acculturated* Eastern European Jews, like the Diamonds. Like many "greenhorns," as the East European Jews were called, Solomon Diamond found work in

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is listed as being born in 1885, while in 1911 she is listed as being born in 1886. At this point these are the only sources available to confirm Director's birthdate.

<sup>7</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh Interview* (Vancouver, BC: The Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia Oral History Project, July 15, 1977), 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883: 69. In 1882, a decree was made which forbade Jews from living in this agricultural area.

<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, *1901 Census of Canada*, 1901; District Number:177; Subdistrict: Saint-Laurent, Sub district Number:a-10; City: Montréal, Quebec), 5-Archives Microfilm:T-6535; Memorial River Gardens Cemetery, Montréal; Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh Interview*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69. Through many decrees and promulgations, Jews in Imperial Russia were reduced to third class status. By 1827 the Government had introduced compulsory military service for Russian Jews. Those who were recruited were often children when they began their service, and remained in the army for 25 years. Military service was used as a way of converting Jews to Christianity. Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada (1840-1940)* (Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress and the Jewish Colonization Association, 1966), p.17.

<sup>9</sup> Statistics Canada, *1901 Census of Canada*, 5-Archives Microfilm: T-6535. Hannah Director's Photograph album also shows a photograph of Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh Interview*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69. Hannah Director, her mother Kate Diamond, and a woman described as Great Grandmother. She is presumably Solomon Diamond's mother. However it has not been confirmed whether actually she resided in Canada. It is not known how many members of Hannah Director's extended family also emigrated from Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

<sup>10</sup> Rebecca (b.1888), Cecelia (b. 1890), Leah (b. 1891), Jacob A. (b. 1882), Zachariah J. (b. 1894), Hilda R. (b. 1898), and Ruth Grace (b. 1899). Statistics Canada, *1901 Census of Canada*, 5-Archives Microfilm: T-6535.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

the port where he first docked and he supported his family by working as a mess agent.<sup>12</sup> Censuses from this period list the family as being of the “Russian Jewish” race, as practicing the Hebrew religion, and as being Canadian nationals. The censuses also noted that the Diamond family spoke French and English, as well as German and Yiddish.<sup>13</sup> The fact that the Diamonds lived in the Jewish quarter, spoke their mother tongue, and had limited interaction with general society initially situates them in Barkan’s *contact* phase.

However, the family appears to have transitioned towards the *acculturation* phase as evidenced by the education of their children and the length of their residency in Montréal. Public education played an important role in the lives of the Diamond children, who attended public school ten months of the year once they reached the appropriate age.<sup>14</sup> In fact, according to Director’s daughter, Rosalie Gorosh, Director had a knack for studying and she was among the top tier of her graduating high school class. Gorosh also noted that Director was presented with a scholarly medal upon graduation, but instead of receiving silver, as she was supposed to, Director received a bronze medal when school officials decided top medals should not be awarded to Jewish

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<sup>12</sup> Statistics Canada, *1901 Census of Canada*, 5-Archives Microfilm:T-6535.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. It is unlikely that the word German was a synonym for Yiddish, since the 1911 census shows that Director spoke Yiddish as well as German. Ibid. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates: A Review of Jewish Immigration, Colonization and Immigrant Aid Work in Canada (1840-1940)*, pp.12, 14. During the final decades of the eighteenth-century more than 200,000 Jews came under the control of the Russian Empire. During this same period the Austrian Hungarian Empire received nearly 175,000 Galician Jews and 100,000 Jews from the Polish provinces of Silesia, and Posen joined Prussia. By the first decades of the nineteenth century, many of the Belarusian Jews migrated to the southern parts of the Russian Empire. Some of these Jews even established agricultural settlements there. This explains why Russian Jews from Yalta and Odessa could have spoken German.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

students.<sup>15</sup> As David Rome noted, this sort of educational prejudice against Jews in Montréal was common at the time.<sup>16</sup>

Shortly after graduating from high school, Hannah Diamond met her future husband, Isidor Director (b. 1875), a newly arrived Jewish immigrant from Prussia.<sup>17</sup> Isidor Director originated from Szillen, in East Prussia, but fled the region at the age of seventeen. Isidor Director's father died while he was still a small child and his mother died when he turned thirteen.<sup>18</sup> In order to support himself in Prussia, the orphaned Isidor Director apprenticed as a merchant. One day, while working in the shop, a German officer made a disparaging remark about Jews. Isidor Director "took a swipe" at the officer, and rather than suffer the consequences for such a bold reaction by a Jew, he collected all of his savings and with the assistance of friends and extended family he left Europe for good.<sup>19</sup>

Isidor Director arrived in North America in 1892. He first lived in Michigan, where he found employment in the mining industry,<sup>20</sup> and then he officially migrated to Canada in 1901.<sup>21</sup> It is unclear where he lived between 1901 and 1905, but in all likelihood he spent some time in Montréal, either before and/or after he moved to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario.<sup>22</sup> By 1905, the couple had married and were living in Sault Ste.

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<sup>15</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

<sup>16</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69. See David Rome, *On the Jewish School Question in Montréal, 1903-1931*, (Montréal: National Archives, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1975), pp.5, 136.

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, p.6.

<sup>18</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Sarah H. Tobe, "Mrs. Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975," In *Pioneer Jews of British Columbia*, ed. Cyril Edel Leonoff (Calabasas, CA: Western States Jewish History, 2005), p.221.

<sup>21</sup> Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, p.6.

<sup>22</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

Marie where Isidor Director had opened up a small clothing shop.<sup>23</sup> Director was soon expecting their first child.<sup>24</sup> Lack of economic opportunity pushed the Directors out of the Sault and across the border. They made their way across the American mid-west and settled in Omaha, Nebraska. Like so many Jewish migrants in search of prosperity, social connections in combination with potential financial success were the key motivators in the choice of residential re-location. The Directors likely chose Omaha due to the fact that they had cousins there.<sup>25</sup> Once again, Isidor Director supported his small family by working as a retail merchant. The Directors' first born son died in Omaha and by 1907 the couple moved back to Canada, this time to Winnipeg where Hannah Director had more relatives.<sup>26</sup> There she gave birth to her second child, daughter Rosalie. In Winnipeg, Isidor Director renewed a relationship with an acquaintance from Montréal, a young man by the name of Maurice Cohen, originally from South Africa.<sup>27</sup> Together they formed a business partnership and sold small necessities to the labourers along the railway.

### **The Directors in Northern BC**

In 1908 Maurice Cohen and Isidor Director walked from Winnipeg to the port town of Prince Rupert, before the town was incorporated.<sup>28</sup> They walked an average of

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Rose Cohen*, ed. PABC Tape Number: 3883:63 (Vancouver: Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, 1976), 197-76:18.

<sup>28</sup> The town-site of Prince Rupert was cleared in 1906 and by 1909 the town-site was officially surveyed. Thomas Thorner, *Sa ts'e: Historical Perspectives on Northern British Columbia* (Prince George, BC: College of New Caledonia Press, 1989), p.310. The port of Prince Rupert was officially founded by Charles Melville Hays, President of the GTP in 1906. He envisioned it as the line's western-most terminus. Although Prince Rupert had no more than seven hundred and thirty two inhabitants, the site was chosen since it was nine hundred and sixty kilometers closer to Asia than Vancouver, and thus considered

nineteen miles per day, sleeping by the tracks at night, and selling their wares to rail workers during the day.<sup>29</sup> The two men were among the thousands of migrants enticed to northern British Columbia by the arrival of Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP)<sup>30</sup> and boosterism in the region.<sup>31</sup> Other Jews also migrated to the area and by 1911 Jews in Prince Rupert formed 0.70 percent of the town's population, a percentage which matched that of Vancouver and which was higher than in Victoria during the same period (see Appendix J).<sup>32</sup>

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, boosters in Prince Rupert, like those in many other frontier towns, successfully marketed their town's urban and economic potential. They pushed for the expansion of public works, services, institutions and economic development,<sup>33</sup> thus ensuring that civic society and business overlapped.<sup>34</sup> By 1921 it became clear that the expected economic boom in the area would not develop as quickly as anticipated, and Prince Rupert's Jewish population

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an economic gateway to the Orient. In addition, Hays expected that large passenger ships, like the Titanic, would dock at the port and create a tourist industry for the region.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Although the Prairies underwent rapid rail development in the late part of the nineteenth century, the rail-lines throughout Northwestern Canada were not built until the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1903 the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway (GTP), a subsidiary of the Grand Trunk Railway (GTR), was established to link Winnipeg to northern British Columbia.

<sup>31</sup> Boosterism refers to a way of promoting a town, city or municipality, with the intention of improving public perception of it. Boosterism was employed by the early founders of Prince Rupert and Prince George, who made extravagant claims about the future prosperity of the region in hopes of attracting more residents to the region. The term was initially applied to the promotion of the urban frontier setting in the Canadian Prairies in the late nineteenth century. F. J. Artibise, "In pursuit of growth: Municipal Boosterism and Urban Development in the Canadian Prairie West, 1871-1913," In *Shaping the Urban Landscape: Aspects of the Canadian City Building Process*, eds. Gilbert A. Stelter and Alan F. J. Alan Artibise (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1982), p.436.

<sup>32</sup> Statistics Canada. *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1.

<sup>33</sup> John Douglas Belshaw, "Rurality Check: Demographic Boundaries on British Columbia's Frontiers," In *Beyond the city limits: rural history in British Columbia*, ed. R. W. Sandwell (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), p.195. Theodore D. Renquist, *Contextualizing Consolidation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1995), p.12.

<sup>34</sup> Even when the initial prosperity of the railway ended with the onset of the First World War (WWI) in 1914, boosterism continued to attract residents to Northern BC through the promise of progress. Renquist, *Contextualizing Consolidation*, pp.6, 12.

declined significantly, accounting for 0.2 percent of the town's total population<sup>35</sup> (while Jews Prince George accounted for 1.0 percent of the population during the same year).<sup>36</sup>

When Maurice Cohen and Isidor Director arrived in Prince Rupert, they opened the town's first Jewish business. They specialized in general merchandise, men's suits and clothing.<sup>37</sup> Isidor Director was joined by his wife and daughter in 1909. That spring Director gave birth to her second daughter, Zelna.<sup>38</sup> Like other residents, the family settled as squatters until 1910, at which point the town was incorporated and residents were required to buy real-estate.<sup>39</sup> Two years later, on a trip east to Chicago to see relatives, Director gave birth to the youngest Director child, Stanley Norman.<sup>40</sup>

## **Rural Jewish settlement in the West**

### ***Rural settlement on the Prairies***

The Directors' decision to settle in the semi-rural environs of northern BC was not unique in the context of rural Jewish settlement in Western Canada. Indeed, ever since the beginning of the exodus of Eastern European Jews from Tsarist Russia, there had been Jewish settlements in Canada's rural west, mostly in Saskatchewan for farming

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<sup>35</sup> The general population continued to increase from 4,184 in 1911 to 6,393 in 1921.

<sup>36</sup> Louis Rosenberg, *Gazetteer of Jewish communities in Canada, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics: A showing the Jewish Population in each of the Cities, Towns and Villages in Canada in the Census Years, 1851-1951*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), (Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1957), Table 1 and 2. The Directors left Prince George of July 1918 to return to Prince Rupert. "Local and Personal," *The Prince George Citizen*, Tuesday 17 September 1918, no.44, sec. Classified Wants, p.6.

<sup>37</sup> Isidor Director's pioneer spirit would later inspire him to walk from Prince Rupert to Prince George, just "to see the country." Pellin, "The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple," p.8; Tobe, *Mrs. Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.216. Later they would open a second store called Cohen, Director and Co. on 2nd or 3rd Avenue in Prince Rupert. This partnership would eventually dissolve and I. Director continued a clothing and jewellery business alone. Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>38</sup> The census of 1911 lists her as being born Galina. Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, p.6.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* Jewish Western Bulletin Director's obituary lists her sister Hilda Armin and Zack Diamond as both having lived in Chicago at the time of Hannah Director's death. Rosalie Gorosh reported visiting an aunt in Chicago as a child. Perhaps, Director had other relatives there as well. Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

purposes. The Jewish emigration from Russia, which began in the early 1880s, coincided with the opening up of western Canada by rail and the federal government's desire to populate the Prairies. Canada's need for settlers attracted the attention of parties, such as England's Hermann Landau and the Russo-Jewish Committee (RJC)—for whom the settlement opportunity was equated with alleviation of the inundation of Russian Jewish refugees in England. Hermann Landau was a prominent Anglo Jewish financier and champion of the rights of foreign-born Jews. Landau proposed a broad colonization scheme in response to the continuous stream of East European Jews arriving in London.<sup>41</sup> The Canadian West seemed to provide the ideal location.<sup>42</sup>

In 1882 the Canadian High Commissioner in London, Sir Alexander Tilloch Galt, attended one of the early meetings of the newly formed RJC. Galt's reason for attending the meeting stemmed primarily from a desire to raise investment capital from wealthy Jewish financiers, such as the Rothschilds, who in turn were interested in settlement schemes for Eastern European Jewish immigrants. To this end Galt became an active trustee of the RJC. Although the federal government made it clear that it preferred emigrants from Britain and Western Europe, Galt succeeded in persuading Prime Minister Macdonald to accept a number of Russian Jewish refugees.<sup>43</sup> Two years passed before the refugees in the Galt scheme were set up with their own farm colony, twenty five miles south west of Moosomin, in present-day Saskatchewan. The colony became known as New Jerusalem; only twenty seven families settled there.<sup>44</sup> New Jerusalem was plagued with problems from the outset. By 1890 the colony was

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>43</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1978), p.3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p.3.

disbanded, tainting the prospect of Jewish colonization in Canada with an unfavourable reputation.<sup>45</sup>

Between 1886 and 1892, some thirty Jewish families, unaided by government or philanthropic organizations, settled in Wapella as small subsistence farmers. The colony was established 228 miles west of Winnipeg and only forty miles northeast of New Jerusalem.<sup>46</sup> Although the initial colonists were mainly unskilled labourers and peddlers, the colony lasted for over half a century and became a training ground for many young Jewish farmers. The religious needs of the colony were fulfilled by a farmer-rabbi, a farmer-*shokhet*, and a small Jewish cemetery.<sup>47</sup> A 1908 report on Jewish farmers in Western Canada lauded Wapella as the most prosperous Jewish colony in the country and it stimulated further Jewish colonization.<sup>48</sup>

Other attempts were made to establish Jewish colonies. Baron Maurice de Hirsch was also firmly convinced that the future of Jews lay in agricultural rather than Zionist aspirations. To this end, Baron de Hirsch established the Jewish Colonization Association (ICA) in 1891 with the aim of rehabilitating Jewish refugees from Tsarist Europe in agricultural colonies in South and North America. The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society of Montréal acted on behalf of the ICA and established the colony of Hirsch, nineteen miles east of Estevan Saskatchewan.<sup>49</sup> One hundred and fifty colonists were selected from a group of Russian Jewish refugees in Montréal and sent to the colony in order to cultivate the 12,160 acres of land. The colony organized schools,

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>47</sup> The farmer-rabbi was Edel Brotman, grandfather of historian Cyril Leonoff. Cyril E. Leonoff, "Early Jewish Agricultural Colonization in Saskatchewan," *British Columbia and the Western States of the Jewish History Association*, Spring (1984), p.11.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>49</sup> Henceforth, Hirsch concentrated on founding colonies in Argentina rather than Canada. Ibid., p.5.

synagogues and a cemetery and lasted for over fifty years.<sup>50</sup> The Hirsch colony was to be the only colony administered and established directly by the ICA in Canada.

Other Jewish colonies in the west included the colonies of Bender Hamlet, Narcisse, Camper or New Hirsch, Birds Hill, Kildonan, Rosser and Transcona, and Prosser in Manitoba. The colonies of Qu'Appelle (later Lipton-Cupar), Hoffer-Sonnenfeld and Edenbridge were located in Saskatchewan. Montefiore, Alsask as well as the colonies near the villages of Rumsey and Trochu were located in Alberta. In 1921 Canada's Jewish farming population reached its peak of 2,568 farmers with sixty nine percent of farmers living west of Ontario. In 1931 there were 2,188 Jewish farmers, the majority of whom resided in Saskatchewan, where one out of every six employed Jews was a farmer.<sup>51</sup> The colonies began to suffer during the drought and Great Depression. Nevertheless, most of these colonies would remain Jewish until the WWII era at which point several significant changes occurred. The farm youth were drawn off the farms to serve in the armed forces and to work in the factories; wide-scale farm mechanization was implemented, and Jewish colonies were no longer replenished by Jewish immigrants, whose numbers had been greatly reduced due to immigration restrictions beginning in the 1930s.<sup>52</sup>

### ***Rural settlement in British Columbia***

Agriculture had never been a major industry in British Columbia and in contrast with Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba agriculture did not play a significant role in determining Jewish settlement in rural BC. As the development of the fruit co-ops in the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp.6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p.13.

southern Okanagan progressed, the ICA contemplated starting a large colony of fruit growers in BC. In 1911 four thousand acres of land was purchased in the Kootenay region of the province just north of Cranbrook. However, the land was found to be unsuitable for cultivation and the project never gained substantial popularity. It was abandoned in 1929.<sup>53</sup>

Despite the lack of organized agricultural colonization effort, individual Jews did occasionally take-up homesteading, ranching and farming in BC. One of the earliest examples was in fact Cecelia Davies Sylvester's son, William Benjamin Sylvester, who owned the Gap Ranch at Shawnigan Lake. He was able to supply the Sylvester Feed Company in Victoria established by two of his brothers. From 1900 until 1910 Jacob Wasserman, a former pioneer from Wapella and Oxbow, established a fruit farm in Naramata in the Okanagan. The family of Philip and Lottie Adelberg also became pioneer homesteaders in Peace River region of BC, and as will be discussed later, they were perhaps were most similar to the Directors.<sup>54</sup>

Jewish BC pioneers differed from their Jewish Prairie colonist counterparts in several ways. Unlike the Jewish Prairie colonists, not all Jewish pioneers in BC were involved in agricultural production. Their activities varied and included everything from farming and homesteading to small-scale merchandizing on the frontier. In some ways, their experiences are more comparable to the experiences of Jewish peddlers who made their living in small towns scattered across the Prairies. Both colonists and BC pioneers ventured off into the Great Canadian unknown. However, unlike the Jewish Prairie colonists, Jews who settled in BC may or may not have had contact with other Jews—

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.11.

thereby, restricting the extent of *acculturation* and *adaptation* that could occur in rural BC, and by default encouraging *integration*. The Jews that settled in areas of rural BC were of diverse origins and unlike their Prairie counterparts the majority of them did not share Eastern European backgrounds, nor did they pass through England. Like most rural settlers in the province, Jews came mainly in hopes of benefitting from the expected economic prosperity of burgeoning frontier centres.

The decision to settle in the promising but remote areas of northern British Columbia was the choice of a select few. The days of the Gold Rush had long since passed, and most Jews, like other settlers to the area, came to urban frontier towns, like Prince George and Prince Rupert, because of the promise of progress and development. Like their predecessors in the nineteenth century, the Jewish settlers of the early twentieth century, who made their way to BC's northern outposts, were adventurous and relatively individualistic. By living so far away from established Jewish centres, broadly speaking these Jewish migrants demonstrated a willingness to *integrate* into the wider society. The pioneer Jews came to northern BC from the Prairies, Eastern Canada, the US and even England. They became furriers, they entered the mining industry, and they opened small businesses, and helped to lay the foundations of burgeoning frontier communities.

### **Jews in Northern BC**

As members of the merchant-class, Jewish residents of Prince Rupert were in a position to contribute to the establishment of institutions of the general community. They did this by raising money to furnish Prince Rupert's much needed General Hospital. Jewish women also worked on the Hospital Auxiliary and contributed to the

overall cultural life of the town.<sup>55</sup> The Directors participated in public life in similar ways. Aside from his retail businesses, Isidor Director acted as the director of the General Hospital in Prince Rupert and he presided over the Fraternal Order of Eagles (FOE).<sup>56</sup> Hannah Director enjoyed participating in amateur dramatic productions, and her musical talents led her to join the Prince Rupert Orchestra (she sang, played the piano by ear, and was a good violinist).<sup>57</sup> The semi-rural urban-frontier setting of Prince Rupert at once offered Jews the chance to *integrate*, while at the same time enabling them to maintain informal social networks with other Jews and create a semblance of a Jewish community. In this way, aspects of the *adaption* phase could be maintained. Towards these ends, it appears that the Directors played an important role.

Although Prince Rupert did not attract large numbers of Jewish residents (see Appendix J for population figures), when the Directors arrived in 1908 they decided to live alongside four other Jewish families. In 1909 around twenty five people gathered in the Director's home to observe the High Holidays. Prince Rupert's Jewish merchants and fur traders soon formed an informal *kahal* (community), referring to themselves as Beit Yaacov. The Canadian Jewish News even published a list of the *kahal's* board members, including: Mr. Weinstein—president, H. Hoffman—vice-president, J. Levy—

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<sup>55</sup> The other Jews included Maurice and Freda Rose Cohen, Mr. and Mrs. David Cohen, the Holtmans, and the Isaac brothers from Calgary, who owned a china shop. Other Jews in town included Mr. and Mrs. Weinstein, who owned the tailor shop; the general-store keeper Nathan Scheinman from England; Louis Ripstein, who owned a jewellery business; Harry Frome from Winnipeg, Charlie Cohen from Chicago, William Zackon, Morris Soskin, Zebulon (Billy) Goldbloom from Winnipeg, Mr. and Mrs. Gutstein from Chicago, Mr. and Mrs. Max Herman, and Mr. and Mrs. Rubinovitch. The Landos came to Prince Rupert from England in 1912-1913. Tobe, *Hannah Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.219.

<sup>56</sup> Pellin, "The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple," p.8. The Fraternal Order of Eagles was founded in 1898. Initially an American social fraternity that pushed for the advancement of community medical support, social security and the overall social infrastructure of communities, the fraternity soon spread to various Canadian locales. [<http://www.foe.com>], 2009 FOE October 21, 2009.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

secretary, and Isidor Director—treasurer.<sup>58</sup> Although board members were elected, the *kahal* never acquired Torah scrolls, indicative of the community's transient and institutionally incomplete nature. Instead members used only *siddurim*, common prayer books, whereas normally members of a synagogue would use both.<sup>59</sup> When Harry Hoffman's son was born in Prince Rupert the following spring, the town's Jewish population was still not large enough to warrant hiring an official full-time rabbi. As a result, Rev. Jacob Goldberg was brought in from Vancouver in order to perform the *bris-milah* (circumcision). The rarity of the event attracted quite a crowd.<sup>60</sup> That same year, the Directors once again hosted the High Holidays for about twenty people and the services were conducted by a layman.<sup>61</sup> In 1910 Prince Rupert witnessed another birth, that of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA). The YMHA was geared towards meeting the physical, social and intellectual needs of its constituents and all forty members of the region's Jewish residents registered as members.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the initial enthusiasm for the establishment of Jewish institutions in Prince Rupert, maintaining the institutions was more difficult particularly after the Directors left for Prince George in 1913. The *kahal* of Beit Yaacov never developed into a formal synagogue, nor was a Jewish school ever established. It is not known whether the YHMA succeeded on entrenching itself, how long it survived and to what extent it actually existed as a formal association. According to Esmond Lando, there was no Jewish [religious] life in Prince Rupert after 1913.<sup>63</sup> No one observed Passover for

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<sup>58</sup> From *Canadian Jewish News*, 22 October 1909, pp.12, 45.

<sup>59</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p.30.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>63</sup> Dodek, Esmond Lando, 19-86:05.

example. The reason, according to Lando, was that no one was interested.<sup>64</sup> Lando's own upbringing in Prince Rupert included regular attendance at the Presbyterian Church, a practice for which he won medals for good attendance.<sup>65</sup> In short, the organized life of the Jewish community in northern BC was limited.

Although perhaps not all Jews in Prince Rupert sent their children to church every Sunday as Lando's father did,<sup>66</sup> it seems unlikely that adherence to Jewish principles of faith would have been strictly observed in frontier towns like Prince Rupert. Even Rosalie Gorosh noted that her mother "was very religious when she came out [to Prince Rupert]. [She] bought kosher meat from Vancouver. It got to be too difficult and she got away from it."<sup>67</sup> It is hard to know what Rosalie Gorosh meant by "very religious," because Rosalie Gorosh goes on to say that, "I feel that I am religious in that I do the best that I know how, every day, for everybody."<sup>68</sup> And perhaps that is how the Jews of northern BC should be defined, through their sense of "feeling Jewish." As the American historian Deborah Dash Moore has remarked that "feeling Jewish is something that occurs to people only when they already see some alternatives to being Jewish."<sup>69</sup> Regardless of varying degrees of religiosity, no one could argue that the Jews of northern BC lost their feeling of Jewishness. Director is a case in point.

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> According to Esmond Lando, his father, Lou Lando, hated religion. The family name "Lando" was an Anglicized version of Armalanda. The family was Sephardic and migrated from Prussia and Poland to England and then to Canada. Dodek, *Esmond Lando*, 19-86:05.

<sup>67</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Deborah Dash Moore, *American Jewish Identity Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), p.6.

***Other Jewish BC pioneers: The Adelbergs in the Peace River District***

The Adelbergs, like the Directors, took up homesteading in BC just prior to WWI. Like Isidor Director, Philip Adelberg was a self-made man. Born in Lithuania, Adelberg immigrated to South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. Adelberg arrived in Calgary, circa 1910, after fighting in the Boer War and ranching in Argentina. In Calgary, Adelberg met and married Lottie Ratchesky, a young homesteader, originally from Russia.<sup>70</sup> In 1912, Calgary's economic downturn bankrupted the newly married couple.<sup>71</sup> When the federal government opened up land in the Peace River district of BC, they decided to homestead, in a location six miles west of Dawson Creek. Unlike the Directors, the Adelbergs were entirely *integrated*. They had no known Jewish associates; in fact their neighbours were all Catholic. All of the families worked together to harvest their crops and they also prepared meals together.<sup>72</sup> Farming turned out to be unprofitable and as a result Adelberg joined a survey crew and worked as the district's first Justice of the Peace. Keeping the religious tenets of Judaism was not easy. Lottie Adelberg lit candles every Friday and recited the evening prayers.<sup>73</sup> The lack of properly koshered meat led Lottie Adelberg to stop eating meat altogether. Nevertheless Lottie Adelberg still "koshered" wild fowl, rabbits, moose and deer meat, with salt for the rest of her family.<sup>74</sup> The Adelberg children attended a missionary school along with children from the Catholic homesteading families and neighbouring First Nations tribes.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p.229.

<sup>71</sup> Sarah H. Tobe, "The Adelbergs: Homesteading the Peace British Columbia, 1906-1919," In *Pioneer Jews of British Columbia*, ed. Cyril Edel Leonoff (Calabasas, CA: Western States Jewish History, 2005), p.228.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p.231.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p.231.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p.232.

Although the priest, Father Bruno, insisted that everyone in the class learn the Catholic catechism, he also spoke Hebrew and reminded the Adelberg kids not to forget their Jewish roots.<sup>75</sup>

In 1919 the Adelbergs moved to Saskatchewan where Lottie Adelberg ran various stores and Adelberg became involved in politics. The communities they settled in were also inhabited by other Jews and this allowed them to re-acquaint themselves with communal Jewish life to a small degree. In 1926 Adelberg served as the first *gabbai* (caretaker) of his local *chevra kaddisha* (burial society). When Adelberg died a year later, he was the first Jew to be buried in the town's Jewish cemetery. Lottie Adelberg later moved back to BC. In the mid-1960s the Adelberg homestead was donated to the city of Dawson, BC as a museum.<sup>76</sup>

Both the Directors and the Adelbergs homesteaded in a remote area of BC and like the Directors, the Adelbergs integrated in general society. However, unlike the Adelbergs, the Directors did not completely lack contact with a Jewish community. Furthermore, the Directors differed from both the Adelbergs and earlier Jewish agricultural colonists in the sense that they did not initially settle in BC's northern regions with the intention of living off the land. Instead, the Directors settled in Prince Rupert and later Prince George with the intention of benefiting from the expected economic boom of the town. Although the Directors did eventually become homesteaders outside of Prince George, as we shall see, it was by virtue of a hostile social climate rather than pure economic necessity.

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.236.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.238.

### **The move from Prince Rupert to Prince George**

In 1913 the Directors moved to Prince George in the Central Interior of British Columbia, and 721 miles east of Prince Rupert. One of the primary factors which motivated the Directors to move was that by 1913 it was apparent that the great boom anticipated in Prince Rupert would not happen. However, hope for economic advancement still lay in BC's central interior and boosterism prevailed in Prince George.<sup>77</sup> Local newspapers promoted changing Prince George from a "frontier into a metropolis of concrete and steel skyscrapers with electric transportation and all the rest of the metropolitan frills."<sup>78</sup> The Directors settled in the Prince George area two years before its incorporation in 1915.<sup>79</sup> They did not stay there long.

### **The difficulties of being German during the Great War**

With the commencement of the First World War, immigration from Europe to Canada came to a near stand-still.<sup>80</sup> Not only was it dangerous for European migrants to make their way to North America, immigration from countries at war with Canada and Britain was suspended entirely. This included immigration from Germany, Austria, the Ukraine, Hungary, as well as others.<sup>81</sup> Residents of Canada who originated from enemy

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<sup>77</sup> Robert George Dennison, *A study of The Prince George Citizen, 1957-61* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1984), p.8.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>79</sup> The area that became known as Prince George was actually an amalgamation of three separate town sites: South Fort George, Central Fort George, and Fort George. Renquist, *Contextualizing Consolidation*, p.12.

<sup>80</sup> On August 4, 1914 Great Britain declared war on Germany; the following day Canada made its own declaration of war against Germany and in doing so pledged official support for Britain. Within a few short months, large numbers of Canadian men and women from across the country mobilized themselves for the war effort. "Canada Enters the War," [<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca/remembers/sub.cfm?source=history/firstwar/canada/Canada3>].

<sup>81</sup> It is worth remembering that the WWI era was not the first time Canada displayed hostile sentiments towards Eastern European immigrants. German immigration to Canada resumed in 1923. Bruce Ramsey,

countries were deemed enemy aliens and subject to the terms of the 1914 War Measures Act. The Act stipulated that enemy aliens refrain from possessing fire arms, leaving the country without exit visas, from reading or publishing anything in languages other than in the two official languages—French and English—and from joining socialist or communist groups etc. Furthermore, enemy aliens were required to register with the government and carry official identification with them at all times.<sup>82</sup> With the introduction of the War Measures Act, a total of 8,579 enemy aliens (including 1,192 Germans) were interned in work camps across Canada, while others were deported from the country. At first only non-naturalized Germans were affected by the War Measures Act; later the regulations were extended to include second-generation individuals.

Although he had been a naturalized Canadian since 1909, Isidor Director was born in Prussia and the 1911 census categorized him and his children as racially German (and religiously Hebrew). Therefore, he was at risk of being deemed an enemy alien, and as the war progressed so were his children. Hannah Director was born in Canada and recognized as both racially and religiously Hebrew and therefore was at no risk of becoming an enemy alien.<sup>83</sup> While it remains unclear as to whether Isidor Director was actually registered as an enemy alien in 1914, it is known is that with the start of WWI, anti-German sentiments in Prince George were tremendously high. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that Isidor Director would have been part of a federal round-up, as the government was very selective in choosing its internees. After all, the royal family was

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*A History of the German-Canadians in British Columbia* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: National Publishers Ltd, 1958), p.6.

<sup>82</sup> “Immigrations Acts 1866-2001,” [[http://www.canadiana.org/citm/specifique/immigration\\_e.html](http://www.canadiana.org/citm/specifique/immigration_e.html)].

<sup>83</sup> Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, p.6. With the onset of WWI, amendments were made to the naturalization laws which allowed a woman to retain Canadian or British status, if her husband was deemed an alien. Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920*, p.114. Excerpt from Beynon, *Marriage and Nationality*.

of German origin. Furthermore, Germans were among one of the largest ethnic groups in Canada at that time, and widespread internments would have been very costly. Isidor Director's fears likely stemmed from his place as an outsider and the general hysteria that existed within Canadian society and that was propagated by the media towards people of German origin.

Throughout WWI newspapers in both Prince George and Prince Rupert testify to local opinion concerning enemy aliens. In Prince George, the largest local newspaper, *The Prince George Citizen*, specifically commented on the German residents of the region. One article records a comment made at a local church service: “[’] While our own brothers and sons are fighting the German peril in Flanders, we ought to be doing something to eliminate the same peril at home. [’] [This remark] was vigorously applauded by the large audience.”<sup>84</sup> In another article, the topic of discussion revolved around whether the German language should be taught in schools. The article made the claim that German was taught in schools so that German ideals could be cultivated. The schools where German was taught were located in German speaking districts and were in the control of “pro-Hun” trustees.<sup>85</sup> Along with the propaganda against Germans and German culture, the newspapers also reported on issues such as, “the Mennonite menace,” “the pro-German peace plot,” and how “the Kaiser used the Masons.” In short, the community opinion of Prince George was actively hostile with regards to residents of German origin.

As young men emptied out of Prince George to join the war effort, Isidor Director remained one of the few visibly young and healthy men in the town. The

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<sup>84</sup> *The Prince George Citizen* 3, no. 32 (6 August 1918), p.2.

<sup>85</sup> *The Prince George Citizen*, 3, no. 31 (2 August 1918), p.2.

Directors rightly concluded that because of Isidor Director's German background, it would be in their own best interest to keep a low profile and to stay out of the public eye. As Esmond Lando noted, Isidor Director was German and "so when war broke out, life was pretty miserable for him."<sup>86</sup> With the start of WWI the family moved to an already built homestead on the outskirts of Prince George along the Fraser River.<sup>87</sup>

### **Homesteading and life in Prince George**

Rosalie Gorosh recounts that life "was very primitive" on the homestead. The Directors lived in a log house with packed dirt between wooden floor beams, a wood stove and outdoor plumbing.<sup>88</sup> In the summer they received their supplies by a boat that came down the Fraser River, and in the winter Isidor Director would hike the twenty-two mile trek into town. The Directors kept animals and lived as pioneers did in those days.<sup>89</sup> During their homesteading period, Director insisted on homeschooling her children by government correspondence. By all accounts, Director was quite the disciplinarian.<sup>90</sup> She taught her children so well that when they moved back into Prince George they did not have to go back a grade.<sup>91</sup> The Directors homesteaded for about a year before returning to town.<sup>92</sup> It is not known to what extent the Directors maintained

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<sup>86</sup> Dodek, *Esmond Lando*, 19-86:05.

<sup>87</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1978).

<sup>88</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>89</sup> Dodek, *Esmond Lando*, 19-86:05.

<sup>90</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> "And then the war broke out. We went homesteading because Dad was German and it was very difficult for him to stay. We were only [away] for a year then we went back." *Ibid.* This contradicts what Sarah Tobe writes in her article. "...while they were living on the homestead, Director had taught the children herself for three years..." Tobe, Mrs. *Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.224.

Jewish practices on the homestead, but in all likelihood their isolation would have limited their interactions with other Jews as well as members of general society.

In 1917 the shortage of labourers forced the Canadian government to release enemy aliens from the internment camps, enabling them to return to the cities and work.<sup>93</sup> This shift in policy likely influenced the Directors to move back to Prince George in the autumn of that year. However, they found that life in the town was different from when they had last lived there. World War One brought several social shifts, particularly with regards to political rights and the economy. The lack of men to fill the labour pool meant that women had become an essential component in Canada's wartime productivity and had replaced the male dominated workforce.<sup>94</sup> Women's rights, or at least rights for some women, were extended in September of 1917, when the federal government enacted the Military Voters Act granting Canadian and British born women, whose male relatives were away fighting in the war, eligibility to vote on behalf of their husbands or brothers.<sup>95</sup> Shortly after the release of enemy aliens the Wartime Elections Act was implemented in 1918.<sup>96</sup> It deprived all enemy aliens—even those who had been naturalized Canadians since 1902—of the right to vote, while at the same time it enfranchised women whose husbands, sons or brothers were fighting in the War.<sup>97</sup> In 1918, Sir Robert Borden introduced a bill which awarded federal franchise to women. In view of these changes it is probable that general society in Prince George would have

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<sup>93</sup> Canada in the Making, *Immigrations Acts 1866-2001*.

<sup>94</sup> Moira Armour and Pat Staton, *Canadian women in history: a chronology* (Toronto: Green Dragon Press, 1990), p.29.

<sup>95</sup> Statutes of Canada, *The Military Voters Act, 1917*, c.34.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

been accepting of Hannah Director, even if her husband's status as an enemy alien was dubious.

### *Community involvement*

In Prince George, the Directors continued to spend their time giving to the community, living as pioneers and integrating into public life like they had in Prince Rupert. Once again, Director involved herself in civic and social activities. She was a socialite and a known frequenter of local dances. Isidor Director would take her to the door and then, not being a dancer himself, he would leave her there to dance the evening away. According to Rosalie Gorosh, in those days everyone danced with everyone else.<sup>98</sup> Director also loved the yearly masquerade balls, and she “won more prizes than anybody” for her costumes.<sup>99</sup> Aside from her costumes, Director also made fur coats, corsets, and won prizes for her handiwork.<sup>100</sup> Once, she even agreed to the request of an itinerant Catholic priest to play the violin for the midnight mass services.<sup>101</sup>

When the family moved back to Prince George, they bought a building right next to the tracks, the upstairs of which Isidor Director rented out to train conductors and other railway men passing through town.<sup>102</sup> There were often Jewish news agents on the train and they were brought to the Directors to stay the night.<sup>103</sup> The Directors were also quite friendly with the non-Jewish residents of the town and they “...knew a number of

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<sup>98</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> This occurred in South Fort George and none of the other musicians were Catholic either. Pellin, “The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple,” p.8.

<sup>102</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

non-Jewish single men,”<sup>104</sup> due to the fact that they often kept single men working as labourers in the local industries as boarders. These men always hung around the house... [and Director] always had sing songs.”<sup>105</sup> *The Prince George Citizen* often listed the Directors’ social events in its social column.<sup>106</sup> The men used to tease Isidor Director about leaving his wife alone in the company of so many single men. In response, Isidor Director—a big and strong man—would bend a nickel between his thumb and forefinger, as if to show the men what he would do if anyone made the wrong move.<sup>107</sup>

One of Director’s most noteworthy achievements came during the school year of 1917-1918, when she was one of three trustees elected to the Prince George School Board. Known as a capable woman and “never afraid of tackling anything,”<sup>108</sup> Director rose immediately to the position of “Chairman of the School Board.”<sup>109</sup> The other two trustees were men: F.B. Hood and Peter Wilson, secretary. Director once remarked that “she was quite naive in the ways of local politics in those days and at first did not know why she was elected chair of the Board of School Trustees. However, by the time her term ended, “[she] had gained quite a unique education in these matters and felt that [she] had done some good in the field of school administration.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid. Statistics Canada, *1911 Census of Canada*, p.6.

<sup>105</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>106</sup> Tobe, *Mrs. Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.220.

<sup>107</sup> Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, 1977:03-PABC tape number: 3883:69.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Pellin, “The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple,” p.8; De Marsh, *School District No. 57 (Prince George): List of School Board members*, pp.1-2; De Marsh, *Prince George Mayors and Councils since 1915*, pp.1-2; Runnalls, *List of Mayors, Aldermen and Board members*, pp.177-187; Golbeck, *Conversation about Mrs. Director as Chairman of the Prince George School Board*; City of Prince George, *Public Notice*, p.5.

<sup>110</sup> Pellin, “The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple,” p.8.

### **Prince George society**

As mentioned earlier, Canada enacted national laws against enemy aliens during the WWI era and maintained discriminatory laws to keep “Orientals” out of the country. During this same period, Prince George demonstrated a type of nationalism that was based on a united front against Germany yet it condemned outright racism based on skin colour. This sentiment was demonstrated in 1918 when a Hindu man was refused admission and treatment at the local hospital on the grounds of his skin colour. The man had been injured on the job at a local lumber mill, but the hospital matron refused to admit him, even after receiving orders from the mayor to do so. Furthermore, she was receiving a stipend from the city with the understanding that she would attend to such cases. Although the injured man was eventually treated at someone’s home, considerable public outrage was expressed at the inhumane treatment he received at the hands of the matron and measures were taken to ensure that similar incidents would not be repeated.<sup>111</sup>

The discrepancy between nationalist-based dislike for particular groups of people and the realities of local interactions is worth noting. Such gaps in social discriminatory thinking perhaps explain why Director’s social contributions outweighed any negative labels or socio-religious barriers which could have been imposed. If such social barriers within the public sphere had been impermeable, surely Director, who was Jewish and who was married to a man who would have been considered by many to be an enemy alien, would have been unable to attain the kind of authority she did within the community.

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<sup>111</sup> British Columbia. Education survey commission et al, *Survey of the school system* (Victoria, BC: Printed by C.F. Banfield, 1925), p.2.

The main reason that communities like Prince Rupert and Prince George could tailor their own social climate, despite the direct influence of both the provincial and national agendas, was because they were fairly isolated. Due to unreliable communication and transportation networks, “each [urban frontier] settlement became a separate society made distinct by features such as unique social composition and personal interests. As a result, each community resembled a clique of sorts.”<sup>112</sup> In addition, these urban frontiers often exhibited high degrees of individualism, where persona played a far greater role in determining one’s social position than did economic prosperity, skin colour and/or religious orientation.<sup>113</sup> This was due to the fact that each settler stood more or less on equal economic footing. Prospectors, farmers, trappers, tie-hackers and business men all struggled for economic subsistence. Therefore, one’s personality and character were key factors in facilitating local power and integration.

### **The Prince George School Board**

The school board was also shaped by the same “economic egalitarian forces,”<sup>114</sup> which influenced other social structures in the region. Trustees became members of the school board via different avenues. In some instances they were able to attract votes on the basis of personal prestige, while in others a potential trustee simply volunteered for the job.<sup>115</sup> Seniority was also another prospective route to acquiring a seat on the school board. However, once on the board, the power differential among trustees was vague.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Paul James Stortz, *The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, 1988), p.109.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, p.112.

A main drawback of the local boards was that they were often characterized by “petty local jealousies.”<sup>117</sup> Provincial government authorities surmised that these local rivalries prevented cooperation and the overall advancement of the school system in the rural and urban frontier settings of Northern BC.<sup>118</sup> As Putnam and Weir noted in 1925,

Proposed consolidation, undoubtedly advisable from an educational viewpoint was defeated in a small centre in the northern part of the province because the trustee was at odds with his business rival, who was the prime mover in the consolidation project...This spurious brand of democracy...should receive a well-merited rebuke...The action of this trustee is in reality antidemocratic...This case is by no means an isolated one.<sup>119</sup>

Disputes within the school board often reflected social tensions that existed outside of the board, where personal and family concerns erupted in communal conflict.<sup>120</sup> By the same token, social harmony on a communal level was replicated on the school board level. Interestingly, during the year that Director chaired the Prince George School Board, the Superintendent to Schools, gave the Prince George School Board a very high rating.<sup>121</sup>

Although Director’s nomination as a school trustee is a significant achievement in its own right, it is worth noting that due to the centralized nature of BC’s school system, trustees had relatively little power.<sup>122</sup> The Provincial School Act ensured that the public school system was centrally controlled,<sup>123</sup> and the bulk of the important decisions

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p.111.

<sup>119</sup> British Columbia Education Survey Commission et al, *Survey of the School System*, pp.124-125.

<sup>120</sup> Stortz, *The Rural School Problem in British Columbia in the 1920s*, p.112.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p.112.

<sup>122</sup> Thomas Fleming, “In the Imperial Age and After: Patterns of British Columbia School Leadership and the Institution of the Superintendency 1849-1988,” *BC Studies* Spring, no. 81 (1989), p.53.

<sup>123</sup> To understand the historical-evolution of the Provincial School Act refers to Barman, *The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-century British Columbia*, p.19. The Provincial School Act of 1871 was based on the earlier Colonial School Act of 1865, as well as the Common Schools Act of 1846 and other education systems being implemented in the United States. Frederick Enns, *The Legal Status of*

were made by the Minister of Education.<sup>124</sup> The true power of trustees lay in more mundane matters, such as determining who would supply water, wood, slate chalk boards, and other furnishings, what could the schoolhouse be used for at the end of the day, and so on.<sup>125</sup> In general, the small school district was seen as over-administered and “the calibre of trustees left much to be desired.”<sup>126</sup>

### **How BC’s social climate facilitated Hannah Director’s integration**

While personality and character likely facilitated Director’s nomination to the school board and her integration into public life in the urban frontier setting of Prince George, larger social forces at work throughout in the province (or even the rest of Canada) also played a role in ensuring Director’s integration. These included the advancements being made with regards to women’s rights and BC’s *religious exceptionalism*.

### ***Women and rights***

Women’s suffrage came to the forefront of the political spectrum due to changes taking place on a number of different levels, including BC’s transition from a colony to

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*the Canadian School Board*, (Toronto: Macmillan, 1963), p.4; Thomas Fleming, “Letters from Headquarters: Alexander Robinson and the British Columbia Education Office, 1899-1919,” *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy* January, vol.10, no.2 (1995): pp.11-58.

<sup>124</sup> Fleming, “Letters from Headquarters: Alexander Robinson and the British Columbia Education Office, 1899-1919,” pp.11-58.

<sup>125</sup> Thomas Fleming, “Our Boys in the Field: School Inspectors, Superintendents, and the Changing Character of School Leadership in British Columbia,” In *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, eds. Nancy M. Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson and David C. Jones (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1986), pp.285-303.

<sup>126</sup> Fleming, “*Letters from Headquarters: Alexander Robinson and the British Columbia Education Office, 1899-1919*,” pp.11-58.

a Canadian province.<sup>127</sup> After BC's incorporation into Confederation, the movement for women's rights and suffrage in the province paralleled many national and international trends.<sup>128</sup> Like their American and British counterparts, early forays into feminism in Canada during the turn of the century drew on women from the relatively privileged middle- and upper-middle-classes.<sup>129</sup>

The establishment of formal educational systems usurped women's role as primary educators and consequently, many women decided to enter the education sector as teachers. Others continued to influence the education of their children by pushing for the right to vote at school meetings and the right to be elected as school trustees.<sup>130</sup> In British Columbia, the first bill for women's suffrage was presented to the legislature in 1872. It received only two votes of support. In 1873, women property holders in BC were given the right to vote in municipal elections. Interestingly, no significant numbers of women actually showed-up to vote.<sup>131</sup> During the 1880s and 1890s, there were nearly a dozen attempts to secure provincial suffrage for women; all of which failed.<sup>132</sup> In

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<sup>127</sup> Elizabeth S. Clemens, "Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women's Groups and the Transformation of US Politics, 1890-1920," in *American Journal of Sociology* Volume 98, no.4 (January 1993): p.760.

<sup>128</sup> The Canadian women's suffrage movement took its lead from two distinct, yet overlapping, ideologies: one liberal and the other domestic. The liberal position was based on the philosophical thinking of Mary Wollstonecraft, Thomas Paine, and John Stuart Mill in Britain and advocated "same rights and privileges for women as those accorded men." Ibid. Liberal feminists supported women's personal autonomy, an increased role for women in the public sphere, and occupational and educational equality.

Advocates of domestic feminism wanted to influence society in such a way as to promote a "Protestant morality, sobriety, and family order." As such, advocates argued for the elaboration of women's social public roles based on "innate maternal qualities." The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) is a good example of this. Both liberal and domestic feminism recognized that if they were to accomplish any of their goals, women needed the right to vote. Carol Lee Bacchi, *Liberation Deferred? The ideas of the English-Canadian Suffragists, 1877-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 3. WCTU was originally an American organization established in 1874; it was incorporated in Ontario that same year; it became a national Canadian organization in 1885.

<sup>129</sup> Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920*, p.246.

<sup>130</sup> Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920*, p.224.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p.56.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p.56.

January of 1895 a petition was presented by the Victoria Council of Women (VCW) to the Legislative Assembly with regards to the eligibility for women to become members of the Boards of School Trustees. The petitioners requested that the School Act be amended to include the right of women members.<sup>133</sup> With the help of the VCW, Maria Grant became the first woman in Victoria elected to the school board.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, all provinces gave female rate-payers “the school vote” by the 1890s.<sup>135</sup> In some provinces, including Ontario, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Manitoba, as well as the North West Territories, women were eligible to be elected or nominated as school trustees.<sup>136</sup> WWI enabled significant changes to take place with regards to women’s enfranchisement and between 1916 and 1918 women became enfranchised both federally and provincially.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Light and Parr, *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920*, p.224.

<sup>134</sup> Michael H. Cramer. “Public and Political: The Women’s Suffrage Campaign in BC, 1871-1917: The View from Victoria,” p.55. In 1873, BC became the first Canadian province to grant women property holders the right to vote in municipal elections. In 1884, Ontario was the first Canadian province to offer municipal enfranchisement to widows and spinsters. Other provinces followed suite during the 1890s. New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and the North West Territories extended municipal enfranchisement to widows and spinsters during this decade. In Lower Canada, women property owners held the right to vote in municipal elections during the period between 1809 and 1849. This changed when the word “male” was included in the region’s voting act. Susan Jackel, “Women’s Suffrage,” in W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada*.

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=A1ARTA0008687>

In the 1890s, the province of Québec extended municipal enfranchisement to widows and spinsters. In the 1890s, Nova Scotia awarded the right to vote in municipal elections to widows, spinsters, as well as to women whose husbands had been disqualified from voting. During this period, Manitoba allowed all women who were rate-payers to vote in municipal elections. Ironically, municipal enfranchisement of women householders in BC was revoked in 1908. This was reportedly due to the concern of some citizens, that the madam of a local Victoria brothel had the right to vote along with Victoria’s other female residents. Irene Hill, “Female Suffrage,” in W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada*, vol. II, University Associates in Canada, 1948, pp. 325-326.

<sup>135</sup> Irene Hill, “Female Suffrage,” in W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Canada*, vol. II, University Associates in Canada, 1948, pp. 325-326.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 325.

<sup>137</sup> Statutes of Manitoba, *An Act to amend The Manitoba Election Act* 1916), c.36; Statutes of Saskatchewan, *An Act to amend the Statute Law* 1916), c.37; Statutes of Alberta, *An Act to provide for Equal Suffrage*, 1916), c.5; Statutes of British Columbia, *An Act to amend the Provincial Elections Act* April 5, 1917), c.23; Statutes of Canada, *The Military Voters Act*, c.34; Armour and Staton, *Canadian Women in History: A Chronology*, p.29.

The early admittance of women to sit on the school board not only paved the way for Director's entry into public life in British Columbia, but it also paved the way for dozens of other women to enter into the public sphere, including Fanny Skinner, Jean Mallandaine, Irene H. Moodie to name a few. The entry of women into the school administration was only one component which facilitated Director's nomination to the school board. Another factor was the school system's public and strictly non-denominational character. The following section will reveal how BC became the only Canadian province which did not publicly fund parochial school systems.

### ***Separation of church and state in British Columbia***

The particularity of British Columbia's education system has its roots in the region's views on organized religion and church-state relations in the late colonial and early Confederation periods.<sup>138</sup> By the mid- to late-nineteenth century, BC was known as a place where men left their religion "behind when they crossed the Rocky Mountains."<sup>139</sup> Materialism seems to have been one of the reasons that there was "a

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<sup>138</sup> The educational systems in Eastern Canada officially recognized both Protestant and Catholic denominations for their roles in the early historical formation of predecessor educational systems. Vincent J. McNally, "Church State Relations and American influence in British Columbia before Confederation," *Journal of Church and State* 34, no. 93 (1992): pp. 93-110. For example in Quebec, from the Act of Union onwards, the Catholic Church steadily grew in size and potency, and gave Quebec society an ultramontane flavour. Elsewhere in English Eastern Canada, despite the fact that the British colonial government ceased official recognition of the Anglican Church in 1851, the Church continued to enjoy certain advantages such as tax exemptions and public funding for parochial schools *ibid* Not only did these religious organs receive funding from the public purse, but they also set the criteria for who could be admitted into their schools. In the early decades of the twentieth century the admission criteria of both Protestant and Catholic school systems often resulted in discriminatory measures against Jewish students, teachers, and school board members in certain regions of Eastern Canada. London, *Public Education, Public Pride: The Centennial History of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, 1905-2005*, p.22.

<sup>139</sup> Lynne Marks, "Leaving God behind when they crossed the Rocky Mountains: Exploring unbelief in turn of the century British Columbia," In *Household counts: Canadian households and families in 1901*, eds. Eric W. Sager and Peter A. Baskerville (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), p.371.

good deal of theoretical...and... practical infidelity.”<sup>140</sup> Other commentators of the time noted that migrants from the United States and Eastern Canada lost their connection with extended family and established religious community.<sup>141</sup> Other observers put the blame solely on the Americans, who were known for their opposition and disapproving attitudes towards religion. As one commentator noted, American residents of Victoria soon set the tone of “religious apathy” and liberalism, which would come to characterize general social attitudes towards the public place of religion in BC.<sup>142</sup> A Protestant minister further noted that the “influence of immigrants from the United States is, as a rule, disastrous to religion and morals.”<sup>143</sup> BC’s weakened sense of religiosity was also influenced by the abundance of single young men, who were attracted to the leisure culture, drinking, gambling and prostitution, rather than to church culture, which they categorized as being emotional and therefore feminine.<sup>144</sup> Nor was atheism and/or rejection of the Church confined to men; BC women were also drawn to such viewpoints.

The general shift in consciousness which started to take root in the 1860s laid the groundwork for the theoretical and practical break in relations between church and state. In essence, BC was the first area in Canada where dominant Christian norms had weakened to the point where significant numbers of people could abandon traditional

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p.376.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p.376.

<sup>142</sup> McNally, *Church State Relations and American influence in British Columbia before Confederation* pp. 93-110.

<sup>143</sup> Marks, *Leaving God behind when they crossed the Rocky Mountains': exploring unbelief in turn of the century British Columbia*, p.390. Although this statement was made in reference to American miners in the Kootenay region of BC in the early twentieth century, the statement holds true for the mid nineteenth-century as well.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p.382.

demonstrations of religious adherence.<sup>145</sup> Prior to BC's entry into Confederation, the general public had little interest in the public maintenance of religious institutions.<sup>146</sup> The lack of interest in religion ensured that parochial schools would be funded by the private sector. To this day the Pacific North West remains one of the most unchurched areas of North America.<sup>147</sup>

The weakening of church-state relations was directly related to the rejection by general society of British colonial norms. As historian Jean Barman explains, during the period of 1849 to 1863, British Colonialists transferred English social structures to the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island, including the replication of strong class divisions.<sup>148</sup> In effect, by maintaining class (and religious) segregating practices, early colonial education had two functions: it maintained social order and class divisions and it fostered denominational religious beliefs.<sup>149</sup>

The British Colonial preference for the Church of England, as exhibited by the Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) Chief Factor—James Douglas, later Governor of the Colony,<sup>150</sup> only exacerbated a denominational rivalry between the Catholic and the Anglican clergy—a rivalry that had existed since the late 1830s.<sup>151</sup> While the Catholics were continually denied financial support by British authorities, the Anglican Church

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.371.

<sup>146</sup> McNally, *Church State Relations and American influence in British Columbia before Confederation*, pp. 93-110.

<sup>147</sup> The term *unchurched* first appeared in Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.69.

<sup>148</sup> Jean Barman, "The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-century British Columbia," In *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia*, eds. Jean Barman, Neil Sutherland And Donald Wilson (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, 1995), p.15.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p.15.

<sup>151</sup> McNally, *Church State Relations and American influence in British Columbia before Confederation*, pp. 93-110.

was treated as if it were part of the state institutional structure.<sup>152</sup> The Catholic Bishop, Demers, accustomed to the state support of Catholic clergy in his native Québec, took exception to this poor treatment. In the spring of 1861 the tensions culminated when Demers sued the Anglican Diocese for preventing other denominations from accessing the local cemetery via a direct roadway which passed through what the Anglican Bishop deemed as church-reserve land. In the eyes of the Anglican Bishop the use of the roadway was tantamount to trespassing. By asserting control over the right to road access, the Anglican Church brought its own relationship with the state into the public forefront.<sup>153</sup> In addition, Governor Douglas insisted on supporting the Anglican Church throughout the entire affair.<sup>154</sup>

Ironically, it was the tensions between the Catholic and Anglican Bishops which initiated the legal separation of church and state in future province of BC. Demers' persistence was finally rewarded when the jury ruled in his favour.<sup>155</sup> The ruling legally denied the Anglican Church an official claim to church reserves, and it also denied Anglicans an official place as the colony's church. Indirectly, the verdict also prevented any church from holding official status, and thus the cemetery case laid the foundation for the complete separation of church and state.<sup>156</sup>

The decision in Demers favour can be explained by the composition of Victoria's population. In the decade leading up to British Columbia's entry into Confederation,

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<sup>152</sup> Anglican clergy received free passage, paid positions within HBC ranks, and land endowments. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-110.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

American migrants quickly formed “the influential middle-class.”<sup>157</sup> And as mentioned earlier, Americans in the Far West had a much lower tendency towards church affiliation than their mid-western and eastern compatriots.<sup>158</sup> In addition, Victoria society was distancing itself from entrenched British colonial practices. This could be seen in the movement towards free common schools. Victoria had progressively become a mixed community, and the society at large increasingly began to support the idea of non-sectarian schooling. As one farmer stated, “he did not wish his children ‘to be taught such trash as the Catechism’.”<sup>159</sup> Furthermore, as a non-conformist English minister related, “There are individuals of every race, and members of every religious persuasion...it would be unjust to Jews, Catholics, Buddhists, and Mohamedians, to adopt exclusively the textbooks of any one religion.”<sup>160</sup>

The denominational fee-based school system was an integral part of the English state and by extension the British colonies, since it maintained the perpetuity of class distinctions. Once the courts legally recognized that the church had no rightful place in state affairs, notions concerning the implementation of a free common school system were able to take root.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>158</sup> Marks, “Leaving God behind when they crossed the Rocky Mountains’: Exploring unbelief in turn of the century British Columbia,” p.372. Although this statement was made in reference to American miners in the Kootenay region of BC in the early twentieth century, the statement holds true for the mid nineteenth-century as well.

<sup>159</sup> London, *Public Education, Public Pride: The Centennial History of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, 1905-2005*, p.18.

<sup>160</sup> Barman, *The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-century British Columbia*, p.21.

<sup>161</sup> Migrants from Ontario brought with them notions of common or free public education. *Ibid.*, p.15. Such notions were also supported by American migrants. London, *Public Education, Public Pride: The Centennial History of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, 1905-2005*, p.11. Unlike British migrants to BC, migrants from English Eastern Canada, were often from evangelical Protestant backgrounds, and thus tended to shy away from established Anglican Protestant religious authority. They were also often from the middle and lower middle classes, thus making free public education an economically appealing option. Barman, *The Emergence of Educational Structures in Nineteenth-century*

In 1865 the Legislative Assembly of the Colony of Vancouver Island agreed to legislate in favour of the Public School Act,<sup>162</sup> where common schools were to be supported by local taxes.<sup>163</sup> By the time British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, it had “the most centralized school system on record,”<sup>164</sup> and with no obligation to supply funds to parochial schools, as stipulated in the BNA Act.<sup>165</sup> Widespread implementation of a common school system took full effect after Confederation and when the deteriorating economy necessitated free non-denominational schooling. Without this separation between church and state it is doubtful that Hannah Director, as a Jewish woman, would have had the opportunity to be elected to the school board.

#### **“Hannah Director’s Album of Memories”<sup>166</sup>**

The previous sections have demonstrated the possibilities which existed within general society that facilitated Hannah Director’s *integration* into mainstream society. Her photograph album, which includes mostly undated photographs from her time in Prince Rupert and Prince George, reinforce the observations made in the previous sections about Hannah Director’s level of integration (see Appendix F for photographs).

Director’s leather-bound album, complete with beaded tassels and leather braids, contains photos centred around themes of friends and family; work life; childhood

*British Columbia*, p.20. Additionally, the idea of a common school system received support from both Eastern Canadian and American migrants because common schooling gave greater assurance that all children would grow up adhering to a basic common set of mores. For non-conformist Protestants morality, not ritual, lead the way to Salvation. Ibid., p.18.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>163</sup> McNally, *Church State Relations and American influence in British Columbia Before Confederation*, pp. 93-110.

<sup>164</sup> F. Henry Johnson, *A History of Public Education in British Columbia* (Vancouver: Publications Centre, University of British Columbia, 1964), p.88.

<sup>165</sup> Section 93 (3) of the BNA Act obligated Provincial governments to uphold agreements between separate or dissentient schools and previous colonial legislatures. London, *Public Education, Public Pride: The Centennial History of the British Columbia School Trustees Association, 1905-2005*, p.17.

<sup>166</sup> Tobe, *Mrs. Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.214

education; rootedness in a new homeland (four generations of Diamond women in Canada); community social engagements; fashion; and pioneer lifestyle, e.g. animals, homestead, wilderness. Many of the themes found in Director's album differed little from broader social aspirations in Canada during the Edwardian period. At this time, networks of family and friends in the community became especially important for women, as they increasingly considered themselves as players in the public sphere; domestic photography reflected this.<sup>167</sup> Family photo albums of non-Jewish pioneers also contained photographs depicting a rugged and adventurous lifestyle. Director's photographs mimicked popular pioneer poses, including rifle slung over the shoulder and posing before a natural landscape. Director's photographs were also typical of the times in that they displayed images of people dressed in Edwardian urban fashion. Despite their location in rural frontier towns, it was the convention for other Canadian pioneers to maintain Edwardian dress habits in expectation of urban development. The overlapping of family and outside community networks in Director's life was also a reflection of Canadian social aspirations.

What distinguishes Director from the general population was her dual attachment to general social conventions and to her Jewish identity. Although Director's album does not illustrate anything distinctively Jewish, e.g. Jewish holidays or celebrations, they do offer an understanding the importance she gave to her relationship with Jewish friends and associates. Friends depicted in her album all have Jewish names. Furthermore, all of Isidor Director's close business associates, including those in the album, are known to have been Jewish. In addition, Director went out of her way to photograph the marquee

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<sup>167</sup> Naomi Rosenblum, *A History of Women Photographers*, 1st ed. (Paris; New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), p.356.

announcing a screening of the film “La Tosca.” No explanation was provided as to why Director included this photograph in her album, but the fact that it featured the famous Jewish actress, Sarah Bernhardt, may have had some bearing.

### **Director’s identity**

Hannah Director was affiliated with numerous social groupings that intersected in different ways. She was part of a rural town community, she was a mother, a wife and a friend; she was a musician, she was active in the greater community, she was Jewish, both religiously and ethnically, she was a pioneer, and by association she was part of the business community, members of which were often involved in local governance. Although Director was subject to the pressures of each group she was affiliated with, inevitably a person chooses her primary group affiliation. So the question remains: which affiliations determined Director’s primary identity in Northern BC?

According to Blau’s *deductive macrosociological theory* people find friends in accordance with their strongest in-group preferences. When few other sources are available, a photograph album may be the best source for discerning in-group preferences because it is so personal. Director’s photograph album is full of photos of her family and her Jewish friends and associates, suggesting that these were the people to whom she felt closest. Based on Director’s strongest group association, i.e. with her Jewish friends, one can posit that Director’s Jewishness was the foundation of her primary social identity, even if she participated in mainstream society to a great extent.

In Northern BC Director’s Jewish identity would have been based mainly on informal networks. Recall that in Prince Rupert, aside from Beit Yaacov and YHMA, both of which existed for a very short period of time, there were no formal Jewish

communal networks. In Prince George, there were no known formal Jewish institutions. In both places, Jewish communal structure was based mainly on informal networks formed by friendships within the community.

The lack of *institutional completeness* allowed for a greater transcendence of Jewish/non-Jewish boundaries on the part of Jews in those areas. Since Director's Jewishness was expressed in an informal manner, her Jewish identity did not limit her from having other affiliations. In other words, her Jewishness was permeable to outside influences. As Breton argues, interpersonal networks quickly extend outside the community boundaries when a community exists without formal institutions. Thus Director's Jewish identity was structured in such a way that it allowed her to move into other communal networks, without weakening her primary Jewish identity.

Aside from friendship, Director also asserted her Jewishness via her interactions with the outside world. One striking incident where Director's Jewishness was publicly demonstrated was when an antisemitic comment was made by one of her daughter's school teachers in Prince Rupert. The children were reading a story titled, "The Queen and the Diadem," which told of a queen who lost her diadem and offered a reward for its return, providing that it be returned within thirty days. A rabbi found the diadem and kept it for the full thirty days before returning it. The teacher then asked the children to re-write the story in their own words and use a different title, "The Honest Jew." The reason for the title change, explained the teacher, was that Jews were rarely honest. The irony of the remark was that Director's daughter was one of the teacher's favourite

students. Upon learning of the teacher's remarks from her daughter, Director quickly brought incident to the attention of the Prince Rupert School Board.<sup>168</sup>

### **Leaving the North: Life in Vancouver**

After Hannah Director ended the school year in 1918, the Directors moved from Prince George back to Prince Rupert, where they remained for four more years. What little is known about the details of their life there indicate that they carried much as they had in Prince George. Hannah Director was involved in the Prince Rupert community while Isidor Director worked as a longshoreman and the children attended school. The economic aftermath of WWI, meant that Prince Rupert was no longer seen as an economically viable urban frontier and instead it became a fishing centre. The outcome was that many of the town's Jews dispersed, and by the early 1920s most Jews had left the region altogether. The Directors followed suit and in 1922 they left Northern BC for Vancouver, at a time when the city was experiencing a brief economic revival.<sup>169</sup>

When the Directors arrived in Vancouver there were about 250 Jewish families living there. By 1930 Vancouver's Jewish population had grown to more than 600 families.<sup>170</sup> Like many Jewish Vancouverites of the 1920s and 1930s the Directors did not settle in the Strathcona district, which until that point had been home to the majority of the city's Jews. As Strathcona's Jewish small business owners established themselves financially and experience higher levels of *acculturation*, they began to move away from

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<sup>168</sup> Pellin, "The Directors -An outstanding pioneer couple," p.8. The incident took place in 1918, after Director had chaired the school board in Prince George.

<sup>169</sup> Sarah H. Tobe, "Hannah Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975," In *Pioneer Jews of British Columbia*, ed. Cyril Edel Leonoff (Calabasas, CA: Western States Jewish History, 2005), p.225; Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Rosalie Gorosh*, (Vancouver, BC: The Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia Oral History Project, July 15, 1977), 1977:03-PABC tape number:3883:69.

<sup>170</sup> Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.86.

the old neighbourhood to newer districts south of False Creek, such as Mount Pleasant, Fairview, Shaughnessy, and later even Kerrisdale.<sup>171</sup> The Directors first settled in the west-end Jewish district of downtown Vancouver before moving to the Kitsilano neighbourhood. Director's photograph album shows the family taking advantage of their surroundings, bathing in English Bay, and picnicking and sightseeing in the city.<sup>172</sup>

Once settled in Vancouver, the Directors remained integrated in the general community as they had in Northern BC. Isidor Director worked as a stevedore (ship loader). Hannah Director joined the Women's Canadian Club; she was president of the Kitsilano Community Choir, sang in the Brahms Choir and worked at the annual Chamber of Commerce Beach Concerts. With the help of his son-in-law, Dr. Jacob I. Gorosh, Isidor Director opened a small print shop, known as "The Printery," in the basement of the Director home on 337 Smithe Street, later relocating the business to their home on 2355 West Broadway between Balsam and Vine. Isidor Director ran the business until 1965.<sup>173</sup> Director and her husband hosted the Kitsilano Show Boat, a waterfront stage established in 1935 which provided local entertainment. As Kitsilano business owners, the Directors were charter members of the Kitsilano Chamber of Commerce and when they retired from being the Show Boat hosts in 1961, they were awarded the Good Citizen's Trophy by the Kitsilano Association.<sup>174</sup>

Although the aforementioned activities meant that they were as integrated as ever, once in Vancouver and in proximity to the largest Jewish community they had seen since arriving in BC, the Directors exhibited stronger characteristics of Barkan's

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<sup>171</sup> Tobe, *Hannah Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.286.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.225.

<sup>173</sup> Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.143.

<sup>174</sup> Tobe, *Hannah Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.226.

*adaptation* phase than they had at any time previously in BC. The Directors made conscientious efforts to involve themselves in promoting an institutionalized Jewish presence in the city. These efforts were initially demonstrated through Isidor Director's publishing business.

### ***Vancouver's Jewish newspapers***

Initially The Printery focused on printing calling cards, Christmas cards, New Years' cards, and the like. However by 1925, J.I. Gorosh, who was active in the Vancouver Jewish community, felt that Vancouver Jewry needed some form of newsletter and suggested to his father-in-law that he begin publishing one. On July 15 of that year *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin*, the province's first English-language Jewish publication, was issued.<sup>175</sup> Although the newsletter was touted as a monthly publication, a total of four issues were published that year.<sup>176</sup> Isidor Director was in charge of printing *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin* while Hannah Director acted as the business manager and J.I. Gorosh was the editor. The newsletter reflected the communal concerns of its patrons as well as those of its manager and editor. Concern for Jewish community affairs were seen from the first issue of *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin*, whereby the front page editorial actively promoted the establishment of an official Jewish community centre, something which Vancouver was desperately lacking at that time.<sup>177</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon*, p.143.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144.

After the publication of *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin* other Jewish communal publications followed suit.<sup>178</sup> The completion of the new Jewish Community Centre in October 1928 was accompanied by the publication *The Centre Bulletin*, a mimeographed weekly leaflet containing news about Jewish activities in the city.<sup>179</sup> *The Centre Bulletin* was so well received by the Jewish community that by February 1930 it had morphed into Vancouver's first regularly printed Jewish newspaper. A community contest inaugurated the paper by naming it the Weekly News. Several months later the name was changed to *Jewish Centre News*. The name changed once again in October 1930. From then on it became known as *The Jewish Western Bulletin* and became the official news medium of the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre. The four page weekly publication cost five cents a copy, or a dollar for an annual subscription, and was printed at The Printery.<sup>180</sup> During its early years some notable editors and publishers worked on *The Jewish Western Bulletin*, including David Rome and Abraham Arnold.<sup>181</sup> For a short time *The Jewish Western Bulletin* was rivalled by Julius Shore's *The Independent Jew*. A publication edited by Sim Alfred Goldston, a former pedagogue from the Jewish schools of the Hirsch colony in Saskatchewan. However, *The Jewish Western Bulletin* proved to be formidable competition and *The Independent Jew* soon folded.

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<sup>178</sup> In March of 1928 a teacher by the name of Mordecai Jaffe from the Vancouver Talmud Torah established *Di Yiddishe Velt*, a literary publication with sections in Yiddish and English. Although the publication was issued until 1935, relatively few issues were actually published. Unlike the Yiddish publications east of the Rockies, *Di Yiddishe Velt* did not find a supportive audience for its proliferation in Vancouver. This may have owed to the literary nature of the publication and the fact that the Yiddish speakers in Vancouver were more interested in earning a living than reading about high culture. The end of *Di Yiddishe Velt* came when Mordecai Jaffe moved to Israel to pursue his writing career. *Ibid.*, p.143-44.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, p.144.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146.

### *Activities in Vancouver's Jewish community*

Hannah Director also maintained other strong ties to Vancouver's Jewish institutions. The period between 1910 and 1920 had witnessed the birth of several Jewish institutions, including B'nai Brith and the Hebrew Aid and Immigrant Society in 1910, Zionist and Social Society in 1913, and the Hebrew Free Loan Association in 1915.<sup>182</sup> The Vancouver Jewish community continued to expand its institutions as the population grew between 1920 and 1930. Indeed, the time between 1910 and 1930 is historically considered the founding era of the Vancouver Jewish community, when the core communal institutions as we know them today, were established. As Cyril Leonoff noted, the organizations established during that era ably met the various needs of the mainly immigrant, Eastern European Jewish community.<sup>183</sup>

Since the Directors arrived at a pivotal point in the founding of Vancouver's Jewish institutions and given Hannah Director's interest in communal organizations, she was a charter member of many of the city's Jewish organizations including the Vancouver Chapter 77 B'nai Brith Women (est. 1927), the Beth Israel Sisterhood (est. 1932), as well as a the Lillian Freiman Chapter of Hadassah (est. 1920). Director also served as the representative for the National Council of Jewish Women on the Vancouver Council of Women (est. 1924); she was also secretary of the Jewish Community Chest (est. 1924) for eight years.<sup>184</sup> This organization eventually became the Jewish Community Council, and served as the model for "one of the founding agencies

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p.86.

<sup>184</sup> Tobe, *Mrs. Director's Album of Memories 1908-1975*, p.226.

of the city-wide organization,” known as the Vancouver Community Chest, which eventually became the United Way.<sup>185</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

The previous pages have explored the factors which allowed for Hannah Director’s integration into general society to take place. It has been demonstrated that her contribution to the public sphere was enabled and facilitated by socio-historical characteristics of Canada, BC, and Northern BC in particular, during the turn of the century. By the end of the nineteenth century, provincial- and national-level feminist movements earned women the right to run and vote in the local school board elections. As a consequence of the prevalence of *religious exceptionalism* throughout the province, BC’s educational system also became non-denominational. In the urban frontier setting of Northern BC, local status was determined by individualistic aspirations and personal charisma more than anything else. Director’s election as School Board Chair—perhaps her most notable achievement as an integrated Jew in Northern BC—was a direct result of: the growing rights of women within British Columbian society, the lack of emphasis that the education system put on religious differences, and the personality-over-background orientation that typified the urban frontier setting. That Director was able to be elected to public office during WWI, even though, for all extents and purposes, her husband was considered an enemy alien, is testament to just how predominant these trends really were. It is also indicative of the overall social harmony that existed within the general society of Northern BC.

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p.86.

While the characteristics of BC's general society were vital to her integration, Director's Jewishness also played a central role. Born into a family of recently-immigrated, mainly *acculturated* Jews, Director's earliest primary identity would have most certainly been as a Jew first and foremost. However, her migration to Northern BC, a region with very few Jewish inhabitants and even fewer formal Jewish institutions would have necessitated that Director adapt her Jewishness to become more oriented towards general society. By making substantial contributions to the greater good of society, Director constructed her Jewish identity in such a way that it allowed her to move between Jewish and non-Jewish social groupings, exhibiting aspects of Barkan's phases of *adaptation* and *integration*—at least to the extent that BC's public sphere would allow. Accordingly, Director inspired Jews and non-Jews alike to follow in her footsteps and make their own contributions.

Over the course of her life in BC, Director altered the balance between her Jewishness and non-Jewishness to accommodate local circumstances. When she moved to Northern BC, a lack of *institutional completeness* required that Director look outside the Jewish group to meet her various social needs; indeed, her time there was marked by a high degree of association with various social groups in mainstream society. Although the remoteness of the region limited the formal nature of the Jewish institutions in Prince Rupert and Prince George, Hannah Director still made a concerted effort to help establish and maintain Jewish networks on a formal and informal basis. That she continued to maintain her primary identity as a Jew during this period is indicated by analyzing Director's photograph album, which (in addition to family members) places particular emphasis on her Jewish friends and associates. When Director moved to Vancouver, its larger and more established community allowed her to accentuate her

Jewish identity, and consequently she and her family became increasingly involved in the affairs of the Jewish community while at the same time maintaining their status as integrated Jews.

Throughout the forty plus years Director spent in Vancouver, she remained friends with fellow Jews she had known in Prince George and Prince Rupert.<sup>186</sup> Isidor Director died in 1969, aged ninety four, just shy of the Directors' sixty-fourth wedding anniversary. Hannah Director died a year later at the age of eighty four. Director was survived by two of her own children, Rosalie Gorosh and Stanley Norman, as well as five grandchildren and six great grandchildren.<sup>187</sup> Director's second eldest daughter, Zelna Director, died young in 1964. She had married E. Plottel and had one son with him, Neil Plottel. Neil and his wife Janet had two children, Jeffrey and Terrie, both of whom remained in the Vancouver area.<sup>188</sup>

Of all of Director's descendants these two were the only ones to remain in Canada. As mentioned earlier, Rosalie Gorosh had married J.I. Gorosh in 1926. Originally from Lithuania, near Riga, J.I. Gorosh was a man of good standing within Vancouver's Jewish community. He was one of Vancouver's first podiatrists and worked hard to establish chiropody, as it was known then, as a legalized and legitimate profession. Together the Goroshs had two daughters, one of whom, Kay, went on to become the first woman to graduate in podiatry in North America, from the California

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226.

<sup>187</sup> *The Vancouver Herald* Thursday 11 February 1955.

<sup>188</sup> Correspondence with Terrie Plottel, October 2009, Vancouver, BC.

College in 1953.<sup>189</sup> Kay Gorosh married Myron Simon, a fellow podiatrist and remained in California. Rosalie Gorosh's second daughter became Mrs. Jack M. George and worked for the California school system after studying for a time at the Toronto Conservatory of Music.

Stanley Norman Director, by virtue of his American birth, likely possessed an American passport and decided to try and make his fortune in the States. He moved to Jacksonville, Florida where he married Marie Hurwitz. There Stanley worked as a businessman and he and Marie raised two sons, Alan L. Director and Lawrence Sheldon Director. While Stanley took after his father with regards to religion and had little interest in it, Marie was steeped in the Orthodox tradition and made sure her boys had a good Jewish upbringing. Stanley's descendants remained in Florida and Louisiana.<sup>190</sup>

All of Director's own children married Jews. Of her five grandchildren, one never married, one married out of the Jewish faith, and three married within it. The histories of her great grandchildren are equally varied.

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<sup>189</sup> *Vancouver Sun* Tuesday 14 July 1953.

<sup>190</sup> Correspondence Alan L. Director October 2009, Boca Raton, Louisiana

## CHAPTER 4 LEON KOERNER: TRANSFORMING LUMBER INTO LEGACY

WWII ERA  
Vancouver, British Columbia

### Introduction

On the morning of September 22, 1938, Leon Koerner was one of a select group of passengers scheduled to fly to Amsterdam from Prague on a privately chartered Dutch-owned Douglas DC-3. As an eminent lumber baron, Koerner was no stranger to air travel; he was however unaccustomed to being hunted by many and wanted by few. For the first time in his life Leon Koerner became a Jewish refugee.

In view of the fact that Canada was not a haven for the world's refugees, Leon Koerner's 1939 admission to Canada was an anomaly.<sup>1</sup> Historians Irving Abella and Harold Troper have noted that of all the allied countries, Canada had the poorest record for admittance of Jewish refugees during WWII.<sup>2</sup> Although the economy of the 1930s had reduced immigration to a trickle, Canadian immigration officials had a particular dislike of Jewish applicants during the years leading up to and following WWII. Historian Joseph Kage notes that from April 1, 1940 until March 31, 1945 out of the 52,152 immigrants granted landing status in Canada, only 1,852 Jews were among them.<sup>3</sup> That figure included those Jews already living in Canada as "tourists." Whereas

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<sup>1</sup> Eric Koch, *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder* (Toronto: Methuen, 1980), x.

<sup>2</sup> Irving M. Abella and Harold Martin Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1982), p.336.

<sup>3</sup> Koch, *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder*, 12. Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.109. That included those already living in Canada Ibid., p. x.

between 1940 and 1942 alone, the United States accepted 70,954, Argentina accepted 4,500, Brazil accepted 6,000, Uruguay accepted 1,000, South Africa accepted 2,000 and Palestine accepted 35,000.<sup>4</sup>

Hailing from an industrialist upper-middle-class Jewish family from Moravia, Austro-Hungary, later Czechoslovakia—Koerner was able to use his expertise in the forest industry, his financial status, longstanding family connections to financial institutions in Britain, and a bit of luck, to persuade the upper echelons of the Canadian government to ignore his Jewish origins and to allow himself, his wife Thea Koerner, as well as several siblings and their family members, entry into Canada. As if to demonstrate his social stature, Koerner arrived in Canada with a letter of introduction from Lester B. Pearson, then a staff member under the Canadian High Commissioner, Vincent Massey, in London.<sup>5</sup> Koerner's admittance into Canada also coincided with the admission of 2,000 anti-Nazi Sudetenlanders, who for the most part were not Jewish.<sup>6</sup> Given the Canadian track record for accepting Jewish refugees during this time, it is clear that the Federal government's decision to accept Leon Koerner into Canada was based upon the Koerner family capability of bringing much needed jobs to a depressed Canadian economy. In a letter to the Director of Immigration, Frederick Charles Blair, a year and a half after his arrival to Canada, Koerner wrote:

Everything at Alaska Pine [Company] is going along quite well, and we are working two 10 hour shifts in the box factory and in the planer mill, all on orders for the British government, with over 250 men on the payroll. As you, Mr. Blair, remember my first promise was to employ 100 to 150 men...and we are employing now double that amount with only nine

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.109.

<sup>5</sup> David Mitchell, "Business in Vancouver," *British Columbia's Business Leaders of the Century* (1999), pp.60-61. Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-6 Koerner to FC Blair, 27 June 1940; Rosemary Cunningham, "Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire," *BC History* 40, no. 1 (Fall 2007), p.21.

<sup>6</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, pp.47-48.

Czechoslovakians. The working capital...brought over from Europe exceeds \$500,000.<sup>7</sup>

Although Leon Koerner deeply valued the asylum and opportunity that Canada provided him, he was not initially welcomed with enthusiasm. By his colleagues and competitors, Koerner was considered a formidable threat; by his Canadian contemporaries, Koerner's sophisticated sense of fashion and polished European manners were ridiculed. Furthermore, despite his admittance into Canada, government officials still deemed Koerner an enemy alien, and required him to report regularly to the RCMP.<sup>8</sup> In seeking entrance into the upper echelons of BC business society, the fact that he was Jewish was not something Koerner highlighted. Concerned with the survival of his family, salvaging the family fortune, as well as securing the family's future, Koerner did his best to ignore the negative aspects of his welcome to Canada and instead concentrated his efforts on establishing what would become one of British Columbia's most prosperous lumber mills, the Alaska Pine Company.

By May 13, 1943, Koerner's accomplishments in British Columbia's lumber industry gave him courage to push the government to issue his naturalization papers. In a letter dated November 5, 1943, Koerner explained:

Since I came to Canada early in February 1939 ...I have been developing, quite an important lumber industry on quite new lines from what the lumber industry in British Columbia has been working. It has been recognized by all authorities and by the whole timber trade that my associates and I have been a great asset to the development of Western Hemlock by treating it differently from what it was up to then. I wish to mention that about 1100 employees are now working in our mills and logging camps.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-6 Koerner to FC Blair, 27 June 1940; Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.21.

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61.

<sup>9</sup> In his application for residency Koerner received the support from retired Blair. Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 5-6 letter from Koerner to Oscar Coderre, Director, Department of Naturalization, November 5, 1943.

It seems that Koerner's accomplishments earned him the right of residency. On December 28, 1943, just prior to the expiration of his Czechoslovakian passport, issued five years earlier, Koerner became a naturalized Canadian. On January 10, 1944 Koerner was sworn in as a Canadian citizen. With pressure from Koerner, the naturalization of other Koerner family members would follow.<sup>10</sup> On January 11, 1944 Koerner took the opportunity to write to Blair at his home address in Ottawa. He wrote:

I wish to express my very best thanks to you for your kindness of having helped me to get my Canadian Citizenship. I cannot repeat often enough how grateful I personally and Thea Koerner and all the members of the Koerner family are, to you, for the permanent friendliness with which you have followed up our fate since we entered this great Country.<sup>11</sup>

Koerner later hung his certificate of citizenship in his office and referred to it as his most prized possession. Thea Koerner expressed her appreciation by writing a poem in 1955, entitled *Song of an immigrant*.<sup>12</sup> Irrespective of the reasons for his admission into Canada, Koerner remained forever grateful to the country, the province, and the society that provided refuge for his family. In 1944, speaking on behalf of the Koerner family, Koerner wrote to Blair:

We all together will never forget what you have done for us and the only possibility of showing our gratitude is to be constantly good citizens and do our very best to help with all our heart and ability, to make this Country still a better one.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Box 5-6 letter from Koerner to Oscar Coderre, Director, Department of Naturalization, January 11, 1944.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Koerner, *Letter*, ed. FC Blair, Leon Koerner Fonds UBC, (January 11, 1944), Box 13-16.

<sup>12</sup> Until 1964 the poem was included in a booklet given to all new Canadian citizens. Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61. The poem reads: Oh, Canada, my Canada, My dear beloved land, You opened arms, you opened hearts, And gave with generous hand. God bless thee, my dear Canada, And keep you strong and free, I only am a little part, But I belong to thee. And I will pray unto our Lord, That Canada may be forever strong and beautiful, Her people always free. Oh Canada! My Canada, Wherever I shall be, From here into Eternity My heart belongs to thee. Thea Koerner, *Song of an immigrant* (Vancouver, BC, Miosogno Holdings limited, 1959), Box 2-11.

<sup>13</sup> Koerner, *Letter*, Box 13-16.

With each passing year, Koerner's gratitude and attachment for his new homeland grew. Ultimately, Koerner sought to repay British Columbia for the renewed opportunities of "pleasure and happiness"<sup>14</sup> that the province had given his family. This was a stark contrast to the prevailing attitude amongst other prominent BC industrialists at the time.<sup>15</sup> As a business man with a social conscience, Leon Koerner was concerned with the health, safety, and overall well-being of his workers. He and his brothers, Otto and Walter, introduced a number of workplace initiatives previously non-existent in British Columbia. In 1955 he established the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation (LTKF). In doing so, Koerner earned the distinction of becoming the founder of the third private foundation in the province, as well as the distinction of becoming the first immigrant to establish such a foundation.<sup>16</sup> Koerner was awarded honorary doctoral degrees from the University of British Columbia (UBC) in 1965 and from Simon Fraser University (SFU) in 1967.<sup>17</sup> When he died in 1972 a local newspaper credited Koerner with having supported almost every social organization in the province. Since its inception in 1955, the LTKF donated more than eight million dollars to the fields of cultural and creative arts, higher education, medical research and social services.<sup>18</sup>

This chapter will explore the historical roots and evolution of Leon Koerner's Jewish identity; it will also discuss the impact of Koerner's experience as a wealthy refugee in Vancouver during WWII on his Jewish identity; it will attempt to re-insert

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<sup>14</sup> Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61.

<sup>15</sup> Only later would BC lumber barons, such as HR MacMillan donate money to social causes. "Too much publicity only means that more people will be coming after me for more money. I can assure them right now that they are not going to get any." Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 16-9, regarding MacMillan, HR & Family "The biggest gift," *Time*, 19 February 1965.

<sup>16</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.20. The Chris Spencer Foundation (1949) and the Mr. & Mrs. P.A. Woodward Foundation (1951) were the first two Ibid., p.16.

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.60-61. Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.20.

Koerner back into the framework of Jewish Canadian history, a category that Koerner has only loosely been associated with; and it will elucidate the socio-political context that surrounded Koerner's integration into BC society. The discussion will take place by way of the following topics: Jewish Czech history, Canadian immigration laws, antisemitism in Canada during the WWII era, and the tradition of Jewish benevolence. In order to understand Koerner's integration into British Columbian society as well as his Jewish identity, it is best to look to the past. From an historical vantage point Leon Koerner's identity and the circumstances of his life were as much a product of Jewish Czech history and the circumstances surrounding the WWII era as they were a product of Koerner's own personality.<sup>19</sup> This chapter will pay particular attention to Koerner's integration as it was expressed through Barkan's *assimilation* phase.

### **Family roots**

To speak of Jewish Czech history is to speak primarily of Jewish history in Bohemia, Moravia and parts of Silesia, the three main regions of the modern-day Czech Republic.<sup>20</sup> In 1526 these Czech lands fell under Habsburg rule, and later became part of the joint Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867. With the collapse of Austro-Hungary following WWI, the Czech lands joined with those of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia to form the state of Czechoslovakia from 1918 until 1993. Czechoslovakia remained united during this entire seventy-five year period, with the exception of WWII

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<sup>19</sup> See Helen Epstein, *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History*, 1ed. (Boston ; Toronto: Little, Brown and Co, 1997), p.322; Livia Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust* (Lincoln Neb; Jerusalem: University of Nebraska Press; Yad Vashem, 2005), p.447; Natalia Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia* (Tel Aviv: Beth Hatefutsot, 1990), p.222; Hillel J. Kieval, *Languages of community: the Jewish experience in the Czech lands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p.311.

<sup>20</sup> Today the country is bordered by Poland to the northeast, Germany to the West, Austria to the south, and Slovakia to the east.

when Slovakia and Ruthenia allied themselves with the Nazis; while Czech lands were occupied by the Nazis, who labeled them as the Protectorates of Bohemia and Moravia.

Jewish Czech history may be characterized by various combinations of persecution and opulence. In comparison to elsewhere in Europe, the Jewish experience in Czech lands was on the whole a less hostile one.<sup>21</sup> That is not to say that Jews were not subject to pogroms, persecution, discrimination, expulsion, and economic restrictions, but rather that they were subject to this sort of maltreatment less frequently.

Family histories maintain that the first Koerners, spelt Körner, fled Westphalia and arrived in Bohemia in 1348, at a time when the policies of Charles IV aimed at attracting skilled traders and craftsmen to the region, while at the same time offering Jews protection from the widespread plague inspired pogroms of Westphalia.<sup>22</sup> The Körners eventually settled on the Bohemian-Moravian highlands.<sup>23</sup> It is possible to trace Leon Koerner's lineage directly back to one of these early Körners, Joachim Körner (1589).<sup>24</sup> The name Körner suggests that Koerner's ancestors likely worked as grain producers and keepers of forest records for wealthy landowners.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.24.

<sup>22</sup> The Jewish community provided for its own education, jurisprudence, and health services, closely resembling urban Burger estates. Walter Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside* (Vancouver: W.C. Koerner, c1988), p.23.

<sup>23</sup> When Bohemia and Moravia became affiliated with the Hapsburgs and the Holy Roman Empire, and intolerance towards non-Catholics increased, the Körner family left the highlands and settled in Hodonín in 1547, in southern Moravia. Israel Körner, Koerner's great-great-grandfather, was one of thirteen Jewish families allowed to remain in Hodonín after 1727, following the promulgation of the Familiantengesetz, which permitted the oldest son of a Jewish family to remain in the town of his birth. All others had to leave. The regulations ensured a continuous Körner presence in Hodonín until the nineteenth century. By 1787 Joseph II promulgated that everyone in the Empire must have German names and in order to get married Jews had to complete elementary school in German and Rabbis had to have a university education in order to be recognized by the Empire. Epstein, *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History*, pp.48-50.

<sup>24</sup> Joachim married a Jewess from the Oppenheim family, of similar Westphalian and Bohemian origins. *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

Like his ancestors before him, Koerner's father, Isidor Körner (1848-1925), was a native of Hodonín.<sup>26</sup> In the nearby village of Buchlovice, Isidor Körner met his future wife, Maria Beck (1853-1920), whose family raised crops and cattle. Isidor completed his education at the *gymnasium* and served nine years in the Austrian army, fought in the Balkan crisis of 1875-1878, and then ended his career as a commissioned officer. After Isidor Körner's military duty he and Maria Beck were married in 1878. At this point, Isidor Körner returned to Buchlovice, where he worked in the forestry businesses of a family friend.<sup>27</sup> Soon afterwards, Isidor Körner began his own business and the couple moved to Nový Hrozenkov, Moravia.

Born on the 24th of May in 1892 in the town of Nový Hrozenkov, Leon Joseph Körner was the second eldest son and eighth child in a family of ten children, six girls and four boys.<sup>28</sup> All ten children were born in Nový Hrozenkov. In order to improve business and educational opportunities, the family settled in Nový Jičín in 1898. By this time Isidor Körner ran his own successful lumber business, Isidor Körner Forest Industry Ltd (IKAG). Although Isidor Körner was oriented towards the Hapsburg Dynasty and German culture, perhaps owing to his nine years of military service, Maria

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<sup>26</sup> When Prussia invaded Moravia in 1866, during what is known as the Seven Weeks War, Isidor Körner and the rest of his family were forced to flee their home and their grainery. The War decimated the village and the family property. Isidor Körner's parents, Herman and Josephine, never recovered from the shock of the war and died from grief and exhaustion within a year of the War's end. Isidor Körner fled with his remaining siblings to the nearby village of Buchlovice and took refuge with the Jewish family of Salomen Reich, whose family lived on the estate of the Count Berchtold. Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.28. As Isidor's youngest son Walter mentions with great pride, Hodonín was also the birthplace of Thomas Masaryk. *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>27</sup>The Reichs had established the first glass factory in the area. And when they settled they brought with them skilled workers including: glass blowers, loggers, mill men, farmers, millers, butchers, bakers, grocers, innkeepers, and teachers. *Ibid.*, pp.32-33.

<sup>28</sup> Twelve years after they first met Isidor and Maria married. Aside from Leon, their other children included: Regina Sonnenschein 1882-1971, Ida Schwarz 1884-1942, Irma Riesenfeld 1884-1942, Kamilla Schindler 1885-1942, Else Reif, 1887-1974, Josephina Körner 1889-1951, Otto Körner 1894-1946, Theodore Körner 1881-1951, Walter Körner 1898-1995. *Ibid.*, p.33. Blair Galston, *Walter C. Koerner Fonds Inventory Biography*, (Special Collections Division Main Library University of British Columbia: 1996), Series Family and other photographs BC1957.

Körner identified more with Judaism and Czech culture.<sup>29</sup> As Koerner's youngest brother Walter writes, "It was natural for [Maria Körner] to speak in Czech to her children...and...to all the Slavic-speaking people in the community,"<sup>30</sup> perhaps owing to her more rural existence.

The different Czech/German orientations of Maria and Isidor Körner harken back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which sparked a process of Germanization among the Czech populace. This trend was eventually experienced amongst Czech Jewry.<sup>31</sup> Joseph II, who accessed the throne in 1780, hoped to consolidate his power by reinforcing German culture and thereby required Jews to adopt German family names (if they had not already done so), establish and attend German language schools, cease using Hebrew and Yiddish in business transactions, and use German for record keeping. Accompanying the Germanization of Czech Jewry, were a series of edicts, including the Edict of Tolerance (Toleranzpatent) and the Law of Free Movement (Freizügigkeitsgesetz). Both allowed Jews to slowly begin experiencing greater opportunities for their acculturation into Czech society. By the early 1800s, the *Haskalah* reached Bohemia and the German language and culture became even more enticing for certain elements of Czech Jewry.<sup>32</sup> By the 1840s marriage and residence restrictions were lifted, and Jews were no longer required to attend German public schools in order to be legally married. In places like the Sudetenland of northern

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<sup>29</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.39.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>31</sup> Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*, p.10.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

Bohemia and the city of Prague, “Jews integrated relatively smoothly into various occupational fields.”<sup>33</sup>

The acculturation of Czech Jewry during the nineteenth century also corresponded with the revolution of 1848 and the renewed tensions between proponents of German and Czech cultures. Ironically, by the time the Habsburg Empire formerly became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, during what is known as the *Ausgleich* of 1867, the majority of Czech Jewry had adapted to German culture, meanwhile Czech Christians longed for a national Czech identity, and opposed Germanic cultural influence. Furthermore, in Austro-Hungary one’s nationality was determined by the language one spoke. Since Jews had been forbidden from using Hebrew or the Yiddish vernacular from the late-eighteenth century onwards, they mostly spoke German. Therefore, officially and popularly Jews were demonized as Germanizing elements, and thus aliens to Czech culture.

Integration for Jews in urban settings was easier than it was for those living in the countryside, where German culture was less entrenched and Jews were seen as Germans by the Czech peasantry. For this reason Jews who remained in villages, such as Maria Beck, became more attuned to Czech culture rather than to German culture. Jews in Moravia were also generally more observant than their compatriots in Bohemia. This may have owed to the fact that Moravian Jewry was strengthened by a continuous influx of Jews from Poland, especially from the Duchy of Tesin.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>34</sup> Meir Lamed and Yeshayahu Jelinek, “Moravia,” In *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, eds. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), pp.471-476.

### Family life in Moravia

Koerner spent his childhood skating and skiing in the winter, hiking in neighbouring mountains in the spring and autumn. The Körners lived in a large house with a garden and adjacent agricultural property, as well as a large wholesale and retail lumber yard. They had a maid and a cook and the house was always full with children, friends, visitors, and poor students who were regularly invited to dinner.<sup>35</sup> Though the family was not deeply religious, in the sense of observing every holiday, the children were taught to respect Judaism as the religion of their forbearers.<sup>36</sup> The Körner family atmosphere seems to have been one of rational humanism where knowledge of the Jewish tradition and moral standards were taught and exemplified by Maria Körner.<sup>37</sup> Of his parents Walter Koerner writes that:

Both my parents nurtured responsible habits in us. We were constantly encouraged to be concerned for the well-being of our fellow citizens, and to give, not in impersonal, detached ways, but individually, and from the heart. We were educated to make time and energy available for public service, and to become involved in community affairs. Mother in particular emphasized that we should always be straightforward...about our convictions and ambitions, while being generous and helpful.<sup>38</sup>

Walter Koerner explains that, “The Jewish faith was regarded as the mainstay of the family in time of adversity...We were taught that the law should be respected as being inherited from our ancestors.”<sup>39</sup> Maria’s strong reliance in God and on the Torah only intensified as she grew older. She taught her children to come close to God through

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<sup>35</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.36.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p.39.

prayer and she also taught them “...to include others, family, friends, and all humanity, in [their] prayers.”<sup>40</sup>

Isidor Körner was a powerful man, whose cosmopolitan aspirations and inquisitive personality affected the whole family; he influenced the lives of all of his children, especially the careers of his four sons.<sup>41</sup> Like other middle-class patriarchs of Moravia and Bohemia, Isidor enjoyed the good life: good food, good theatre and good companionship. He travelled regularly throughout Europe on business, was always well dressed and rarely seen without a cigar. Walter Koerner described his father as having an “aura of distinction” about him.<sup>42</sup>

Despite his cosmopolitan interests, Isidor Körner was not detached from Judaism, quite the opposite in fact. He still kept a hand in the religious and cultural affairs of the Jewish community of Nový Jičín (Neutitschein), where he served as the president of the Jewish Cultural Centre.<sup>43</sup> And, it was for Isidor Körner’s sake, whose Hebrew name was Israel, that his eldest (and apparently more secularized) son Theodore Koerner sent his own son, John Koerner, to study for his bar mitzvah. Unfortunately, Isidor Körner died in 1925 before the event could ever take place.<sup>44</sup> Like many Czech Jews, Isidor Körner’s generation was more rooted in tradition than the generation of their children, who were more steeped in secular cultural ambitions.

Walter Koerner notes that of the ten children, Leon Koerner had earned for himself a special place in his mother’s heart. Not only had he served as an artillery

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.39.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.44.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.45.

<sup>43</sup> Galston, *Walter C. Koerner Fonds Inventory Biography*, Series of Family and other Photographs BC1957.

<sup>44</sup> Erin Hyman, *Interview with John Koerner*, ed. Erin Hyman (Vancouver BC: March 2009).

officer in the Austro-Hungarian Army, where he was wounded, decorated for bravery eight times, and contracted malaria,<sup>45</sup> Leon Koerner was also his mother's most educated son. Leon Koerner completed studies at the Exportakademie in Vienna, La Sorbonne in Paris, and the London School of Economics and he also worked for several European financial institutions.<sup>46</sup> So it is perhaps not surprising that when Isidor Körner retired in 1920, his sons took over the business and Koerner became the de facto head of the firm, although officially his eldest brother Theodore Koerner was the senior partner.<sup>47</sup>

Between 1920 and 1938 Leon Koerner continued to develop both his own reputation and the reputation of the family firm, helping mould it into a key player in the European forest industry.<sup>48</sup> Leon Koerner worked on the Schoenbach Forestry Council in the 1920s and in the 1930s he was involved with the Czechoslovakian Central Wood Sales Organization (CUPOD), a state-run cooperative responsible for returning the Czechoslovakian forest industry to prosperity after the Depression. Koerner travelled extensively throughout Europe promoting Czechoslovakian lumber and wood products often as the Czech representative at the European Timber Exporters Convention (ETEC).<sup>49</sup> This gave IKAG a strong foothold in the expanding European market.

During the 1930s the family firm generated a considerable profit margin, thus not only amassing a significant amount of financial wealth for the family, but also making considerable contributions to the Czechoslovakian economy by employing upwards of

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<sup>45</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Koerner achieved the highest post-secondary education of any of the Körner children Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.44; Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.1.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>49</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.80.

15,000 workers in mills, factories, and offices throughout Czechoslovakia and Europe.<sup>50</sup> Walter Koerner commented that “wherever charm, force of personality, and enthusiasm could carry the day, Koerner triumphed.”<sup>51</sup> Koerner liked challenges and was adept at public relations. Although he was a loyal and generous friend, according to his brother, Koerner could also “lapse into excessive frostiness,” perhaps compensating for his initial bursts of exuberance or for people taking advantage of him.<sup>52</sup>

In 1922 Leon Koerner married his long-time sweetheart, Thea Rosenquist. Rosenquist was born in 1898 in the port city of Lübeck.<sup>53</sup> Until her marriage to Leon Koerner, Rosenquist performed in theatrical and cinematic productions, which were generally created under the auspices of Jewish directors and film makers.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps for the benefit of her career, Rosenquist converted to Lutheranism at some point prior to 1938. Partly due to Rosenquist’s career and her ongoing interest in the arts and cultural scene, the couple lived in Vienna prior to and during the early period of their marriage. Living in Vienna had its disadvantages for Leon Koerner, whose business interests were mainly in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Nevertheless the couple remained in Vienna and until the Anschluss in March of 1938, where they were very much “attuned to the social and cultural atmosphere” of Vienna.<sup>55</sup> Aside from Koerner’s involvement with Zionist organizations, not much is known about the extent to which he practiced Judaism while living in Vienna. It is possible that, although he and Thea Rosenquist gravitated towards

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<sup>50</sup> Mackenzie Porter, *Leon Koerner's One-Man Giveaway Program*, (MacLean's: August 4, 1956), p.34.

<sup>51</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.47.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>53</sup> “Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S, 1895-1956 about Thea Korner,” in The Generations Network, Inc. [database online]. Provo, UT, USA March 12, 2009 [cited 2009]. [<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=canadianbc&h=5598227&ti=0&indiv=try&gss=pt>]. Lübeck was also the home of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach’s parents and aunts and uncles.

<sup>54</sup> “Thea Rosenquist Filmography,” cited 2009, [<http://uk.imdb.com/name/nm1258348/>].

<sup>55</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.48.

assimilation, their circle of friends was composed of other like-minded Jews. During the 1920s it was not unusual for Jews wishing to shed the vestiges of traditional cultural ties to continue to fraternize together. This was particularly true for Viennese Jews.<sup>56</sup>

Rosenquist's conversion to Christianity was not unusual, especially in Vienna, where it had been on the rise since the first decade of the twentieth century and was considered an "entry ticket" into fashionable European society.<sup>57</sup> The reasons for Jews to join the *Konfessionslosigkeit* (conversion culture) were often linked with a desire for upward mobility and complete assimilation. Although Czech Jews converted less frequently than those in Austria, documents attest to the conversion of Leon Koerner's sister-in-law Iby Molnar (born in Hungary) as well as his youngest brother Walter Koerner and his wife Marianne Hinkl converted to Roman Catholicism.<sup>58</sup> It may be assumed that although Iby Molnar, Thea Rosenquist, Marianne Hinkl and Walter Koerner were part of the *Konfessionslos* class, it is unlikely that they converted out of pure conviction and that like many *Konfessionslos* they ultimately saw themselves as citizens of the state. As Sam Heller explained, motivation to convert was often prompted by traditional understanding of European antisemitism, which was based on religious differences, rather than racial ones.<sup>59</sup> As Nazi propaganda spread outside of Germany, antisemitism began to take on racial tones, the impetus for conversion decreased—given

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<sup>56</sup> Marsha L. Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: assimilation and identity* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, c1983), pp.132-7.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134. *Ibid.*, p.132-133. Between 1870 and 1910 the *Konfessionslos* class was primarily made of professionals, business employees, merchants, civil servants, and students. *Ibid.*, p.137.

<sup>58</sup> Rosemary Cunningham, "A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contributions to Vancouver," *British Columbia History* 39, no. 2 (2006), pp.12-21; Walter C. Koerner Fonds, *Walter Koerner family official documents -Testimonium Baptismale, 1909-1938*, Box 28-2-UBC Rare Books and Special Collections

<sup>59</sup> Oral History Interview Sam Heller Leonoff Cyril September 1, 1976 Vancouver BC The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 1/2 side 1: 365.

that baptism did little to erase racial stigmas.<sup>60</sup> However, there were many Jews who clung to the notion that if they erased their religious ties to Judaism, assimilation would be possible and therefore it is possible the documents attesting to some of the aforementioned conversions were fabricated around the time of WWII as a safety measure.<sup>61</sup>

If Czech Jewish culture in the late-eighteenth century was more German-oriented, in the early-twentieth century Czech Jews were increasingly orienting themselves towards Czech national culture and becoming “self-consciously bilingual.”<sup>62</sup> By the early decades of the twentieth century the Jewish community had lost its cohesive structure. Although the first elected president, Thomas Masaryk,<sup>63</sup> of the newly established Czechoslovakia (est. 1918), recognized Jewish nationality; for the most part, Czech Jews were no longer defining themselves solely in terms of religion. The rabbinate no longer directed Jewish communal life, traditional education and the use of Yiddish had been abandoned, and Jews no longer suffered demographic and occupational restrictions. Czech Jews began to interpret their past in the same way Czechs interpreted theirs, through a national and increasingly secular lens. Czech Jews

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<sup>60</sup> Rozenblit, *The Jews of Vienna, 1867-1914: assimilation and identity*, p.137.

<sup>61</sup> According to Erin Hyman, the papers and dates for Walter and Marianne Koerner’s conversion may have been fabricated as a safety measure against the Nazis.

<sup>62</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.50. However Jews had not completely abandoned German cultural aspirations. Jewish parents continued to send their children to German gymnasiums and academies. Indeed in 1900 seventy seven per cent of all Moravian Jews declared German to be their mother tongue, while only six teen per cent declared it as Czech. Lamed and Jelinek, *Moravia*, pp.471-476.

<sup>63</sup> In the face of increasing antisemitism, Masaryk, then a young Catholic Czech nationalist professor, spoke-out against the Hilsner libel and the ongoing Dreyfus trial. Masaryk maintained that a belief in ritual murder was a disgrace to the Czech people and to the Christian religion. When Thomas Masaryk became Czechoslovakia’s first president in 1918, he made a point of ensuring that Czechoslovakia’s Declaration of Independence guaranteed National minorities equal rights as Czechs. Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*, p.17. Under Czechoslovakia’s new constitution, a Jewish national identity was a valid one, despite the fact that neither Yiddish nor Hebrew were spoken by the majority of Czechoslovakian Jews. Not only did Masaryk accord Jews a minority status, but he was also a strong supporter of Zionism and the creation of Jewish national home in Palestine. *Ibid.*, p.31.

“retained a feeling of deep reverence for their past, cherishing their ancient synagogues, historical monuments, cemeteries, and ...community... social and charitable activities.”<sup>64</sup> Masaryk’s recognition of the Jewish minority also opened a variety of opportunities for their integration into Czechoslovakian society. In the 1920s eighteen percent of all university students were Jews, despite the fact that they constituted 2.5 percent of the total population.<sup>65</sup> Jews were appointed as academics in universities; they became leading journalists and political as well as public figures.

The loss of religious cohesion to Czech Jewish life resulted in a search for identity. As Jewish society split into a number of different factions, including liberals, German Jews, Czech Jews, Zionist Jews, Czechs of the Mosaic faith, agnostics, nihilists, atheists, complete assimilationists, and *Konfessionslos*, Jews broke with traditional Judaism and drifted, sometimes unknowingly, into a world that would replace Jewish tradition. At the same time, however, they brought with them “peculiar fragments” of their past.<sup>66</sup> The Koerner family was somewhat typical of Czech Jewry of the early twentieth century, in the sense of their loose ties to Judaism, their broad humanist perspectives, and the extent of their involvement with non-Jewish society.

Like his father before him, Leon Koerner kept his hand in Jewish affairs. Indeed local newspapers described him as having the souls of both a Jewish idealist and a capitalist.<sup>67</sup> At the time, from the perspective of the Czech public, these qualities were not necessarily flattering. Nevertheless, like many of his counterparts, Koerner was

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p.20.

<sup>65</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.12.

<sup>66</sup> Alan Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite* : Robin Brass Studio, 2008), p.256.

<sup>67</sup> Karel Chobot and Adolf Turek, *Vlastivědný sborník okresu Nový Jičín, Proceedings Vlastivědný Nový Jicin district* (Nový Jičín., 1967).

attracted to Zionism. By 1918 the Prague Zionist and Czech Jewish movements were competing for the right to represent the Czech Jewish community.<sup>68</sup> In 1919 Koerner attended the World Zionist Congress in Prague. By the early 1920s, Koerner acted as the representative for Moravian-Silesian Zionist District Committee at various Zionist Congresses throughout Europe.<sup>69</sup> He was also elected the head of the Jewish National People's Party. In this capacity, he travelled annually to London where he attended meetings and presumably took care of family finance and banking. When Leon Koerner fled Czechoslovakia in 1938, the Moravian Zionist Chapter ceased to exist. The dissolution of Czechoslovakia at the behest of Nazi Germany put an abrupt end to Koerner's public affiliation with his Jewishness.

Nazi racial categorizations came as a complete shock to the majority of Czech Jews, who could not accept that such an ideology would be supported by Czechoslovakia. Irrespective of their identity, many Czech Jews, be they Zionists, assimilationists, or *Konfessionslos*, came to see themselves ultimately as Czech citizens. Ironically, it was this adhesion to Czech national identity, at times coupled with the negation of past connections with Jewish identity, which often prevented Jews from escaping Czechoslovakia in time. The criss-crossing of categories had lifelong and generational repercussions on Czech Jewry. As time passed, the intricate history of European Jews, like Leon Koerner, was often concealed by impeccable manners and polished appearances.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Rothkirchen, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: Facing the Holocaust*, p.31.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20. By the twentieth century, Czech Jews were becoming increasingly urban. By 1910 more than seventy per cent of Jews lived in towns with populations of more than 10,000 people; seven decades earlier, of the 347 separate Bohemian Jewish communities, only twenty two lived in towns with fifty or more people.

<sup>70</sup> See Epstein, *Where She Came From: A Daughter's Search for her Mother's History*, p.322.

### **Fleeing Czechoslovakia and Stopover in Britain**

Although Czechoslovakian liberalism had initially attracted thousands of refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, by the 1930s open hostility against Jews swept segments of Czech society. The Körners left one week before the signing of the Munich Pact on September 30, 1938 and the annexation of the Sudetenland by Nazi Germany.<sup>71</sup>

On fleeing Czechoslovakia, Walter Koerner wrote:

On September 18, 1938, just before the Godesberg meeting of Hitler and Chamberlain, F. Sedia, the political secretary of the Prime Minister, called me to say that Prime Minister Hodža wanted to see me. Hodža frankly and unhappily admitted that he and his government were going to resign in the near future. He had just returned from Paris where that shameful betrayal [the Munich Pact] had been arranged. Milan Hodža in his inimitable mixture of Slovak and Czech philosophized: “right or not, by Nazi rules racially, socially, politically you and your family are Jews.” He advised me to leave the country without delay, saying that we risked destruction if we stayed.<sup>72</sup>

According to Walter Koerner, “Leon, until the last moment, was unwilling to leave.”<sup>73</sup> For more than a decade Koerner had acted as the head of the family business and as such had been privy to the elite stratum of corporate society. In addition, his marriage to Rosenquist ensured Koerner a foothold in the fashionable arts world.<sup>74</sup> For Koerner, like for most patriotic Czechs, Jews and non-Jews alike, and especially those who had fought in WWI, the idea of abandoning one’s country in its hour of need was hard to accept. Having fought in WWI, it was extremely difficult for Koerner to believe that the Czech army could not keep the Germans at bay, at least until the allied armies came to Czechoslovakia’s aid. The idea that the allies would let Czechoslovakia come

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<sup>71</sup> Shortly after the Körners fled Czechoslovakia, the country had lost three tenths its territory, one third of its population and a significant portion of its national income. Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.113.

<sup>72</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.10.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

under Nazi occupation in order to buy themselves some time had not yet occurred to most people. The fact that Thea Koerner also would not be leaving with her husband only added to Koerner's pressure to stay.<sup>75</sup> Brothers Otto, Walter and Theodore had relocated their families to Holland, France, and England respectively.

Under the pressure of his brothers, Koerner finally consented to leave. Otto Koerner arranged for a chartered plane to fly Leon Koerner, his brother Walter Koerner, and their nephew John Koerner from Prague to Amsterdam. From there all three took the train to Paris where John re-joined his parents, while the brothers continued on to London.<sup>76</sup> A few hours after the Koerner plane departed, the Prague airport was closed to all civilian traffic.<sup>77</sup> President Eduard Beneš and the Hodža government resigned in October of 1938 following the Munich talks of September 29, 1938, which resulted in the cession of the Sudetenland. As its democratic leaders stepped down, Czechoslovakia's morale reached a new low. The Czechoslovakian Parliament was dismembered and the country dissolved in March of 1939. By March 14, 1939 Bratislava had declared an independent Slovakia and strategically allied itself with Nazi Germany; Hungary seized Ruthenia, and Bohemia and Moravia became occupied by the Nazis.<sup>78</sup>

Although Jews had been in Czech lands for more than one thousand years,<sup>79</sup> the events of the second half of the twentieth century all but ensured the decimation of once thriving Jewish communities. While Jews never formed a large section of

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., p.14. John Koerner, *A Brush with Life* (Vancouver, BC, Canada: Ronsdale Press, c2005), p.22.

<sup>77</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, 13.

<sup>78</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.113.

<sup>79</sup> Although Jews may have first come to Czech lands with the contingents of Roman soldiers, no historical proof backs such claims. Ibid., p.23.

Czechoslovakia's population, they did represent an important historical component of its society. During the interwar period, Czechoslovakia was the only country in Europe that accorded Jews minority rights. Unfortunately a large segment of the general population ignored these rights during the Nazi occupation of the country. Prior to the Nazi occupation/alliance, many Czech Jews were strong supporters of Czech culture and independence, and like members of the Koerner family, had fought in WWI; hence they could not concede that Czechoslovakia would be overtaken by Germany. Out of patriotic loyalty, thousands of Jews delayed their departure from Czechoslovakia until it was too late, including three of Koerner's sisters and their families.<sup>80</sup>

Approximately 80,000 Czech Jews and 100,000 Slovak Jews perished in the Shoah. Before WWII, 26,000 Jews fled Czechoslovakia and a similar number left immediately afterwards.<sup>81</sup> Those Jews, who escaped in time, often joined the Czech Resistance abroad.<sup>82</sup> In fact, fifty percent of the Czech armed forces abroad during WWII were composed of Jewish members. The Jewish community of Czechoslovakia continued to dwindle in the decades following WWII, with as many as 6,000 Jews leaving the country during the Prague Spring of 1968.<sup>83</sup> In 2006 there were approximately 12,000 Jews living in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a small number when compared to the 356,830 Jews living in Czechoslovakia in 1933.<sup>84</sup>

Although the Koerners left Czechoslovakia with only one suitcase each, they were able to make arrangements to have some of their personal effects forwarded to

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<sup>80</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.3.

<sup>81</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.12.

<sup>82</sup> "The Czech Republic," in American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, cited 2009, [<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/Czech.html>].

<sup>83</sup> Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.12.

<sup>84</sup> The Jewish Virtual Library, *The Czech Republic*, Berger and Bet ha-tefutsot, *Where Cultures Meet: The Story of the Jews of Czechoslovakia*, p.107.

them. After March 15, 1939 all remaining personal assets and corporate holdings came under Nazi control and all documents attesting to Koerner ownership were destroyed.<sup>85</sup> Some of their best employees would betray them. Despite the Nazis dissolution of Koerner business holdings, the brothers insisted on continuing the family business overseas. The brothers concluded that London was the gateway to alternative and viable markets,<sup>86</sup> a decision based on Koerner's fluency in English and his familiarity with the city, having studied at the London School of Economics prior to WWI. Furthermore, the family firm had a longstanding relationship (more than fifty years) with the merchant bank Brown, Shipley, and Company Ltd.

The brothers had managed to raise a credit of approximately three hundred thousand pounds with the bank, a fraction of the family holdings before the rise of Nazi power, yet, considering their circumstances, significant capital nevertheless.<sup>87</sup> Despite the bank's confidence in the Koerner ability to rebound, Koerner remained in a heightened state of anxiety until the safe arrival of Thea Koerner in December of 1938. After Thea Koerner's arrival in London, Koerner's brothers suggested that he and his wife take an extended holiday, a trip around the world—what Walter Koerner described as the “cure-all” of those days—both as a way of relaxing and to investigate business opportunities further afield.<sup>88</sup>

Their first stop was New York City. Leon and Thea Koerner sailed from Southampton, England to New York aboard the ship Queen Mary, arriving on February

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<sup>85</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.13.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

<sup>87</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.7.

<sup>88</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.15.

9, 1939.<sup>89</sup> After visiting the World's Fair, they travelled to Montréal where they met with Sir Edward Beatty, a leading businessman and a prominent figure in the rail industry. Initially attracted to Canada because of its business potential and its parliamentary system of governance, Montréal's cold winter deterred Koerner from investigating Canadian business prospects any further.<sup>90</sup> The Koerners quickly made up their minds to spend the rest of the winter in California, but were persuaded by Beatty to first survey the lumber possibilities in British Columbia before travelling south. By the end of February, the Koerners found themselves in Vancouver. Instead of snow, there was rain and it was still cold.

### **Canadian immigration laws**

The Koerner's "cure-all" trip to North America lived up to its name when the "trip" resulted in the subsequent immigration of many of the Koerner siblings to Canada and ended up not only saving their business but also their lives. However, the Koerner family's settlement in BC was not a simple matter, as they had to contend with the country's legacy of restrictive immigration laws and antisemitism.

Migration studies indicate that immigration is generally attributed to the maintenance of economic self-interest. Indeed, most immigrants to Canada came in search of economic security, and to escape from societies dominated by economic hardship and other accompanying social insecurities such as war, famine, and/or oppression. This certainly held true for the Koerners. Studies also show that the receiving countries generally have ulterior reasons for accepting immigrants. Canada's

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<sup>89</sup> Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S., 1895-1956 about Thea Korner*.

<sup>90</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.18.

immigration history has been informed by a desire for economic prosperity and maintenance of British dominion over the land.<sup>91</sup> During Canada's early immigration period, immigration agents recruited wealthy farmers, agricultural labourers and female domestics in Great Britain, the United States, and Northern Europe—and there was little distinction between different immigrant groups. The first formal discriminatory measure taken in regard to immigrant came in the form of the Head Tax Act of 1885, which was passed in order to discourage large scale Chinese immigration.<sup>92</sup> Discriminatory taxes against Chinese immigrants as well as discriminatory by-laws against BC Chinese residents would not be repealed until after WWII (See Appendix H for further discussion).

By the first decade of the twentieth century, the federal government was able to restrict any group from immigrating. On the eve of WWI twenty two percent of Canada's total population was foreign born, and with the outbreak of the war a significant portion of them became enemy aliens.<sup>93</sup> Both the War and the Russian Revolution of 1917 inspired high anti-immigration sentiments among Canadians and Canadian immigration regulations were revised at War's end. During the 1920s, scientific racism had gained influence and Canada's immigration policies not only shifted to reflect the country's economic concerns, but they also reflected the trend

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<sup>91</sup> Jean R. Burnet and Howard Palmer, *Coming Canadians: An Introduction to a History of Canada's Peoples*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1988), p.253; Moshe Lissak, *The Mass Immigration in the Fifties: The Failure of the Melting Pot Policy* (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1999), p.162; Ninette Kelley and Michael J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), p.621; Reginald Whitaker, *Double Standard: The Secret History of Canadian Immigration Policy*, 1st ed. (Toronto: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1987), p.348.

<sup>92</sup> Chinese immigration was almost stopped entirely in 1923 with the enactment of the *Chinese Exclusion Act*; twenty five Chinese entered Canada between 1925 and 1946. From 1885 until 1923 the Chinese head taxes and immigration restrictions increased, only to be repealed in 1946.

<sup>93</sup> "6.1 The Growth of Restrictive Immigration," in Applied History Research Group / University of Calgary, cited 2009, [[http://www.ucalgary.ca.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/applied\\_history/tutor/migrations/](http://www.ucalgary.ca.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/applied_history/tutor/migrations/)].

towards social biases based on race. Beginning in 1923, immigration categories were expanded to include “preferred,” “non-preferred,” and “special permit groups.”<sup>94</sup> 1923 was also the year in which the Chinese Exclusion Act was legislated, although anti-Asian sentiments had permeated BC social policy since colonial times (see Appendix H for discussion). Preferred immigrants included mostly Protestant immigrants from Britain and Northern and Western Europe. Non-preferred immigrants included those from specific Eastern and Central European countries. Southern Europeans and all Jews, no matter their country of origin, were categorized among the special permits class, a category that ranked lower than the non-preferred group. The decades leading up to and including WWII would witness drastic changes in immigration, not only with regards to the general immigrant population, but specifically regarding Jewish immigration.

Low wages and high unemployment characterized the 1930s, while the cost of living remained the same. In 1933, Canadian unemployment reached thirty percent; in some areas it was even higher.<sup>95</sup> With a shrinking job market and a growing supply of surplus labour, few Canadians were willing to entertain the idea of supplementing the labour pool with immigrants. Not only did Canada close its doors to immigrants but by 1935, Canada had also deported more than 28,000 immigrants. This rate was several times higher than in the previous decade.<sup>96</sup> In its efforts to curtail immigration, the federal government adopted several restrictive regulations by way of the Privy Council.

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<sup>94</sup> By 1925 the CPR and the Canadian National Railways were given control over the recruitment of European agriculturalists. However, Canada did not acquire as many agriculturalists as it would have liked. Between 1925 and 1931, Canada received approximately 130,000 immigrants, ten percent of whom were agriculturalists

<sup>95</sup> “Why did Canada refuse to admit Jewish refugees in the 1930s,” cited 2009, [<http://faculty.marianopolis.edu/c.belanger/quebechistory/readings/CanadaandJewishRefugeesinthe1930s.html>].

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

The net result was that by 1932 only Americans and ethnically British subjects of the commonwealth were allowed to immigrate to Canada without restrictions. Members of the non-preferred category were permitted entry in Canada as long as they were financially endowed agriculturalists or industrialists in the mining, lumbering or logging industries.<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore, Canada did not distinguish between refugees and immigrants.<sup>98</sup> Throughout the 1930s, Canada received a total of 252,044 immigrants, including a total of 13,345 Jews.<sup>99</sup> This was a drastic change from the 1920s when Canada received 1,264,220 immigrants with 44,810 Jews among them.<sup>100</sup> Given Canada's economic situation, it is perhaps understandable why Canada's doors were closed to immigrants during the Great Depression.

### **Antisemitism in Canada**

Canada's restrictive immigration policies were compounded by what historian Alan Mendelson calls "genteel" antisemitism, an antisemitism expressed by elite society through the intellectual realm as opposed to through "vulgar" physical violence.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> "The virtual history tour of Canada," in The American-Israeli Cooperative, cited 2009, [<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/vjw/canada.html#Between>].

<sup>98</sup> Bélanger, *Why did Canada refuse to admit Jewish refugees in the 1930s*; Isabel Kaprielian-Chuchill, "Armenian refugees and their entry into Canada, 1919-1930," *Canadian Historical Review* LXXI, no. 1 (1990), pp.80-108.

<sup>99</sup> Reginald Whitaker, *Canadian immigration policy since confederation* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), p.2.

<sup>100</sup> Louis Rosenberg and Weinfeld M, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), p.136, Table 92; Applied History Research Group, 6.1 *The Growth of Restrictive Immigration*, Whitaker, *Canadian immigration policy since confederation*, p.2.

<sup>101</sup> Antisemitic rhetoric generally depicts Jews "as enemies of Christianity, enemies of the national state, enemies of peaceful international coexistence, enemies of the poor, or simply enemies of all humanity." Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, pp.1-2. For further discussion see Pierre Anctil. "Interludes of Hostility: Judeo-Christian Relations in Québec in the Interwar Period." In

According to Mendelson, antisemitic expressions differed only in terms of their physicality and not in their negative assumptions about Jews and Judaism.<sup>102</sup> Although some critics argue that it is futile to distinguish between different types of antisemitism, since all antisemitism is vulgar by definition, Mendelson illustrates that the Canadian elites who subscribed to genteel antisemitism distanced themselves from its physical expressions.<sup>103</sup> Mendelson explains that genteel antisemitism was prevented from expressing itself violently due to notions of “noblesse oblige, gentlemanly decorum,” and the boundaries of “polite society.”<sup>104</sup> During the WWII era not all expressers of genteel antisemitism consciously categorized themselves as anti-Semites.<sup>105</sup> Nonetheless, both subconscious and conscious expressions of genteel antisemitism had social repercussions in Canada.<sup>106</sup>

### ***The 1930s***

Along with the economic impoverishment of the 1930s, Canada tapped into an “inherited legacy of antisemitic assumptions [that] helped determine the outcome of some of the most shameful incidents in Canadian history.”<sup>107</sup> Both locally and politically genteel antisemitism had a widespread presence across the country, despite the fact that Jews formed 1.51 percent and 1.48 percent of the entire Canadian population in 1931 and 1941 respectively. In 1937 a Canadian Jewish Congress committee reported that “During the past few years we have witnessed an amazing growth of antisemitism.

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*Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation.* Edited by Alan T. Davies, 135-166. Waterloo, Ont.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>105</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.8.

<sup>106</sup> Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, p.3.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p.3.

Manifestations of an intensified anti-Jewish sentiment have been springing up everywhere.”<sup>108</sup> In a 1938 study commissioned by the CJC, it was found that “quotas and restrictions had become a way of life for Canadian Jewry.”<sup>109</sup>

Anglo-Saxon nativism was permeated with antisemitic rhetoric, and exclusion of Jews from participating in social institutions was common across the country. In Québec antisemitism was as visible as it was vociferous and the upper echelons of Québec society were saturated with it. In the thirties antisemitism was prevalent everywhere in Canada. As Troper and Abella note, “Anti-Jewish sentiments were being voiced regularly—and with impunity—by many respectable newspapers, politicians, businessmen and clergymen, and by leading officers of such groups as the Canadian Corps Association, the Orange Order, and the Knights of Columbus as well as farm and business organizations.”<sup>110</sup> The American chargé d’affaires noted that the admission of Jewish refugees into Canada would be regarded as a “calamity.”<sup>111</sup> In Canada, antisemitism did not have violent consequences; rather it prevented social and cultural mobility for Canadian as well as foreign-born Jews.

In a meeting between Mackenzie King and the Premier of BC, T.D. Patullo, Patullo advised Mackenzie King that although BC had no objections to taking in refugees, Jews were not wanted in the province.<sup>112</sup> Neither Jewish refugees nor Jews in general were particularly welcome in British Columbia. For example the Royal

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<sup>108</sup> In Canadian Jewish Congress, *Report on Antisemitism Activities 4-6*, ed. CJC National Archives (1937) from Irving M. Abella and Franklin Bialystok, “Canada,” In *The World Reacts to the Holocaust*, eds. David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzweig (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins university Press, 1996), p.749.

<sup>109</sup> Canadian Jewish Congress, *Report on Antisemitism Activities 4-6*, p.750.

<sup>110</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.51.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>112</sup> In Department of External Affairs, *Skelton Memorandum*, Department of External Affairs, January 10, 1939), Box 779, file 382, from Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.50.

Vancouver Yacht Club, the Vancouver Lawn Tennis and Badminton Club, the Shaughnessy Golf Club, the Vancouver Club, and the Terminal City Club, excluded Jews from joining.<sup>113</sup> This was extended to Vancouver's elite business sector, which would have been put in the precarious position of being unable to conduct business meetings with Jewish business people in acceptable meeting places. Jews were routinely turned away from prospective jobs, excluded from university fraternities, turned away from summer resorts, and prevented from renting apartments or buying houses in certain residential locations.<sup>114</sup>

Leading up to WWII countless fascist and populist movements sprouted up throughout the country, including a few in Vancouver, such as the lumber baron Charles Fenn Pretty's Fascisti, Francis Pilkington's Praetorian League at UBC, the Citizen's League headed by former police chief Tom MacInnes, and the Social Credit Group of British Columbia—a movement that originated in Britain—and by the 1930s had strong roots in Alberta. The Social Credit movement advocated fiscal reforms that were popular among those who suffered from the Great Depression. Unfortunately the reforms were also steeped in antisemitic and populist rhetoric, derived from the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. In 1935 the party claimed forty six percent of Alberta's popular vote.<sup>115</sup> Despite later attempts in post-WWII years, when antisemitic rhetoric became publicly inappropriate, and leaders such as Ernest Manning, attempted to eliminate the party's antisemitic tone from within party ranks; the economic reforms advocated by the party

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<sup>113</sup> Cunningham, *A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contributions to Vancouver*, pp.12-21.

<sup>114</sup> Rosenberg and Weinfeld M, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, p.300.

<sup>115</sup> Social Credit ideology was popular among immigrant groups from eastern and central Europe as well as farmers, whose market that had declined some 92 per cent, made. Janine Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, c2000), p.8.

were so intimately connected to such hostile rhetoric, that the party retained the message even after it got rid of its antisemitic vocabulary.<sup>116</sup>

A Gallup poll taken in mid-1943 asked Canadians what nationalities they would “like to keep from settling in Canada?”<sup>117</sup> Forty seven percent said they would keep out Jews, following Japanese (at seventy eight percent) and Germans (at fifty eight percent). A similar poll was taken in 1946 and this time forty nine percent of Canadians said they preferred to cut Jewish immigrants out, second only to Japanese. The same poll found that the highest percentage of prejudice against Jews existed in Québec, followed by the Maritimes, Ontario, the Prairies and British Columbia, in that order, with the range varying from sixty seven percent in Québec to thirty percent in British Columbia.<sup>118</sup>

The reasons behind Canadian anti-Jewish sentiment of the 1930s, genteel or otherwise, were related to the economic depression, the successes of Nazi propagandists and American hate-mongers at spreading their message, the prominence of Jewish names in the left-wing movement and the widespread belief among Canadians that Jews were communists. Furthermore, three decades of open immigration had inspired a nativist reaction among Canadians—antisemitism may have been seen as an extreme form of nationalism. Finally, both Eastern European immigrants, as well as fundamentalists from other parts of Canada—such as Western Canada and Québec—

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<sup>116</sup>The Social Credit party would only form BC’s provincial government beginning in 1952, the BC party was an offshoot of the Alberta Social Credit party. Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Wilfrid Sanders, *Jack [and] Jacques: a scientific approach to the study of French and non-French thought in Canada* (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1943), p.40.

<sup>118</sup> The degree of prejudice had little to do with the percentage of Jews to the general population. Manitoba had the highest percentage of population at 2.6 per cent; Quebec had two per cent; while Ontario had 1.84 per cent. Pierre Berton, “No Jews need apply,” *Canadian Jewish News* 35, no. 50 (December 23, 2004), re-printed from MacLean’s Magazine November 1, 1948.

played off antisemitic religious rhetoric.<sup>119</sup> The combined effort created a highly antisemitic atmosphere in Canada on the eve of WWII. If the 1930s were difficult, Jewish immigration applicants would experience even lower rates of admission between 1940 and 1945.

## **WWII**

In the years leading up to and including WWII, Canadian political and business elites were infused with genteel antisemitism. Goldwin Smith, scholar and controversial writer, and mentor to many of that generation's leaders, helped to instil antisemitism into Canadian social thinking.<sup>120</sup> Smith opined that Jews, who did not accept Jesus as messiah, were "condemned to wander the earth and to make their living through the parasitic exploitation of non-Jews."<sup>121</sup> By this logic it was inferred that Jews could never be truly patriotic. Although Mackenzie King was occasionally moved by the plight of an individual Jewish refugee, overall he and many in his government believed that "Jews harboured dangerous tendencies."<sup>122</sup>

The bureaucracy involved with immigration to Canada came under the charge of the Immigration Branch Director, in the Department of Mines and Resources, Frederick Charles Blair, who personally vetted each application for admission. Blair was a church-going Baptist from southern Ontario and like Mackenzie King, he "increasingly mirrored the antisemitic spirit of his times."<sup>123</sup> In 1938 Blair stated that the "pressure on

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<sup>119</sup> Abella and Bialystok, *Canada*, pp.753-754.

<sup>120</sup> To various degrees these included Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King, Henri Bourassa, Vincent Massey, and George M. Grant, Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, p.4.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p.34.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

the part of the Jewish people to get into Canada has never been greater than it is now, and I am glad to be able to add that after 35 years of experience here, that it has never been so carefully controlled."<sup>124</sup> So acceptable was antisemitic rhetoric during that era that Blair did not consider himself an anti-Semite. The government reasoned that Jewish immigration restrictions were humanitarian because they prevented future antisemitic provocations against Jewish Canadians.<sup>125</sup> This policy was strongly influenced by Vincent Massey, then High Commissioner in London. Massey pushed for the acceptance of 3,000 Sudetenland Germans, thus creating the illusion that Canada did indeed welcome immigrants.<sup>126</sup> By mid-January 1939, six weeks after Kristallnacht, Mackenzie King considered the Jewish refugee problem resolved.<sup>127</sup>

### ***Impressions of antisemitism in BC***

Like the Koerners, members of the Heller family were some of the few lucky Jewish refugees who gained entrance to Canada during the WWII period. Hailing from a prominent lumber family in Poland, brothers Paul and Sam Heller were able to use their expertise in the forest industry, as well as their abundant capital, to flee Europe. Escaping first to England, from there they succeeded in securing an Order-in-Council which granted them Canadian residency. The Heller entrance to Canada was granted under the condition that the Hellers transferred significant funds to Canada and that they

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., p.8.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>126</sup> Vincent Massey was a fringe member of the aristocratic and antisemitic Cliveden set. He was enthusiastic about anti-Nazi Sudetenland refugees. Massey told Mackenzie King that only a few of the refugees were Jews. "If we could take a substantial number of them it would put us in a much stronger position in relation to later appeals from and on behalf of non-Aryans." The Sudetenlanders included "many persons who would be much more desirable as Canadian settlers and much more likely to succeed in our country than certain other types of refugees." Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe*, pp.47-48

<sup>127</sup> Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, p.84.

start a business which would employ Canadians.<sup>128</sup> Paul, Sam and their wives Edwina and Sella Heller sailed to Canada in 1940. They arrived first in Montréal and remained there for some time before moving on to the West Coast.

Although Canada on the whole exhibited a form of genteel antisemitism during the 1930s and WWII era, it would perhaps be fair to say that the antisemitism that existed in Vancouver was even more genteel than the antisemitism found in Toronto and Montréal during this same time period. This observation is corroborated by both Paul and Sella Heller. As they both point out, in Vancouver one never found signs in hotels or apartment buildings saying “No Jews Allowed” or “Christians Only.” Sella remarked that such forms of antisemitism were modelled after American antisemitism on the East Coast which prohibited Jewish residents in hotels and apartments.<sup>129</sup>

Vancouver had property restrictions of another kind: municipal covenants prohibiting certain ethnic groups, including Jews and Chinese, from buying property in the prestigious West Vancouver neighbourhood of the British Properties.<sup>130</sup> Overlooking Burrard Inlet, the British Properties were first established in 1932 by the A.R. Guinness British Pacific Properties Group, the same group helped to finance the development and construction of the Lions Gate Bridge in 1938. Sella Heller described British Columbian antisemitism as one based on class lines and the maintenance of strong social separation

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<sup>128</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/5 side 1: 287.

<sup>129</sup> Even with the presence of signs, Sella was still incredulous that such restrictions existed. She would expressly go and try to stay at one of these restricted hotels. With her sophisticated French and European manners, Sella was inevitably shown to her room, no questions asked. Once settled in her room Sella would go to reception and inquire about the sign she had read on her way in, “No Jews.” Management would explain their policy and when Sella told them that she herself was Jewish, they would say that she was different and that the rule did not apply to her. At this point, Sella would say that she was not different and that since she was a Jew she would leave. Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 1:251

<sup>130</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 4/ 5side 1: 016.

between Vancouver's predominantly Eastern European Jewish community and the British-based general population.<sup>131</sup>

Part of the Canadian government's rationale behind admitting Jews like the Koerners and the Hellers was based upon the expectation that they would provide the Canadian economy with much needed jobs as well as stimulate labour in other areas. Capital alone was not enough to ensure entry into Canada, and indeed many wealthy Jewish refugees were turned away.<sup>132</sup> By December of 1938 even the head of the Jewish Immigrant Aid Service (JIAS) in Canada advised his European counterparts to discourage Jews from applying to Canada as a result of the fact that the Canadian government had already rejected Jews "with as much as \$170,000...on the grounds that their industry might compete with others."<sup>133</sup> Mark Sorensen, a non-Jewish Danish immigrant who came to Canada following WWI, while working for the CPR in Copenhagen in the 1930s, attempted to arrange visas for young, well-off Jews, with considerable expertise in farming. Sorensen cited that they were amongst the "most progressive in Europe, and had thousands of dollars to buy land... as well as liquid capital."<sup>134</sup> All were rejected with feeble excuses.<sup>135</sup>

Once established in Vancouver, Koerner wrote numerous letters to F.C. Blair, requesting the admittance of several friends, all of whom were relatively wealthy. On

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<sup>131</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 2:294.

<sup>132</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.21.

<sup>133</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.56.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.71-72.

<sup>135</sup> Paul Eisner, a Czech Jew, was refused admission because he was a national of a territory "occupied by an enemy country," and despite his ability to bring over advanced metallurgical processes as well as \$100,000 in capital and offer employment to twenty Canadians. *Ibid.*, p.73. Joseph Mahler, an Austrian Jew, with enough capital to start a paper plant in Canada, was also rejected, as were Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bauer, who wanted to bring \$360,000 to Canada. So too was Otto Sygal, an experienced aeroplane mechanic, as well as a family with nearly one million dollars to invest. Other applicants experienced similar rejections. *Ibid.*, p.29.

December 8th 1941, in response to one such request from Koerner regarding Dr. Egon Glesinger, the General Secretary of the International European Timber Exporters Convention and the International Timber Committee, Blair wrote that Glesinger's application "could not be granted favourable consideration" due to the fact that he was deemed ineligible by US Immigration Services.<sup>136</sup> Blair noted that his office was inundated with similar requests and there was nothing about Glesinger's case which warranted special intervention. (See Appendix G for Blair's response).

When Mark Sorensen was relieved from his Copenhagen post in 1940, he wrote of his frustrations in a letter to a railway official. "If we had experts and men with a rudimentary appreciation of Political Economy in the Department of Immigration they would have corrected public opinion in Canada instead of resorting to the mob for endorsement of their negative and self-sufficient attitude."<sup>137</sup> Sorensen believed that one day the attitude of government officials, particularly those in the immigration branch, would be seen as a "shameful chapter in the history of Canada in this period...It will record regrettable opportunities lost for the expansion of the country and for the exercise of the nobler and gentler qualities of the nation."<sup>138</sup>

For their part, Jewish lobby efforts had little effect on federal policy. Canadian Jewry of the 1930s was neither well financed nor well organized, nor was it monolithic; conflicts existed among numerous factions of the community. Although the Canadian Jewish Congress revitalized its efforts in 1934 to confront Nazi antisemitism, it did not

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<sup>136</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds.

<sup>137</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.76.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.72.

have real clout politically or communally.<sup>139</sup> As a consequence of the CJs lack of authority and the insecurity of Canadian Jewry, political lobbying was deferred to three Jewish members of parliament: Samuel Jacob—a Montréal Liberal, Sam Factor—a Toronto Liberal and A.A. Heaps—from the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) of Winnipeg. Heaps counselled Canadian Jewry to let the MPs do the negotiating. In fact, “the three Jewish MPs achieved nothing—nor did their lobbying.”<sup>140</sup> The Prime Minister did exactly as he deemed politically necessary. This environment necessitated that Jewish newcomers (i.e. refugees) be open to a significant degree of integration into general society, regardless of whichever of Barkan’s phases they subscribed to previously.

### **The Koerners in Vancouver**

Although Koerner had achieved a high level integration in Europe, and therefore might have more prepared to integrate into Canadian society than other Jews, his settlement in BC was not without its challenges. By the time he reached Vancouver, the high economic expectations placed on Koerner, likely compounded with the stress of not knowing the fates and whereabouts of missing relatives, plummeted him into “an acute state of depression.”<sup>141</sup> Moreover, Koerner’s first impressions of British Columbia were not exactly favourable. His letters of introduction were ignored, his formal and sophisticated manners were ridiculed, and he was classified as an enemy alien.<sup>142</sup> Had it not been for the fact that Thea Koerner contracted mumps, the Koerners would have left

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<sup>139</sup> Social Credit’s antisemitism campaign in the 1930s occupied a significant portion of the CJC time and energy. Stingel, *Social Discredit: Anti-Semitism, Social Credit, and the Jewish Response*, p.30.

<sup>140</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.22.

<sup>141</sup> Porter, *Leon Koerner's One-Man Giveaway Program*, p.35.

<sup>142</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.4.

immediately. When Koerner's brothers informed him of Hitler's invasion of what remained of Czechoslovakia, Koerner understood that it would be impossible to ever call Czechoslovakia home again. He galvanized himself in the face of this adversity and persevered in spite of his culture-shock and fragile mental state.<sup>143</sup> After visiting some coastal mills on the mainland and Vancouver Island, Koerner was "amazed" at the potential for opportunity he observed.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the natural beauty of the province, Koerner was struck by the socio-cultural differences between Czech society and that of British Columbia.<sup>145</sup> According to Walter Koerner, in comparison to Czechoslovakia, general society in British Columbia lacked a sense of community and historical national consciousness.<sup>146</sup> In 1939, Vancouver had a population of approximately 250,000 and was dominated by Irish, Scottish and English ethnic groups, as well as the Anglican and United Churches.<sup>147</sup> Most homes did not have telephones, radios, cars, or vacuum cleaners, and it was not unusual for people to keep farm animals on their property.<sup>148</sup> The average home was worth \$3,100 and the average rent paid was \$25. From the perspective of one coming from Europe, Vancouver was little more than a provincial frontier town, at the ends of the earth.<sup>149</sup> When the Koerners arrived in Vancouver, the city was home to only three tall buildings, the remainder of the city was residential. Unemployed and destitute men lined the downtown core, as a reminder of the lingering depression. False Creek hosted

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p.3.

<sup>144</sup> Harold Hillier, "They've Built a Forest Empire," *Star Weekly*, 15 Nov. 1952, p.2.

<sup>145</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.82.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., pp.82-83.

<sup>147</sup> Cunningham, *A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contributions to Vancouver*, pp.12-21.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., pp.12-21.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pp.12-21. Indeed, when John Koerner, Koerner's nephew, told his friends in Paris that he was moving to Vancouver, they asked, "Vancouver? Where is that?" When John showed them its location on the map they said, "Mon Dieu, it's at the end of the earth!" Koerner, *A Brush with Life*, p.24.

sawmill and shipbuilding enterprises, which together with the residential coal furnaces created a thick fog blanket over the city.<sup>150</sup> Walter Koerner comments that aside from its natural beauty, Vancouver was aesthetically unpleasing, the diet was “unimaginative,” and the symphony was “awful.”<sup>151</sup> According to Walter Koerner, never had he seen so many do so little with so much.<sup>152</sup>

In terms of art and culture, Vancouver was also a veritable disappointment for those coming from Europe. Most residents entertained themselves at the city’s beaches and parks in the warmer months, while the Vancouver Public Library, the Art Gallery of Vancouver, the Kitsilano Showboat, the Pacific National Exhibition, and various vaudeville and movie theatres provided alternate leisure venues. The more affluent Vancouverites, especially those in the lumber, mining, liquor and sugar industries spent their time at more sophisticated venues, such as the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club, the Vancouver Lawn Tennis and Badminton Club, the Shaughnessy Golf Club, the Vancouver Club, and the Terminal City Club, where membership was both exclusive and restrictive.<sup>153</sup> The Commodore Ballroom was a frequent host of debutante balls and the Palomar Supper Club as well as the Panorama Roof, atop of the newly opened Hotel Vancouver, offered fine dining. Many of Vancouver’s wealthy held dinners, dances, and bridge parties on their own estates.<sup>154</sup>

Vancouver society was by no means an egalitarian one. Social divisions existed in terms of income, outlook and lifestyle. However, Vancouver’s population was predominantly British and the city’s rapid growth and development had kept social

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<sup>150</sup> Cunningham, *A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contributions to Vancouver*, pp.12-21.

<sup>151</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, pp.82-83.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.82-83.

<sup>153</sup> Cunningham, *A Debt Acknowledged: Iby Koerner's Contributions to Vancouver*, p.12-21.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12-21.

boundaries between different classes relatively fluid. Thus, mainstream society was unified in its accepted definitions of status and prestige.<sup>155</sup> The two main sources of prestige in Vancouver were ethnicity and family status.<sup>156</sup> In order to gain prestige one had to be respectable; respectability was determined by good character, honesty, industriousness, self-sufficiency and sobriety. It was also strongly associated with rootedness, stability, family, and above all, British culture.<sup>157</sup> One was linked to general society by association with middle-class morality, British cultural aspirations, bourgeois sensibilities, and normalized sexuality.<sup>158</sup>

Koerner and other family members understood this process of social definition and although they could not claim a British ethnicity, they knew that they could earn social respectability via the other avenues. Needless to say, the drive to fit into Vancouver's elite precluded planting significant roots in Vancouver's Jewish community, whose comparatively strong Eastern European character, it would be fair to surmise, appeared slightly alien and antithetical to the Koerners' Western European sensibilities. The reverse would also have been true. To this end, the Koerners remained somewhat estranged from Vancouver's Jewish community, and as a result the Koerners' Jewishness remained somewhat estranged from them.

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<sup>155</sup>Status and prestige were prominent social determinants in the years prior to WWI, and continued to affect Vancouverites in the decades that followed. Robert A. J. McDonald, *Making Vancouver*, (Vancouver BC: UBC Press, 1996), p.236.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.234.

<sup>157</sup> Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003), p.10.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

### **Vancouver's Jewish community**

In 1941 there were approximately 3,000 Jews in Vancouver. The community was divided between Jews from Russian and Eastern European backgrounds (sometimes referred to as the East-Enders due to their initial settlement in Vancouver's east-end neighbourhood of Strathcona), and those from German and English backgrounds (sometimes referred to as West-Enders due to the residence in downtown Vancouver.)

<sup>159</sup> Despite the fact that Anglo-Germanic Jews had been in Vancouver longer, it was the newly arrived Eastern European Jews who formed the majority and thus set the tone of Vancouver's burgeoning Jewish community.<sup>160</sup> Paul Heller estimated that among Vancouver Jewry there were only a handful of lawyers and doctors, the rest of the community engaged in trade.<sup>161</sup> The population was steeped in Jewish traditions and Yiddish culture and not educated in Western culture. Furthermore, Heller noted that most Jews came to Vancouver because they could not find a viable way to settle in the Eastern parts of Canada or in the United States. The vast majority of them settled in Vancouver without much money and initially supported themselves with a horse and buggy.<sup>162</sup> Thus, although the Vancouver Jewish community cared and managed to set up its own institutions, it provided no financial sustenance to the general population of the city. Because Eastern European Jews set the tone for the Jewish community, during the WWII period Vancouver Jewry had very little influence on the non-Jewish sectors of

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<sup>159</sup> The Hebrew Assistance Association, *Eighty Years of Deeds of Loving Kindness* (Vancouver, BC: The Hebrew Assistance Association, 1995).

<sup>160</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/5 side 2: 310

<sup>161</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/5side 2: 310

<sup>162</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/5side 2: 310

the city, and mainly exhibited characteristics of Barkan's *acculturation* and *adaption* phases.

That being said, in no way did Vancouver's Jewish community aim to exclude Western and Central European Jewish refugees to Vancouver during this era.<sup>163</sup> In fact, the community was well aware that although some refugees had slipped quietly into Vancouver, most had yet to make contact with the community. In the summer of 1940 a statement was published in *The Jewish Western Bulletin* putting its members on alert for such persons. The announcement read:

It is known that Vancouver Jewry has, during the past months, received in its midst numerous families who have as yet made no contact with our Community and know nothing of our social and general activities. It can be appreciated that some of these newcomers, in view of their past experiences are inclined to be reticent and, in respect of this, it should be the duty of every one of our Community members to be on the look-out for these new arrivals and see to it that they be placed in contact with people and surroundings that will be conducive to help them readjust themselves within our Community.<sup>164</sup>

When the Hellers arrived in Vancouver in 1941, they were aware that there were a number of Jews involved in the region's lumber industry. Despite this, only one, Alex Sereth, publically identified himself as a Jew. The others remained concealed Jews, curbing their Jewish identity through conversion and/or avoidance of Jewish communal institutions. It would be more than twenty years before Leon Koerner officially became a member of Vancouver's Jewish community.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> *Jewish Western Bulletin* (Friday August 2, 1940)

<sup>165</sup> Oral History Interview Paul Heller, Ron Stuart, October – November 1995, The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/5 side 1: 295

*Concealed Jews of Vancouver*

After Koerner's arrival and settlement in BC, evidence suggests that his orientation to Jewish causes became submerged by his desire to *assimilate* among the elite echelons of British Columbian society. Like his own wife, brother and sisters-in-law, it is possible that Koerner and his other brothers may have converted to Christianity shortly after arriving in Canada. Sella Heller reported that the Koerners were all baptized at a Presbyterian Church in Windsor, Ontario. She explained that there was a Presbyterian clergyman "who had a lucrative business to turn rich Jews into Presbyterians."<sup>166</sup> A conversation in 1941 between Heller and a new, non-Jewish friend, by the name of Margaret, illustrates the concealed nature of Jewish identity for some of Vancouver's newly arrived Jewish refugees, including the Koerners as well as other individuals involved in the lumber business. Margaret asked Heller which church she belonged to. Heller replied that she did not belong to a church, but if she did attend services, she would go to a synagogue.

Margaret: What's that?

Sella Heller: A Jewish church.

Margaret: But the Koerners, Bentleys, and Sauders are Jewish and they all go to the Presbyterian Church.

Sella Heller: Yeah, Jewish. They used to be. They were baptized in Windsor, Ontario.

Margaret: Well, who gets baptized at age forty?

Sella Heller: A lot of people... [And Heller went on to explain why] <sup>167</sup>

As odd as this conversation may appear, it was the conflicted reality of a select group of Vancouver Jews, including the Bentley (originally Blochbauer), Koerner,

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<sup>166</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996, The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 1:251.

<sup>167</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 2: 294

Sauder (originally Sauz and Sonnenschien), Phefer, Cherniavski, and Wiener families. Since many of these families were involved in the lumber business, as were the Hellers, many non-Jewish Vancouverites assumed that the Hellers also attended Presbyterian Church like their Jewish colleagues. This was not the case. The Hellers were active in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities of Vancouver.

In 1951 Heller became the first president of the Vancouver Chapter of the Friends of Hebrew University. She was an avid Zionist. She used to phone everyone she knew in the lumber industry, fundraising on behalf of Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJI). In those days all the large firms had overseas charity programs. Heller remembered her mother telling her that in Berlin the non-Jews of the city donated more to HUJI than the Jews. Heller took her cue from her mother and started her fundraising campaign by approaching H.R. MacMillan. She made an appointment with him and he donated \$1000 and seemed to know more about HUJI than many of the city's Jews. Heller continued her campaign and approached Jews (or ex-Jews as she called them) and non-Jews alike.<sup>168</sup> Each time Heller met with a concealed Jew, she noted that they all felt compelled to explain the reasons for their conversion or suppressed Jewish identity. "It was such a psychosis for them,"<sup>169</sup> Heller explained and the reasons for their conflicting identities were complex. Heller believed that all of Vancouver's concealed Jews remained "cardiac Jews," something that her mother used to refer to as *Juden mit Hertz*, Jews at heart.<sup>170</sup> The extent to which the East European character of Vancouver's Jewish

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<sup>168</sup> It should be noted that although the Koerners were inevitably approached by Sella, the Koerner donations to HUJI started long before Sella's fundraising efforts of 1951.

<sup>169</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7side 2: 392

<sup>170</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 2: 376

community played in deterring these mostly Western-identifying and German-speaking European Jewish refugees from associating with Vancouver Jewry is worth bearing in mind; a case in point being the Hellers, who also hailed from the educated industrial entrepreneur class, but were of Polish origin.

### **Koerner's identity**

#### ***The outcome of WWII***

The allied forces celebrated VE Day on May 8, 1945, but allied-victory did not result in immediate changes to Canadian immigration regulations. By autumn of that same year the Liberal cabinet agreed to delay making any changes to immigration policy and to postpone discussing immigration changes until a more “opportune” time. The official line was that Canadian armed forces had to be reintegrated into the workforce before immigrants could be allowed in. On September 12, 1945, Leon Koerner wrote to the Director of Immigration, A.L. Jolliffe's, in response to the latter's rejection of Koerner's petition to admit his nephew to Canada:

I acknowledge with thanks your letter of September 1. I am sorry that for the time being you are unable to grant immigration for my nephew, Henry J. Schindler, in Brussels. I understand that nothing can be done until our servicemen and their dependents and Canadian citizens now in Europe have been repatriated...I am sure that in a few months from now this very important and urgent work will be concluded and immigration will be granted to worthy people from Europe into Canada.<sup>171</sup>

Indeed, between April 1, 1945 and March 31, 1947 three percent of the allotted total was Jewish.<sup>172</sup> Of the 2,200 Jews interned by Canada at the behest of Britain

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<sup>171</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-16 Koerner to A.L. Jolliffe, September 12, 1945.

<sup>172</sup> i.e. of the 98,011 immigrants allowed into Canada 2,219 of them were Jewish Koch, *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder*, 272. Franklin Bialystok, *Delayed Impact* (Montréal, Que, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), p.27, 39.

between 1940 and 1944, only 960 remained in Canada.<sup>173</sup> While Mackenzie King's government did not "mind hearing about individuals on a case-by-case basis, especially when they involved leading citizens, it was not until 1948 that increased numbers of Jewish refugees were allowed into Canada."<sup>174</sup> It was this atmosphere in which Leon Koerner and his family established themselves in Canada.

In 1946 Koerner received a letter from an old acquaintance, Otto Bermann, from his hometown of Nový Jičín, attesting to the outcome of the War and the actualization of some of Leon's worst fears. Otto, his wife and their two daughters survived three years in Theresienstadt. Bermann wrote of the remaining nine Jewish survivors of Nový Jičín. He described the synagogue, which was not bombed due to its proximity to a gas factory but instead was used as a market place. Bermann also explained how the Mayor of Nový Jičín attempted to turn the local Jewish cemetery, where Koerner's parents were buried, into a playground. Bermann described the betrayals and loyalties of certain Koerner employees. Bermann ended the letter by stating that despite the fact that the war was over, Jews were still being treated poorly by their Czech Christian neighbours (see Appendix G).<sup>175</sup>

In a letter dated February 21, 1946, Koerner responded to Bermann's letter with empathy. Koerner was saddened by "barbarian" outcome of the war. Koerner was

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<sup>173</sup> Koch, *Deemed Suspect: A Wartime Blunder*, p.272; Bialystok, *Delayed Impact*, p.27, 39; Draper, Paula Jean. "The Accidental Immigrants: Canada and the Interned Refugees, Part I." *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* 2, 1: pp.1-38.

<sup>174</sup> The defection of Igor Gouzenko in 1946 contributed to the post-WWII response of the Canadian government towards Jews. Gouzenko, a minor official in the Soviet embassy in Ottawa, fed Canadian authorities information regarding Communist spies in Canada. "He was quick to identify the Jews as key players in post-war espionage." Such revelations led Mackenzie King to make statements such "...the evidence is very strong, not against all Jews...but that in a large percentage of the race there are tendencies and trends which are dangerous indeed." Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, p.88.

<sup>175</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-15 Bermann, Otto, 1946-48.

particularly upset of Bermann's news about the betrayal by some former Koerner employees. Of this Koerner wrote, "God knows how many similar cases have occurred, and you are right in saying that we have to rely on the Lord whose punishment is sometimes late but certain." Koerner was also disheartened to learn that after the War not all Czech nationals were treated equally. He informed Bermann about the Koerner family members lost in concentration camps during WWII and about the survival of the rest of the family and the establishment of Koerner involvement in the Canadian lumber industry. Koerner described the challenges of bringing all family members into Canada and how obtaining visas for some family members and friends was not possible. Although Koerner was grateful the "country which gave us a friendly reception" he was careful to explain that there "is little chance for immigration during the near future."<sup>176</sup>

Koerner's correspondence with Otto Bermann is significant for several reasons. It describes what happened to Koerner's childhood hometown of Nový Jičín during the Nazi occupation and how the Czech townspeople as well as Koerner family associates behaved during the war. It shows Koerner's cosmopolitan ideals through his trust and acceptance of people at face value regardless of race and creed. In essence the Koerner-Bermann correspondence illustrates Koerner's sadness over the events which occurred as a result of WWII, but it also demonstrates his determination to move on and become part of Canadian society. It is interesting to note that, although Koerner tended to wax enthusiastic about becoming part of Canadian society in his letters to Blair and other government officials, in his letter to Bermann, Koerner was more subdued. He stated

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid., Box 13-15 Bermann, Otto, 1946-48.

that immigration conditions would not be “too rosy,” belying some of his frustrations with the Canadian immigration process in regards to Jewish refugees (see Appendix G).

***Koerner’s relationship with F.C. Blair***

Aside from stimulating the economy, Koerner’s admission into Canada came with an inferred understanding that he would become a loyal and devoted citizen. It was the belief in Koerner’s potential to fulfill this prerequisite that smoothed his entry into Canada. In the eyes of the government elite, the words “Jewish refugee” and “devoted Canadian citizen” did not go together. Given the official attitudes towards Jews, rooted within Koerner’s admission into Canada was the expectation that he would do his utmost to become a good Canadian, presumably at the cost of his Jewishness. From the perspective of the Canadian government, *integration* or *assimilation* were the desired goals for Jews like Koerner. Koerner no doubt lived up to these expectations, as demonstrated by his successful *assimilation* into the upper echelons of British Columbian society.

Koerner’s admission into Canada was likely made possible through the passing of an Order-in-Council. Although the decision to admit Koerner was conducted at the parliamentary level, Koerner would have likely been aware of the importance of keeping up cordial relations with a high level bureaucrat like F.C. Blair. From Koerner’s perspective, cordial relations could only help facilitate and speed along the citizenship application process not only for himself but also for members of his extended family. For his part, Blair had little choice but to follow the directives of his superiors and process Koerner’s residency and citizenship applications. It is known that Blair helped to facilitate Koerner’s citizenship, which he applied for in 1943 and received in 1944, an

unusual event to say the least. Blair also extended courtesies to other members of the Koerner family, all of whom were welcomed to visit Blair personally when they came through Ottawa.<sup>177</sup> Blair even sent the Koerners autumn leaves from nearby Gatineau Park, some of which Koerner reported that they used for their Christmas table, while promising to preserve the rest.<sup>178</sup>

In light of Blair's proven general dislike of Jewish refugees and in view of the fact that Koerner had inserted himself so successfully and so quickly into elite circles within British Columbia, it is probable that Blair chose to ignore Koerner's Jewish roots, at least superficially.<sup>179</sup> This was not an uncommon occurrence among the upper circles of Canada's elite. While attending the funeral of a Jew by the name of Dr. Leathem, Mackenzie King stated, "Dr. Leathem was one of the finest men we have had in Canada. A Beautiful Christian type with refined mind, great moral strength and purpose."<sup>180</sup> Perhaps Koerner was also seen in this vein.<sup>181</sup>

In May of 1943, the same year Koerner applied for his naturalization, he received an unusual letter from Blair regarding the possibility of employing a German Jewish refugee by the name of Erwin Zanger, an unemployed lumberjack, and former Jewish internee in Canada (1940-1942), who was having difficulty finding employment due to

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid., Box 13-6 Letters from Koerner to Blair regarding Peter Sonnenschein, June 30, 1941, regarding citizenship December 9, 1943, and January 11, 1944, regarding hosting English children during WWII July 2, 1940.

<sup>178</sup> True to his word, the leaves can now be found in UBC's archival collection. Ibid., Box 13-6 Letters from Koerner to Blair regarding maple leaves October 29, 1941.

<sup>179</sup> See Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.336.

<sup>180</sup> Quote in Mendelson, *Exiles from Nowhere: the Jews and the Canadian Elite*, p.333 n81.

<sup>181</sup> Also worth noting is the fact that upon entry to Buffalo, New York from Canada in 1941, Thea Koerner was recorded as being of the "Hebrew" race, while Koerner was only ever recorded as being of the "Moravian" race. "New York Passenger Lists, 1820-1957 re: Leon Korner," in The Generations Network, Inc., Provo, UT, USA, cited 2009, [<http://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?db=nyp1&h=1004123463&ti=0&indiv=try&gss=pt>].Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, re: Thea Korner *Border Crossings: From Canada to U.S, 1895-1956*.

antisemitism. Blair attached Zanger's résumé as well as his letters of reference, including one from a Baptist minister. Koerner flatly rejected the possibility of employing Zanger. Considering Koerner's previous attempts to aid other Jewish and non-Jewish refugees, the rejection seems odd. There are two plausible explanations for Koerner's rejection. The first may have had to do with Koerner's citizenship application. Koerner may have sensed that his response was being judged and so declined to help a fellow refugee. Three years earlier, in 1940, Koerner had had no trouble offering to provide a home and education for seven non-Jewish British war children.<sup>182</sup> Furthermore, Koerner had written numerous letters to Blair in an attempt to get other Jewish refugees into Canada, most of which were rejected. It may have been the case that Koerner saw Blair's letter as a test.<sup>183</sup> Alternatively, Koerner may have felt that he was in a position to reject a request from Blair—after all, he did not owe the bureaucrat any favours. If this was so, the question remains: why would Koerner not help a fellow Jew, also trying to gain a foothold in Canada?

Despite Blair's fervent record for keeping Jews out of Canada, Koerner kept up a very cordial correspondence with him, until Blair succumbed to lung cancer in 1959, and—at least on paper—Koerner remained forever grateful to him. Although the letters exchanged were very friendly, they should in no way be interpreted as a philosemitic softening on the part of Blair.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., Box 13-6 Letters from Koerner to Blair regarding British War children July 2, 1940.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., Box 13-6 Letters from Koerner to Blair regarding Mr. Erwin Zanger May 12, 1943.

<sup>184</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-16 Blair, F. C.

### *Koerner's Jewishness*

Prior to his arrival in Canada, Koerner's Jewish identity could be described as secular with Zionist leanings, perhaps fitting most closely into Barkan's *accommodation* phase. (However, Central European societies were not pluralistic or immigrant-receiving; therefore Barkan's model is not as applicable.) Although Koerner's Zionist leanings and concern for the Jewish community did not disappear completely, the impact of WWII, including Canadian sentiments towards Jewish refugees, took their toll on Koerner's Jewish identity. As we have seen, Canada was not a hospitable place for immigrants especially immigrant Jews. In Koerner's quest to re-establish himself as a successful industrialist, he astutely surmised that he would need to subvert his Jewishness if he wanted to succeed in entering the upper levels of Canadian society. What was not buried remained hidden from public sight as much as possible.

However, not all aspects were submerged in the past. Some of Koerner's most tangible expressions of Jewishness came from his contributions to Jewish causes. From the 1940s onwards Koerner donated to Jewish causes such as the Vancouver Jewish External Welfare Fund to help the Jewish refugees of Europe. He also contributed to Vancouver's Jewish orphan's committee led by Mrs. Resnick in 1943, as well as to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem where he established a fellowship to help struggling students. Koerner and his brothers, Theodore and Walter, also established a separate grant for HUJI and donated some much needed medical equipment.<sup>185</sup> In spite of this, Koerner never became a visible member of Vancouver's Jewish Community. Aside from his own corporate holdings, Koerner's primary affiliations involved the elite

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid., Box 2-7 Friends of Hebrew University, Box 2-14 Jewish Community Centre, 1963.

institutions of the city, namely UBC and various social clubs. Only in the 1960s did Koerner begin an affiliation with Vancouver's Jewish Community Centre (JCC). In 1961 he bought a plaque in memory of his late wife, for \$500. And in 1963, at the suggestion of Arthur Fouks, Koerner became an actual member of the JCC.<sup>186</sup>

Nonetheless, Koerner was never an active member of the Vancouver Jewish community. It is not known whether he even renewed his membership to the JCC past 1963. Nor is it known whether he recited Jewish prayers or observed Jewish holidays, although he dutifully sent Christmas cards to friends and family each year. And yet, Koerner's Jewishness laid the foundation for some of his life's greatest accomplishments: his social contributions.

### **The Jewishness of Koerner's social contributions**

While Koerner's social contributions could be explained by examining the economic benefits that Koerner derived from his contributions, this discussion will speculate as to the extent to which Jewish ethics influenced Koerner's actions. Koerner was raised in a Jewish household and, as his brother Walter noted, the Jewish value system was the foundation of the family. There is a strong possibility that Judaism a foundation for Koerner's personal outlook, whether he was aware of it is another question entirely. Koerner may have been completely ignorant of Jewish ethical teachings relating to business, but this does not imply that he did not absorb some of Judaism's more profound teachings relating to business ethics. In Europe, the Koerner family rooted itself in Jewish values while being involved in the forestry business; Koerner was likely exposed to an intertwining of these two areas from a very young age.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., Box 2-14 Letter from LK to Mr. Sid Olyan, November 29, 1963.

Among all of Koerner's endeavours, his contributions to the forestry industry—specifically to workers—and his financial contributions to general society, are the most noteworthy. Koerner's actions in these areas may be directly linked back to Jewish ethical inspiration.

Jewish scholar Meir Tamari illustrates that the economic life of a Jew is a direct reflection of the ethical and moral principles of Judaism.<sup>187</sup> The most important premise behind the Jewish economic framework is the idea that all wealth originates from the Divine. Tamari demonstrates that because Judaism is oriented towards communal elevation rather than individual enlightenment, society is therefore seen as a partner in the wealth of an individual. In turn, individuals are stewards of wealth, not possessors of it, where “all wealth is subject to the needs of the community.”<sup>188</sup> Judaism provides a moral framework from within which any economy may operate.<sup>189</sup> For these reasons Jewish principles involving wealth distribution may be applied to any economic system. Before we look into Jewish philanthropy, let us first examine Koerner's actions in the forest industry and see how they link back to Jewish ethics.

### ***Going against the tycoon philosophy in BC's forest industry***

When he arrived in Vancouver in February of 1939, Koerner knew that in order to succeed, his company would have to produce quality lumber at a lower premium than the competition. The key to this lay in Koerner's insight into how to treat and process a

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<sup>187</sup> Meir Tamari, *With all Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life* (Northvale, N.J, Jason Aronson Inc, 1998, c1987), p.1.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

tree typically discarded by North American saw mills, the western hemlock.<sup>190</sup> Considered too moist for pulp and lumber processing by BC lumber mills, hemlock was abundant and cheap. Although Koerner was optimistic that hemlock could become a viable product, the wood's reputation made it difficult to market. After some research, Koerner came across an alternate name for hemlock, Alaska pine, cited in a textbook by Beaulieu and Barton, entitled *Applied Lumber Science*.<sup>191</sup> When he inquired about selling hemlock under an alternate name, the chief forester of BC, Ernest Manning, replied, "If you can sell hemlock to Britain, you can call the stuff any darn name you like." Shortly thereafter, Koerner purchased a mill and box factory in New Westminster.<sup>192</sup> Although the mill had not cut a log in over two years, by May of 1939 the Alaska Pine Company was open for business.<sup>193</sup> Meanwhile back in London, Walter Koerner, with the help of the firm Foy, Morgan & Company, opened negotiations with British buyers. Walter Koerner argued that with war looming it would be in their best interest to secure a supply of timber from a reliable source outside of Continental Europe, preferably from within the Commonwealth. By July of 1939, Alaska Pine's \$250,000 mill was open for operation and wood was being shipped to Britain. The mill

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<sup>190</sup> In March 1939, the forest industry was still experiencing that last effects of the Great Depression. As a consequence many mills were out of business and there was a surplus of unused mills and logs. Some advised against going into the lumber business, citing that the market was already flooded with a surplus of Hemlock, cedar, and balsam logs. Western Hemlock was known by the names of *sosna* and *fitche* in Central Europe. Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, pp.97-99.

In Porter, *Leon Koerner's One-Man Giveaway Program*, p.37, From Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.5. It is worth noting that after the Koerners introduced western hemlock to the British market, the Sloan commission of 1945 acknowledged that when properly treated western hemlock was superior to Douglas fir in some instances. Gordon McGregor Sloan and Royal Commission on Forest Resources of British Columbia, *Report of the Commissioner, the Honourable Gordon McG. Sloan, Chief Justice* (Victoria, B. C, C.F. Banfield, 1945).

<sup>191</sup> Albert E. Beaulieu and Carl F. Barton. *Applied Lumber Science: Being a Non-Technical Analysis of the Methods Used in Producing and Selling the Lumber of the West Coast of North America, 2nd Ed.* (Vancouver, BC: Clarke & Stuart Co. Ltd. 1939).

<sup>192</sup> Brown, Shipley, and Company Ltd. acted as guarantor and Koerner was able to secure loans from Canadian banks. Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.19.

<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18. Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.4.

employed 100 workers and had the capacity to produce 125,000 feet of lumber per day.<sup>194</sup>

During the summer and autumn of 1939, Koerner's brothers and their families joined him in Vancouver and began working for the newly established firm.<sup>195</sup> The Koerners brought over other personnel from Europe.<sup>196</sup> The Koerners success in British Columbia's forest industry was also aided by the fact that they already had experience working with the British market from Czechoslovakia. Therefore not only did they know the specifications required by the British market, they also knew their competition. In this capacity the Koerners were able to undersell European white woods to the British by ten percent.<sup>197</sup>

As the war progressed so too did Koerner's business. By 1942 Alaska Pine was supplying seventy five percent of the ammunition and ration boxes used by the armed forces of the Commonwealth. At this time, the Koerners also invested in expanding their production base and timberland acquisitions, employing a further 455 workers and nine foremen. By 1944 almost as many workers had again been hired. Like many immigrants who sought a better life, the Koerners believed hard work would not only allow them to rebuild their company, but their persistence and dedication to integrate financially would also allow them to integrate socially.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> BC hemlock to find market abroad again," *Vancouver Sun*, 11 July 1939, p.5.

<sup>195</sup> Walter, Otto, and Theodore Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.99.

<sup>196</sup> Geza Por, a senior European sawmill expert, Gene Ralston, a sawmill expert and woodsman, Dr. Albert Steiner, a wood chemist, Koerner's nephews, Peter Sloan, Francis Reif, Robert Koerner, Henry Shindler, John and Fred Koerner, also began working for the company *Ibid.*, p.82.

<sup>197</sup> Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.8.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14.

From the inception of Alaska Pine until his retirement in 1952, Koerner served as the company's president. Known as Mr. Leon to his workers and managers,<sup>199</sup> Koerner once commented that:

This is one of only two countries in the world where a man can do what he's best suited for and suffer no feeling of social inferiority... [Our workers] are natural, candid and proud. They are strong, healthy, intelligent and mechanically minded. And they are loyal if you treat them well.<sup>200</sup>

Within Jewish law the worker-employer relationship is clearly laid out in contractual terms, wherein provisions are made for worker protection, while at the same time the workers also have obligations. Provisions include the safeguarding of workers health at all times. Judaism also stipulates that disabled or aging workers must be provided for.<sup>201</sup> The Koerners brought these elements to BC's forest industry and they had to work against the prevailing tycoon philosophy to do so (see below for more details).

Koerner's attitude towards his employees and their place of work was completely different from that of his Vancouver colleagues. Safety became Koerner's top concern. Concrete runways were laid between the stacks of lumber and for the first time BC lumber yard workers had dry feet. The lumber yard was kept clean of debris and grease, later the yards were paved. Safety helmets were issued; indoor washrooms and a lunchroom were installed. All of these were firsts in British Columbia's forest industry, and each measure reduced the accident rate in the lumber yard significantly. Foreman Albert Rose commented:

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<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p.10.

<sup>201</sup> Tamari, *With all Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life*, p.158.

When I joined the company in 1943... I was amazed—everything was so clean. I had always been used to mills where you ate your lunch sitting on a log, washed your hands in the boiler room, and went into the bush to the toilet. But here was a fine cafeteria, indoor plumbing, and concrete runways between the stacks to save the men from getting their feet wet’.”<sup>202</sup>

Koerner was also concerned with workers’ rights. By 1940 he had already created the Alaska Pine Employees’ Advisory Committee (APEAC), a bargaining agent for the plant. Koerner implemented free life, health, and accident insurance, medical care for employees and their dependants, holiday pay, and special considerations at Christmas time.<sup>203</sup> He made sure that for every shift at least one worker had been certified with St. John Ambulance Association and the first-aid room was well stocked.<sup>204</sup> Alaska Pine’s safety standards exceeded the norm. Minor injuries were commonplace in the lumber business and fatalities were not infrequent. Employers were not obligated to ensure safe working conditions and the prevailing attitude was that the forest industry was a dangerous one and workers had to accept the risks. Koerner’s voluntary implementation of safety standards forced other operators to bring their standards into line.<sup>205</sup> Another worker, George Percy noted:

There was tremendous resistance to the Koerners. They started logging in the Fraser Valley. The competition resented them, saying, “The Europeans could stay in the Fraser Valley, they are not getting anywhere else.” They had a tough row to hoe against the tycoon philosophy that was ‘get in, take what you want, get out.’ The tycoons thought they owned BC and could do what they pleased. The Koerners had a great social conscience –the result of their

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<sup>202</sup> Reginald Eyre Watters ed, *British Columbia: A Centennial Anthology* (Toronto: McClelland Stewart, 1958), p.509; Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.11.

<sup>203</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box1-3APEAC Minutes, June 18,1942 Leon Koerner Papers. From Cunningham, *Leon Koerner:Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.12.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

European experience. They were the first to make logging camps comfortable for the workers. They paved the yard at Alaska Pine. Nobody had thought of doing that before. They changed the philosophy of the timber industry. There was no social responsibility before they came.<sup>206</sup>

The Koerners also took measures to ensure the competency of their workforce. One of the ways they did this was by financing a management training programme for returning veterans interested in the lumber business as well as for employees with extra potential. For many years, the Koerners sent two workers to the Banff School of Business.<sup>207</sup> Alaska Pine also initiated another innovative concept into their company: the cadet programme, where the trainee advanced through all phases of the company operation. The programme was designed to ensure a stable and well-trained workforce. Bill McMaster, who joined Alaska Pine as a post-WWII cadet compared the Koerner programme to those of the competition:

I started in the booming ground and came out in the shipping end of the business. It worked very well. This was post-war and there were a lot of us. Some fellows went in to the H.R. MacMillan Export Company, but they went in as employees. A friend of mine went in as a spark chaser, and after six months he figured, I'm here forever, and he quit. It didn't work, but the Koerner system, and I would think this is European, I think worked very well. We came out and were supposed to know how you make lumber from logs.<sup>208</sup>

The Koerners went against the prevailing tycoon philosophy in regard to the environment as well. They concerned themselves with sustainable harvesting practices at a time when established foresters preferred to think of BC forests as infinite sources of

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<sup>206</sup> George Percy, *Interview*, ed. Rosemary Cunningham (Vancouver, BC., June 18, 1999). From Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.12.

<sup>207</sup> Percy, *Interview*, From Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.12.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16. W. J. Bill McMaster, *Interview*, ed. Rosemary Cunningham, (6 January 2003).

wealth. In the post-Depression era the logging industry in BC was still very much infused with a pioneer quality of life, where the main goal was to conquer and exploit a hostile land.<sup>209</sup> Lumber companies fostered this attitude and used it to exploit the province's forests. The companies would cut the best logs, or they would cut half a tree and leave the rest. It was not uncommon to see a tree with its top lopped while half of its trunk was left still rooted in the earth. Lower quality trees, which had been carelessly cut down along with more desirable specimens, were left to rot on the ground, until all of this so-called debris was burnt by the loggers before they left the area—not the most sustainable of practices.

Even in the 1930s concepts of stewardship and sustainable yields were still mostly unknown in BC, as were ideas of industrial responsibility.<sup>210</sup> In Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Europe, the forests were harvested sustainably. The Koerners understood the ineffectiveness of being wasteful. Walter Koerner spoke on behalf of the family firm, calling for change to environmental practices in BC's forest industry. At the same time he maintained that the forest was not a "museum piece" to be preserved ad infinitum.<sup>211</sup> Steps were taken to ensure sustainable practices were maintained. Both Koerner and his brother Walter participated in the Sloan Commissions of 1945 and 1957 to help re-educate BC's forest industry that the forests were not "virtually limitless."<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.83.

<sup>210</sup> Douglas Ross, *Interview*, ed. Rosemary Cunningham, (White Rock, BC:, 6 October 1999); Peter Pearse, *Interview*, ed. Rosemary Cunningham, (Vancouver, BC:, 25 May 1999); Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.19.

<sup>211</sup> Koerner, *The Tree May Prefer Calm, but the Wind Will Never Subside*, p.93.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92. As additional logging and mill operations were acquired the Koerners built the first model communities that enabled workers to live in the places they worked. The amenities provided by the Koerners were more advanced than those of their competitors. They had camps at Jordan River, Meade Creek, Port McNeil, Port Hardy, Port Alice, and Holberg Camp in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.17.

Although the Koerners' extensive experience in Czechoslovakia's second growth forest industry undoubtedly prompted the brothers to raise sustainability concerns about BC's forests, a link between Jewish teachings and environmental concerns may also be the reason. Jewish religious thinking posits that just as economic growth should not be achieved through damage to another's health or property, economic prosperity should not be achieved through the harmful exploitation of natural resources. In essence Jewish tradition maintains that "the physical beauty of the world is a valuable enhancement to religious thought and contributes to man's spiritual growth."<sup>213</sup> Whether such teachings directly informed the Koerner family outlook for environmental forestry practices, or were absorbed invisibly into the family perspective through cultural osmosis, is difficult to determine. Whatever the case may be, the fact remains that the Koerners helped initiate and implement a new line of sustainable thinking in BC's forest industry long before the established tycoons were anywhere near to making such changes on their own.

In 1950 Alaska Pine merged with the Abitibi Pulp and Paper Company and acquired the BC Pulp and Paper Company from Izaak Walton Killam Group. The new joint venture became known as the Alaska Pine and Cellulose Company.<sup>214</sup> By 1951 Alaska Pine and Cellulose was the second largest lumber firm in the province, and included three sawmills, one box factory, eight logging camps, two rayon pulp mills, and

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<sup>213</sup> Tamari, *With all Your Possessions: Jewish Ethics and Economic Life*, p.306.

<sup>214</sup> "Alaska Pine and Abitibi Go into partnership," *Victoria Daily Times*, December 12, 1950, p.17. Cunningham, *Leon Koerner: Industrialist and Philanthropist Extraordinaire*, p.17.

two shingle mills.<sup>215</sup> By this point Koerner was in poor health and passed the leadership onto his youngest brother Walter Koerner.<sup>216</sup>

***Koerner's philanthropy as it relates to tzedaka and gmilot-khesedim***

Koerner is remembered as much for his remarkable career in forestry as he is for his generous spirit. His first official and noteworthy charitable donation in Canada came in 1946, when, together with Walter Koerner, they commemorated their brother Otto, by starting a \$25,000 fund for UBC to buy books and materials related to music and fine art. In 1948 Koerner presented the City Council of Vancouver with a complete reproduction of Captain George Vancouver's account of his journeys. In 1951 Koerner donated \$10,000 to UBC's Faculty of Law library. In 1955 Koerner established a one million dollar endowment fund, LTKF. He continued to give to the foundation until his death in 1972, at which time Koerner bequeathed the remainder of his estate to the fund.<sup>217</sup>

Shortly after the founding of the LTKF an article was published by *Maclean's Magazine* in which Koerner was touted a "miniature Carnegie."<sup>218</sup> The article was entitled, "Leon Koerner's one-man giveaway program," and described Koerner as a short, dark, sallow man, with a beaky nose and a blonde wife, who came to Canada in 1939 as a Czech refugee and now spent five hours a day giving away his millions. Unsurprisingly, the article elicited hundreds of personal requests from across the country

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<sup>215</sup> The gross value of products per annum exceeded fifty million dollars, not including the initial investment of \$40.5 million. Ibid., p.17.

<sup>216</sup> Although Koerner retired in 1952, all of his business ties officially came to an end when the Koerners sold 80,000 shares, valued at \$20 million to the New York pulp firm, Rayonier, in 1954. Ibid., p.18.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p.21.

<sup>218</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 8-24: "Leon Koerner's One-Man Giveaway Program," *MacLean's Magazine*, August 4, 1956.

for charitable donations. Koerner dutifully replied to each letter, patiently declining the requests. The article did not deter Koerner from continuing his support. In 1957-58 he pledged a total of \$600,000 to the \$5 million capital gifts fundraising drive for the building of UBC's Faculty Club. UBC lacked a proper facility within which its professors could meet. Many professors met outside of the University in Vancouver's exclusive social clubs. As UBC acquired Jewish professors, the city's social clubs prevented the Jewish professors from meeting with their colleagues. The creation of the Faculty Club offered professors a prestigious meeting place without ethnic or racial restrictions. The Club quickly earned a reputation as one of Vancouver's high-status establishments, and when Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip visited Vancouver on July 15, 1959 not only was the Royal dinner hosted at by the Faculty Club, but the Royal couple was given use of the six room suite at the Club during their brief stay.<sup>219</sup>

These donations were just the beginning. In 1958 Koerner donated respiratory equipment to UBC and St. Paul's Hospital. In 1959 Koerner also financed a graduate student's centre in Thea Koerner's honour. The list of contributions made under the auspices of the LTKF Foundation included all sectors of public life in British Columbia. Everything from health and welfare, to education, the arts, and grants-in-aid for individuals and organizations, received financial as well as personal support from Koerner. There are so many that they are too numerous to name. During his three

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<sup>219</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 8-24 Moir, Nikki. "Handsome faculty club ready for Queen's visit," *The Province*, June 27, 1959. The Faculty Club closed in the mid-1990s and then was later re-opened as The Leon and Thea Koerner University Centre.

decades in British Columbia, there was hardly a social or cultural organization in British Columbia that did not benefit from Koerner's generosity.<sup>220</sup>

Although it would be difficult to define all of Koerner's philanthropic endeavours as purely acts of *tsedaka*, Koerner's generosity can certainly find its roots in Jewish teachings. *Tsedaka* is sometimes defined as acts of charity, but as noted in Chapter 2, it literally means "righteousness." *Tsedaka* is the religious imperative which obligates Jews to provide for those in need. Judaism asserts that communities cannot endure without "acts of love and compassion," otherwise known as *gmilot-khesedim*, defined as sustaining benevolence in Chapter 2.<sup>221</sup> So important is *gmilot-khesed* to Jewish moral thinking that the concept is considered qualitatively equal to all other *mitzvot* (positive and negative commandments) and is deemed to be the very heart of Torah.<sup>222</sup> While *tsedaka* is traditionally given in the form of money, to the poor and living, *gmilot-khesed* may be given in the form of money (via interest free loans) or personal service, to both the wealthy and the poor as well as to the living and the dead.<sup>223</sup> *Gmilot-khesed* may be thought of as the highest form of *tsedaka*, helping a person help themselves.

So entrenched are the notions of philanthropy within the Jewish community, that they have become cultural norms and many Jews have little knowledge of the religious origins of their actions. As scholar Gary Tobin notes, "long before the 'public sector' took responsibility, Jews took care of other Jews. They became proficient in designing,

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<sup>220</sup> See the inventory lists of Roy Schaeffer, *The Koerner (Leon and Thea) Foundation, 1955-; An Inventory of the Fonds in the Library of the University of British Columbia Special Collections and University Archives Division*, June 1992).

<sup>221</sup> J. D. Spiro, "An Exploration of Gemilut Hasadim," *Judaism* 33, no. 132 (1984), p.448.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.449.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p.449.

building, and maintaining service systems.”<sup>224</sup> As a result, charity and philanthropy had become “hardwired into the Jewish subconscious and communal psyche, guiding and directing Jewish behaviour.”<sup>225</sup>

The idea of sharing material wealth and energy with the less fortunate is certainly not unique to Judaism; other religions as well as nation states feel compelled to help the poor. What makes *tsedaka* and ultimately Jewish involvement in philanthropy distinct is that such efforts originate out of a “must” rather than a “should” attitude. *Tsedaka* “is a command, not a consideration. It is not a matter of choice.”<sup>226</sup> Within Judaism one is not considered generous because one gives; one is simply living up to what is expected. Nor is philanthropy considered part of the voluntary sector, rather it is part and parcel of what is needed to sustain healthy community life.<sup>227</sup> In fact, one could argue that many Jews in BC exhibited these tendencies, even in small ways, for example the contributions of Cecelia Davies Sylvester and Hannah Director.

Koerner’s generosity perhaps can best be understood in relation to philanthropic contributions among modern day American Jews. In his study on the philanthropic practices among American Jewry, Gary Tobin illustrates that the manner in which Jews give money directly reflects their position within society.<sup>228</sup> Tobin explains that in recent years, Jewish giving practices in the USA have undergone an Americanization and American Jews have become integral to the American philanthropic mainstream.<sup>229</sup> In fact, American Jews are compelled to give more to mainstream society than they are to

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<sup>224</sup> Gary A. Tobin, *The Transition of Communal Values and Behaviour in Jewish Philanthropy* (Institute for Jewish and Community Research, 2000).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p.5.

Jewish communal organizations.<sup>230</sup> Universities, symphonies, hospitals and museums receive, and often depend upon, these large donations. Although there are several reasons for increased Jewish support of general society, the main one is integration. Tobin stipulates that the more Jews are integrated into general society, the more they become drawn into non-Jewish philanthropy. Acceptance of Jews into mainstream society has allowed Jews to benefit from, as well as take leadership roles within general society. Giving to general society is seen as an opportunity to express gratitude to a nation that has been good to them.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, many American Jews see contributing to the general good of society as a display of their Jewishness. For them any opportunity to give is a Jewish act.<sup>232</sup> Thus, in tandem to being perceived as a religious act, philanthropy becomes a “thank you.” A direct consequence of Jewish contributions to general society is that the more integrated Jews become, the more *tsedaka* takes on the character of philanthropy. Although it remains rooted in Judaism, its direct connection to Jewish tradition has become diluted.<sup>233</sup> This is especially true among the very wealthy.<sup>234</sup> The more successful Jews become as a result of this integration, the more they feel obligated to support secular institutions, and the more removed their donations are perceived to have originated from Judaism.<sup>235</sup>

These same principles can easily be applied to Leon Koerner. The precise details of Koerner’s childhood Jewish education are not known. Those which are known have been presented in the section “Family Life in Moravia.” However, what is known is that

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<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p.7.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p.6.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p.1.

Koerner did receive a Jewish education. In light of the fact that Koerner's eldest brother, Theodore, felt obligated to have his sons study towards their bar mitzvah for the sake of pleasing Isidor Körner, it would be safe to surmise that Isidor Körner, who was president of the local Jewish community in Nový Jičín, ensured that his sons studied for their *bar mitzvot*. Knowing this, it is likely that Koerner's Jewish upbringing instilled in him a sense of stewardship for his community and a deep obligation to give. When he was admitted into Canada and given the opportunity to re-establish himself as a business leader, he *assimilated* thereby adopting Canada and mainstream society as his new community. Koerner felt deeply obligated to British Columbia; a sense of obligation to contribute that lasted even beyond his earthly years. As one journalist noted,

Koerner contributed a whole new forest industry of immense value to the Canadian economy...His feeling of obligation persisted ... and ... became a magnificent obsession...The account he ran with Canada was a private affair, a thing of the heart. By any reckoning—except perhaps Leon Koerner's—he died, this week, a debt-free man.<sup>236</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Leon Koerner was as multilayered as he was sophisticated. This chapter has mapped the overlapping and sometimes conflicting aspects of his character: Jewish Czech citizen, Jewish refugee, Canadian citizen, lumber baron, quasi-member of the Canadian elite, benevolent leader and philanthropist. Publicly and among certain circles, some aspects of Koerner's identity were expressed more readily than others. Like other Jewish who had been highly integrated in Europe before arriving in Canada between 1939 and 1945, Koerner surmised that if he were to succeed in entering the business

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<sup>236</sup> "Paid in full," *Vancouver Sun*, 27 September 1972, p.4; Rosemary Cunningham, "The history of the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation: 1955 to 2005," In *The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation fiftieth anniversary report* (The Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation, 2005), p.9.

class and resuming his *métier* in Canada, his Jewish identity would have to be subverted.<sup>237</sup> At a time when Canadian antisemitism was at its highest, there is no doubt that this subversion helped to facilitate his *assimilation* into BC general society. Koerner's own business acumen as well as his generous sense of obligation earned him a further place among the elite. Although general society, in both British Columbia and Canada at large, facilitated Koerner's integration, that facilitation took the form of a passive coercion.

Imagine for a moment, how different the outcome could have been had someone like Koerner immigrated to Canada from the Former Soviet Union (FSU), not during 1939, but during 1989 —a person equally ambivalent about his Jewish identity, perhaps secular with engrained Jewish modes of social conduct and Zionist leanings. This person would have had a completely different experience. In terms of the potential for expressing Jewish identity, the main difference between 1939 and 1989 is the reception. Instead of an atmosphere still infused with antisemitism, the refugee of 1989 would find a multicultural society, where difference is tolerated, if not at times even celebrated. He would not be forced to choose between becoming part of the business elite or the Jewish community; both options would be open to him and he would even be presented with avenues which would re-acquaint him with Judaism. A different story would unfold.

Instead, the Koerners, like a select number of other Jewish refugees, came to Canada at a time when "Kosher" was "not welcome."<sup>238</sup> Abella and Troper write of seven Jewish families who came from Czechoslovakia and Austria at the same time as the Koerners. Having previously made their fortunes in banking and farming, they

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<sup>237</sup> Abella and Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948*, p.336.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

transferred all of their holdings to Canadian banks and applied to come to Canada not as Jewish refugees but as Christian ones. They kept up the charade even after they settled in Canada. “Some would never see the inside of a synagogue again; others would only feel confident enough to re-embrace their Judaism publically years after the war; and still others would convert [permanently].”<sup>239</sup> Like Koerner, these families along with other prominent Vancouver families such as the Bentleys and the Sauders, survived at the cost of distancing themselves from their ethnic and religious faith and in some cases that Jewish heritage was lost forever. Leon and Thea Koerner did not have any children of their own, but Koerner’s siblings did. The Koerner family Jewish heritage continued to be a source of consternation even among the second generation of Koerners. Two of Koerner’s nephews illustrate this tempestuous relationship best. One moved east to Montréal and became “a staunch Canadian and non-Jew,” identifying himself as an Anglican in “Canada’s Who’s Who” and he resisted telling his own children about his heritage.<sup>240</sup> The other moved to Victoria and re-identified himself as a Jew. By the third generation of descendants from the original Vancouver Koerners, that is Koerner’s great nieces and nephews, all had intermarried. Of the fourth generation, one returned to the Jewish faith and married a Conservative rabbi and now lives in San Francisco.

Jews like Leon Koerner followed paths less trodden by mainstream Canadian Jewry. Unlike historians of American Jewry,<sup>241</sup> scholars of Jewish Canadian history

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., p.2.

<sup>240</sup> Oral History Interview Sella Heller, Irene Dodek, September – October 1996 The Jewish Historical Society of BC Oral History Project, Tape 3/7 side 2: 392.

<sup>241</sup> Paul Buhle. *From the Lower East Side to Hollywood: Jews in American Popular Culture*. (New York: Verso, 2004); Albert Fried. *The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Gangster in America*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980); Anthony Heilbut. *Exiled in Paradise: German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America, From the 1930s to the Present*. (New York: Viking Press, 1983); J. Hoberman, J. Shandler, and M. Berger. *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies, and Broadcasting*. New York: Theological Seminary

have tended to overlook the endeavours and identities of secular Jews whose lives evolved outside the framework of the general Jewish community. Rather, Jewish Canadian historiography has focused on the people and organizations prominently associated with the majority of Canadian Jewry. One of the underlying aims of this chapter has been to discuss Leon Koerner within the framework of Jewish Canadian history. Although other articles have mentioned Koerner's Jewish ethnicity, it has been mentioned casually, almost as an aside. Koerner was not simply the son of "German and Slavic parents," nor was he married to a woman whose parents were "Polish and Swedish," nor was Koerner a "European aristocrat" or simply a "Czech refugee."<sup>242</sup> Such statements distract from the full picture of Canadian and Koerner family history. Leon Koerner was Jewish. It is important to note that Koerner's successes are not solely attributable to his Jewishness. Indeed, Koerner's life and accomplishments were the product of a variety of influences. Nevertheless, this discussion has tried to show that Koerner's Jewishness, albeit somewhat concealed and assimilated, was a central factor in shaping his life's contributions. To sweep him into the category of European does history a disservice. To describe Koerner as being "of Jewish descent"<sup>243</sup> is to skim briefly over the top of a rich and textured life and to avoid uncovering an identity and a history long buried.

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of America, 2003; Kenneth Aaron Kanter. *The Jews on Tin Pan Alley: The Jewish Contribution to American Popular Music, 1830-1940*. (New York and Cincinnati: Ktav Publishing House, 1982); B. Kessel. *Suddenly Jewish: Jews Raised As Gentiles Discover Their Jewish Roots*. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000.)

<sup>242</sup> Cunningham, *The History of the Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation: 1955 to 2005*, p.5. "History of Leon and Thea Koerner Foundation," cited 2009

[<http://trees.ancestry.com/pt/ViewStory.aspx?tid=9199304&pid=-839298508&oid=32d05102-e7e>]; Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61; Porter, *Leon Koerner's One-Man Giveaway Program*, Box 5-25.

<sup>243</sup> Mitchell, *Business in Vancouver*, pp.60-61.

## CHAPTER 5 HARRY ADASKIN: THE MAKING OF A MUSICIAN

PRE WWI ERA – POST WWII ERA  
Toronto, Ontario and Vancouver, British Columbia

### Introduction

Harry Adaskin<sup>1</sup> (1901-1994) was one of Canada's premier violinists. Born in the Baltic city of Riga and raised in a Yiddish-speaking Orthodox home in Toronto, Adaskin was the eldest son of working-class Jewish immigrant labourers, who spoke faltering English. His parents, Nishe-Bashe Perstnyova and Khayim Laib (Samuel) Adaskins (original spelling), had immigrated from Tsarist Russia in the early 1900s. Like many other Jewish parents, they ensured that their four sons were given the opportunity to study music from an early age. Harry Adaskin's aptitude for music turned his childhood music lessons into the beginning of a life-long musically-centered career. By the age of fourteen Adaskin dropped out of high-school and became a well-liked music teacher in Toronto's Ward neighbourhood—then home to members of the city's working-class immigrant Jewish community. In his early twenties Adaskin earned his fame as a founding member of the Hart House String Quartet (HHSQ). Despite his Orthodox upbringing, Adaskin found himself repelled by institutionalized religion. Instead he became more *assimilated* and turned to music for his main source of spiritual inspiration. Later in life Adaskin looked to Buddhist and other teachings for philosophical insights. Adaskin believed very strongly in freedom of choice. In light of Adaskin's low regard for institutionalized religion, it is not surprising that he met and

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<sup>1</sup> His name was originally spelt Harijs Adaskins, but upon settling in Canada the spelling was later Anglicized to Harry Adaskin. Adaskin never explains why or when the spelling changed. Harry Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, (Vancouver, BC: November House, 1977), p.37.

married a non-Jewish musician, pianist Frances Marr. Adaskin's choice to date and eventually marry a non-Jew, was initially a source of consternation for his observant Jewish parents. In spite of this, Marr became a well-loved member of the Adaskin household.

Harry Adaskin was known throughout his lifetime as much for his musical abilities as a violinist as he was for his teaching and broadcasting talents. In his late thirties, Adaskin integrated more thoroughly in Canada's professional class. He began teaching more earnestly, first at Upper Canada College (UCC) from 1938 until 1941 and then later at the Toronto Conservatory of Music (TCM) where he taught until 1946. In 1946 Adaskin was invited to become the first head of UBC's Music Department, a position which he held until 1958. Upon retiring as Head of the Music Department, Adaskin continued to teach at UBC until 1973. Throughout his various teaching appointments Adaskin gave public concerts and hosted a variety of lecture series on and off the air, including *Musically Speaking* on CBC, which ran uninterrupted between 1938 and 1946, and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra live concert series, which was presented from 1976 until 1977.

Adaskin's integration raises the fundamental question, how did a turn-of-the-century Eastern European Jewish immigrant raised in an Orthodox home, *assimilate* into Canadian society, both during and following WWI and WWII? What role did music play in his *assimilation*? What role did music play in the lives of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in general? What was the history of Jewish musicians in Canada? Who were Adaskin's contemporaries, and did they integrate in a similar manner? How did Adaskin's *assimilation* affect his Jewish identity and vice versa?

This chapter focuses predominantly on Adaskin's earlier experiences in Toronto as opposed to his time in Vancouver. This is partly because the primary sources focus on his life in Eastern Canada, and partly because his level of integration into BC society seems to have been largely determined by his experiences prior to arriving in the province. Indeed, unlike the histories of previous conjunctural agents, circumstances in BC did not substantially alter the level of integration that Adaskin had achieved before moving there. Nevertheless, he is included in this study, not only because his accomplishments as the first prominent Jewish musician and professor in the province are noteworthy, but also because he illustrates just how varied the paths towards integration in BC could be.

### **Family roots and life in Eastern Europe**

Adaskin family roots can be traced back to the 1750s (see Appendix K).<sup>2</sup> Characteristic of the times, both of Adaskin's parents were raised in Orthodox households, where life centered on religious observance. In addition to daily chores, the children were taught the precepts of Judaism as well as the requisite languages for Jewish learning and business transactions, including Yiddish, Russian and German.<sup>3</sup> Since reading was considered to be strictly for Jewish learning, Adaskin noted that his grandparents ensured that their own children never read anything but religious literature.<sup>4</sup> The result was that while Adaskin's own parents were literate, they lacked secular education. They eventually read newspapers (his mother stuck to Jewish only

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<sup>2</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.1; "The Adaskin Family," in Schwartz, Andrew N. [database online]. 18 Covington Meadows St Louis Missouri 63132-4207 USA Available from <http://home.earthlink.net/~anschwartz/personal/genealogy/adaskin/adaskin.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.12.

publications, while his father branched out to include the *Toronto Daily Star*).<sup>5</sup> Adaskin noted that the closest his parents came to reading a book were the serialized novels printed in Jewish newspapers.

Adaskin's interest in music was shared by his father, Khayim Laib Adaskin, who taught himself to play the violin as a child. K.L. Adaskin's own dream to pursue a musical career was discouraged by his Orthodox parents. However, K.L. Adaskin took the chance to become a clarinet player when the opportunity arose to join the military band. Unfortunately, his wages as a clarinet player were quite low and so when a notice was posted in the barracks asking for an experienced wood cutter to be stationed in Riga, the additional salary was too great an opportunity to pass up.<sup>6</sup> Upon his release from the army, K.L. Adaskin secured special permission to settle in Riga, a city which was normally closed to (non-military) Jews. There he opened his own wood cutting business.<sup>7</sup>

Adaskin was his parents' first-born child and also the first grandchild born on his mother's side. Adaskin's birth warranted a visit from his maternal grandfather, Shlaymeh Perstnyov, who, in all likelihood arrived in time to honour the ritual of *pidyon ha-ben* (redemption of the first born son), which usually takes place when the infant is thirty one days old. Shlaymeh Perstnyov travelled hundreds of kilometers from Mstislavl to Riga and his visit would have gone smoothly except for the fact that Jewish visitors were not permitted to stay in Riga overnight, owing to the prohibitions on Jewish residency within Riga city limits. (Khayim Laib Adaskin's exemption did not garner

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.22.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.27.

residency rights for guests.) Given the distance traveled by his father-in-law, and the difficulty of finding accommodation outside of Riga city limits, Khayim Laib Adaskin arranged to have his father-in-law sleep in the concierge's flat. In this way, Perstnyov could avoid detection in the event of a police raid. Indeed, Perstnyov's visit did prompt a raid and the police conducted a midnight search of the Adaskin apartment. Although the police did not discover the grandfather, the incident encouraged K.L. Adaskin to relocate his family to North America.

Khayim Laib Adaskin left his wife and two infant sons, Harijs and Leslie, in Riga, while he attempted to smuggle himself across the border into Germany. Successful on his second attempt, Khayim Laib Adaskin crossed illegally into Germany and traveled to Rotterdam. From there he sailed to London, England. For many Jews, emigration was a "process of dodging the authorities and surviving."<sup>8</sup> Jews often lacked the proper immigration papers. By smuggling themselves into England from Germany, Jewish immigrants could prevail upon Jewish colonization and benevolent societies to help them with the paperwork. In the early 1900s, an average of 500 Eastern European Jews arrived in England weekly from ports such as Rotterdam.<sup>9</sup>

Impressed with English standards of living and manners, Khayim Laib Adaskin would have happily stayed in England, had his Canadian immigration application been rejected. As it was, his application was accepted and he set sail for Canada in 1903. Nine months later, Khayim Laib Adaskin sent for his wife and his young sons. Nishe-Bashe Adaskin followed her husband's route out of Riga. Considering that Nishe-Bashe

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<sup>8</sup> Robert F. Harney and Harold Martin Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1975), p.1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

Adaskin was traveling with two young children, her emigration was far more stressful. Nevertheless, she persevered and by taping her sons mouths shut as they traveled, she too managed to steal across the border into Germany. The family was re-united in Canada in 1903.<sup>10</sup> The Adaskins were soon joined by other siblings and just prior to the outbreak of WWI, Shlaymey and Faigeh Perstynov joined their daughter and son-in-law in Toronto.

### **Arriving in Canada**

The Adaskins were part of a much larger wave of immigration to Canada during the early twentieth century. As discussed in previous chapters, a modest migration of Eastern European Jews to Canada began in the 1880s. Although many of these immigrants settled in the larger centre of Montréal, a significant number of them eventually made their way to Toronto. By 1891 Toronto's Jewish population included 1,425 Jews, mainly from a variety of Eastern European regions. The first eleven years of the twentieth century saw the largest influx of Jews into Toronto. By 1911 the city's Jewish population totalled 18,300 people (see Table 2). Unlike other sojourner groups, Jewish immigrants settled in Eastern Canada as families who intended to stay in Canada, rather than as individuals whose main objective was make money and eventually return to their homeland.

East European Jews who arrived in Canada between 1901 and 1911 typically entered the country as unskilled labourers. As such, they automatically joined the ranks of the working-class and would have likely exemplified Barkan's *contact* and

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<sup>10</sup>Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.38.

*acculturation* phases.<sup>11</sup> In comparison to local residents (Jews and non-Jews alike), these immigrants were destitute.

Table 2 Toronto's Jewish Population, 1891-1931.<sup>12</sup>

Date	Population
1891	1 425
1901	3 090
1911	18 300
1921	34 770
1931	46 751

### ***The Ward: Toronto's Jewish neighbourhood***

Irrespective of their origins, the majority of these Jewish newcomers concentrated in one downtown neighbourhood, St. John's Ward, known locally as "the Ward." Originally known as McCauley Town, the Ward was bound by Queen, Yonge, and College Streets and University Avenue and was adjacent to the central business district, home to textile and garment factories such as Lowndes Company, Timothy Eaton Company, and the Johnson Brothers.<sup>13</sup> Although the Ward had a poor reputation, in part because it hosted Toronto's red-light district, given Toronto's propensity for segregation at that time,<sup>14</sup> the district was destined to become a "major immigrant reception area."<sup>15</sup> By 1900, Eastern European Jews formed Toronto's largest minority group, creating a "mini shtetl" in the midst of Anglo-Celtic Toronto.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, by settling in one major area, Eastern European Jewish immigrants forged a place for themselves where their communal, religious, economic needs could be met.

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<sup>11</sup> Robert F. Harney, *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945*, (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1985), p.107.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.499.

<sup>13</sup> Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, p.118.

<sup>14</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.82.

<sup>15</sup> Harney, *Gathering Place: Peoples and Neighbourhoods of Toronto, 1834-1945*, p.107.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.107,108.

It was common for extended families, along with unmarried *landslayt* (people originating from the same town or shtetl), to inhabit the three to five room cottages of the Ward.<sup>17</sup> There was no limit to the number of people who could occupy a dwelling. Affordable and conveniently located, the Ward became a mixture of residential neighbourhoods blended together with light industry. Sixty percent of the neighbourhood was covered with buildings, meaning that people and houses dominated the streets, rather than institutions.<sup>18</sup> This created a community-oriented neighbourhood. Socializing and child recreation took place in the Ward's unpaved streets; men lingered in coffee shops and sat on shady stoops in the heat of the day, women did their grocery shopping daily and children were everywhere.<sup>19</sup>

The majority of Toronto's Eastern European Jews entered the city's unskilled labour pool via peddling, rag-picking, bottle washing, the used-furniture and the ready-made clothing industries. Menial jobs were not only avoided by established residents and therefore easily available to Jewish immigrants, but because of their independent nature, the jobs gave religiously observant immigrants the opportunity to maintain tradition.<sup>20</sup> Located near the city's garment district, the Ward offered Jewish immigrants the advantage of close and abundant employment. It was common to see yards cluttered with sheds and working materials. Shops were set up next to homes. The disorderly nature of the neighbourhood owed to the lack of distinction between home and work space and perhaps to the lack of distinction between family and communal space. All

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen A. Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987; 1979), p.83.

<sup>18</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.42.

<sup>20</sup> Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, p.72.

were completely intertwined, giving the Ward an atypical status among Toronto neighbourhoods.

In 1911 the City Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Charles Hastings, investigated Toronto's slum conditions. Due to landlord neglect, which resulted from high demand and limited supply of housing, the Ward demonstrated the city's worst slum conditions. Dr. Hastings found that the Ward's population density was eighty two people per acre and that the dwellings consisted on average of six to eight people within three to five rooms, which were sometimes occupied by as many as ten to fifteen people. Living space was further diminished by domestic industries.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Hastings deemed that 108 houses were unfit for habitation and yet all were occupied. Nonetheless, within this "slum," Toronto's East European Jews created a vibrant and *institutionally complete* community, with synagogues, prayer houses, shops, restaurants, and benevolent societies. It is worth noting that the conditions of the Ward were slum-like according to Victorian Toronto standards, but in comparison to conditions elsewhere, i.e. New York City or various cities throughout Eastern Europe, the Ward's living conditions were a dramatic improvement.<sup>22</sup>

In 1890 the majority of the Ward's inhabitants were Eastern European Jewish immigrants. By 1909 only one third—about 6,000—of Toronto Jewry lived in the Ward; Italian immigrants formed another dominant minority in the district. As they gained an economic foothold in the city, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants moved west towards Kensington Market area, on the western side of University Avenue, directly adjacent to the Ward and connected by a single street car. Movement eastward was

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p.83.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p.88.

considered too expensive or a step down.<sup>23</sup> The further westward Jews moved from the Ward, the more likely they were to be property owners. Jewish children continued to attend McCaul Elementary School, located precisely on the border between the Ward and Kensington Market. Jewish students also continued to form the majority of the school's student body. By 1912 sixty six percent of Toronto's Jews lived in the area bound by Kensington Market; Jewish residency extended all the way to Bathurst Street. By 1914 this area was the City's new reception area for Jewish immigrants. By the end of WWI, the Ward was on its way to losing its Jewish flavour.<sup>24</sup>

### ***The Adaskin home in the Ward***

It was into this cramped and insular neighbourhood that the Adaskins settled.<sup>25</sup> Like most homes in the Ward, the Adaskin house was always crammed so full of relatives that the children slept two to a bed.<sup>26</sup> Harry Adaskin's three paternal uncles and a maternal aunt also lived with the family. According to Adaskin, the house was most crowded in the evenings and on Sundays, when everyone was home from work. During the winter, everyone huddled around the kitchen wood and coal stoves, which were kept burning day and night.

Nishe-Bashe Adaskin managed the household and her days were consumed by laundry, bed making, cooking, ironing, washing and helping her boys with their daily

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p.90.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p.90

<sup>25</sup> The Adaskins first rented a house off Elizabeth Street, south of Dundas Street, at Foster Place. Like many of the dwellings in the Ward, the Adaskins' first house resembled a shack with a yard and an outhouse. From Foster Place, the family down-graded and moved east of the Ward to Ontario Street, just south of Carleton Street and one block west of Parliament Street. Later they moved west of Kensington Market to Claremont Street.

<sup>26</sup> Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*, p.23.

Talmud lessons.<sup>27</sup> Khayim-Laib Adaskin supported his family by working in a wood-working factory, where he earned fifteen dollars a week. He eventually left this position to start his own used-furniture business.<sup>28</sup> Although the Adaskins spoke a smattering of languages, at home only Yiddish was spoken. As a teenager Adaskin noticed that his ability to understand (or misunderstand) English was influenced by his parents' lack of fluency in English. Later in life he mused that he wished his parents had spoken Russian at home rather than Yiddish, highlighting Adaskin's own distance from Jewish culture.<sup>29</sup> Life in the Ward for the Adaskin family was pleasant. Adaskin only remembered two occasions of unhappiness while he was growing up: his mother's chapped hands and her bouts of jealousy over her husband's inappropriate attention towards her younger sister.<sup>30</sup>

### ***Religious upbringing***

At first Nishe-Bashe Adaskin took care of her boys' religious upbringing. Adaskin also attended after-school Hebrew lessons every day from 4:30pm until 6:30pm. Although he loved elementary school, this feeling did not extend to his Hebrew after-school program. Adaskin described the experience as dreadful, mainly because the students fought and basic civility was ignored.<sup>31</sup> When his maternal grandfather relocated to Toronto, all religious education was entrusted to him. Shlaymey Perstynov brought his religious devotion with him to Canada and he made sure that all of the Adaskin boys—Harry, Leslie, Murray and John, partook in daily religious study.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p.24.

<sup>28</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.63.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p.51.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p.52.

Shlaymey Perstynov prayed every day in shul and was often invited to be the cantor during High Holiday services. To the dismay of his grandsons, he also required them to form his back-up choir, a task that Harry Adaskin described as “pure torture.”<sup>32</sup>

Adaskin remembered his grandfather as a kind and patient man, and it was thanks to him that Adaskin became adept at reading prayers in Hebrew as well as reading the liturgical neumes (musical notations). Despite this, Adaskin claimed that he was born with a “dread of the ceremonial” and institutionalized religion.<sup>33</sup> Adaskin described his grandfather’s “reified religiosity” as contrary to his own character, stating that, “true believers” made him “anxious even at age ten.”<sup>34</sup> Adaskin’s growing aversion to Jewish religious culture became apparent once again after becoming bar mitzvah and entering high school. At this time, Adaskin felt the need to secularize his birth date so that it would fit into the contemporary Gregorian calendar date system. He wrote to the Yiddish daily *Der Forverts* (*The Jewish Daily Forward*) in New York City and asked for a translation of his Hebrew birth date (from the Hebrew month of Tishrei in 5662). October 6, 1901 was the translation he received, and although he later found out that it may have been inaccurate, October 6 was the date he kept.<sup>35</sup>

As he grew older, Adaskin’s apparent rejection of Orthodoxy led to a pursuit of spirituality outside of institutionalized Judaism. As an adult Adaskin came to believe that it was impossible to institutionalize truth, preferring instead to ponder the paradoxical nature of life outside of a Jewish framework.<sup>36</sup> Adaskin respected Jewish sacred texts, attributing the survival and diversity of the Jewish people to their ability to

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp.36, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler’s World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.37. Harry Adaskin had a twin sister who died at birth.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p.33.

read. “The bible is what saved us,” he wrote, “every Jew...had to be literate.”<sup>37</sup> Adaskin concluded that it was literacy that gave Jews like himself the capability of breaking the confines of what he saw as outmoded practices. Despite his religious upbringing, Adaskin never recited Kaddish, stating that his agnosticism spared him “twinges of conscience.”<sup>38</sup> Reflecting upon his lack of interest in Judaism, Adaskin pondered, “How could my grandfather or my parents ever have suspected that I would end up leaning more towards the Buddhistic overview, when they had never even heard of such an overview?”<sup>39</sup> The question remains, why did Adaskin feel so distant from traditional observance? Perhaps this may be partially explained by the Canadianizing and nativist pressures to conform to Canadian culture that Adaskin experienced in Toronto.

## **Immigrant integration**

### ***Canadianization via the public school system***

During the early years of the twentieth century, Canada, indeed all of North America, offered immigrants the chance for a better life. Established Canadians saw immigrants as victims of oppressive regimes and in need of colonial British protection. The turn-of-the-century Canadians of British origin expected incoming immigrants to abandon their “alien ways” and replace them with British culture and pride and thus become “true” Canadians. Ethnicity in Canada, other than British or French, was to be a transient state of existence.<sup>40</sup> Newcomers were expected to become permanent settlers of remote and uncultivated regions of the country. Such expectations were based upon

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.38.

<sup>40</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.x.

perceptions of immigration waves from earlier eras, i.e. the Irish, Scottish Highlanders, Galician villagers, and German dissidents beginning in the 1840s.<sup>41</sup> However, migrants to Canada during the open door era differed from their predecessors. They either saw themselves as sojourners, i.e. in Canada temporarily, or as immigrants with a desire to settle, but not necessarily in the remote regions of the country. As immigrants filled Canada's main cities, local residents of the established dominant group—those of British, particularly English descent—considered themselves guardians against foreign ways and as such asserted their own cultural dominance.<sup>42</sup> Canadianization through the public school system was one way they ensured cultural conformity.

Toronto's school system served as a vehicle for the Canadianization of the Eastern European Jewish immigrants. Jewish families, like the Adaskins, were part of *institutionally complete* communities, and often worked in mainly Jewish environments. Correspondingly, Jewish pupils formed the majority of students in the Ward, for instance, in 1912 Jews made up eighty seven percent of the students in the Ward's two elementary schools.<sup>43</sup> Regardless of the composition of the student population, children of all backgrounds were taught "the Canadian way."<sup>44</sup> They were taught that Canadians were "tidy, neat and sincere,"<sup>45</sup> and they were encouraged to strive for punctuality, obedience, cleanliness, decency of appearance, good behaviour, regard for others, law and order, and productivity.<sup>46</sup> They learned to read and write in English, in many cases better than their parents. Adaskin recalled an event in which he asked his parents to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>43</sup> Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, p.118.

<sup>44</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.110.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p.110.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p.110.

define a certain word. Upon receiving the definition, Adaskin realized that he knew English better than his parents and began to feel self-conscious of his Yiddish-infused household.<sup>47</sup> With the passage of time, the “Anglo-conformity” instilled by public schools began to increasingly influence the children outside of the classroom.<sup>48</sup> Children became capable enough to move invisibly in Anglophone environments, and in this way, they acted as liaisons for their greenhorn parents and the world outside of the Jewish community.<sup>49</sup>

Through access to public education and interactions with non-Jewish children, the children of Eastern European Jewish immigrants found themselves infused with non-traditional ideas and began to question the religious adherence of their parents. Some of these children, like Harry Adaskin, began to see traditional Judaism as archaic and a hindrance to their ability to integrate. Ultimately, the children became divided between two worlds: the old world of their parent’s generation and their own world. This contrast often undermined the influence of parents over their children. To general society the parents were seen as foreigners, and the children, influenced by their public school education, began to see their own parents in the same light.<sup>50</sup> In this way older and younger Jews became increasingly polarized in their orientation towards integration. This situation would have been only exacerbated by nativist tendencies of the interwar period.

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<sup>47</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler’s World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.293.

<sup>48</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.111.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

### *Nativism*

During the interwar period, Canadian national identity was modeled on that of Britain. Anglophone Canadians clearly saw themselves as British subjects. British standards, institutions and aspirations characterised the WWI and interwar eras. “The British tradition of freedom and self-government was thought to be properly understood only by those...” who adopted the Anglo-Saxon ways.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, unlike Montréal, Toronto lacked the dual Anglophone-Francophone intercultural penetration. In the absence of this cultural duality, Anglo-conformity may have been more extreme, thus allowing for an overwhelming pressure on the thousands of Eastern and Central European immigrants to assimilate to this Anglo-British identity: “Those of non-British origin were regarded as Canadians only in as far as they approximated to the model.”<sup>52</sup> By 1930 these aspirations had turned into Anglo-Saxon nativism, and national sentiment as well as federal policies began reflecting a “Keep Canada British” philosophy, which was in turn backed up by theories of biological superiority. As discussed in the previous chapter on Leon Koerner, the Depression aggravated national xenophobia and the era of closed immigration began.

During the interwar years, nearly eighty percent of Toronto’s inhabitants were of British origin, making it a stronghold for Anglo-Saxon nativism. This nativist fervour included militant Protestant organizations such as the Orange Order and antisemitic organizations such as swastika clubs. Both types of organizations used nativism to promote a national British identity. Not only did Jews during the interwar period form

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<sup>51</sup> Lita-Rose Betcherman, *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf: Fascist Movements in Canada in the Thirties*, (Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1978), p.46.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

Toronto's largest minority, but increasingly a proportion of them were becoming upwardly mobile and beginning to seek the amenities of the more "comfortable classes," such as nice homes, resort vacations. In doing so they increasingly came into direct contact with middle-class British Toronto.<sup>53</sup> Since the British cultural group dominated the middle-class, when Jews tried to gain access to middle-class amenities they were often greeted by a genteel antisemitism.<sup>54</sup>

Prejudice extended to all areas of life including business transactions, home ownership, residential location and recreational activities.<sup>55</sup> It was during these years that private beaches and summer homes displayed signs stating "No Jews or Dogs allowed."<sup>56</sup> During the summer of 1933, Toronto witnessed the infamous Christie Pits riots, which erupted between teenagers from Jewish and non-Jewish baseball teams in Willowvale Park, when someone from the non-Jewish team raised a swastika flag and yelled "heil Hitler."<sup>57</sup> Each side attracted mobs and the fighting continued until two o'clock the next morning. The Christie Pit riots were significant in that they demonstrated that some Jewish youth of the interwar period no longer carried the same Eastern European immigrant identity as their parents and that they were prepared to fight back if pushed. And in doing so, these Jewish boys, as well as those they fought, demonstrated the level to which Canadian values had been instilled. As one author described it, "These boys were all British. They were brought up in Canadian schools

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.47.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.50.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., p.50.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p.53.

and [had] learned something of the British bulldog idea never to give up without a fight.”<sup>58</sup>

### ***The weakening of adherence to Jewish tradition***

The WWI and interwar periods also witnessed a weakening of tradition within the broader Jewish community. During the WWI period the Canadian court system rather than a rabbinical *beit din* (religious court) was used to resolve disputes; civil marriages were taking place; *shabbos* violators (Jews who did keep the Sabbath) no longer kept their practices concealed and public acceptance of *shabbos* violators increased.<sup>59</sup> During this time, *kashrut* chaos erupted, as self-styled *shochtim* (ritual slaughters) passed themselves off as officially trained ritual slaughters. To compound the problem further, unscrupulous butchers and meat wholesalers attempted to deceive the Jewish public by selling non-kosher meat at reduced prices as if it were kosher. In response, various rabbis forbade their followers from purchasing kosher meat, *shechted* and supervised by other Toronto rabbis. Over time, this resulted in the deterioration of *kashrut* observance within the community as a whole.<sup>60</sup>

The decline in Orthodox observance among Toronto Jewry continued during the interwar period. This was the result of a combination of several factors. Synagogues saw a reduction in affiliation rates. Jewish stores increasingly conducted business on *shabbos*. Violation of the Sabbath became enough of a cause for concern when at least two of the congregations launched campaigns against *shabbos* violators.<sup>61</sup> Economic

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p.53.

<sup>59</sup> Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937*, p.278.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p.279.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p.278.

gain was often motivation for *shabbos* violation. Saturday was the main business day for those in retail. Jewish factory workers working for non-Jewish employers increasingly found it necessary to work on Saturdays, as competition for employment grew along with the probability of being fired for not working Saturdays.<sup>62</sup> The decline in Orthodoxy was further accentuated by the numbers of secular Jews settling in Toronto. No longer bound by communal religious authority, secularists were not afraid of becoming outcasts, and as public secularists they held considerable influence over the community.<sup>63</sup> In light of these trends, it is perhaps not surprising that Harry Adaskin chose both a career and a wife outside of the community he was raised in. In order to understand Adaskin's career and marriage choices, let us explore the historical contexts of the evolution of Canada's music history.

### **Adaskin's musical contributions: Music as a vehicle for Jewish integration**

Although Adaskin's mother may have harboured aspirations that her eldest son would become a rabbi, his childhood education in classical music introduced him to a world which directed him on a path away from traditional Judaism and Jewish community<sup>64</sup>—a path to *assimilation*. Young Harry Adaskin's first music teacher was a Mr. Silverman. Like the Adaskins, Silverman was a Jewish immigrant, living and working in the Ward.<sup>65</sup> Adaskin's second teacher was also a fellow Jew and Ward resident, a music teacher by the name of Fleischman. At the age of ten, Adaskin joined the Toronto Conservatory of Music. For Adaskin, TCM was more than an educational

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p.278.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p.279.

<sup>64</sup> Harry Adaskin maternal uncle Shmuel was a famous rabbi in Mistslavl. Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.1.

<sup>65</sup> It was rumoured that he had left his wife and children in New York and settled in Toronto with a much younger woman. Ibid., p.52.

facility. As he became aware of antisemitic prejudices, it became a place of refuge from a turbulent pre-WWI social environment. Adaskin wrote, “It was in those years [1911 onwards] that I discovered that the word Jew was a pejorative noun...the Conservatory was not a bit like that.” At TCM, Adaskin studied with Jessie Flook (married name Ziegler). When Khayim Laib Adaskin had trouble paying for his son’s tuition, Flook arranged for Adaskin to receive his lessons via scholarship. Adaskin’s parents and brothers were overjoyed with Adaskin’s sponsorship, which was renewed annually for the next four years.<sup>66</sup> The Toronto Conservatory of Music’s sponsorship of Adaskin in 1913 earned him the right to study with the top teacher in the Conservatory, Bertha Dreschler Adamson.

Adaskin described the scholarship as creating the circumstances through which he could liberate himself from the “confines of the lower-middle class into which [he] had been born.”<sup>67</sup> Adaskin claimed that both his parents, particularly his father, desired this liberation “with incredible intensity.” Adaskin realized that his violin was his passport out of a “narrow environment.”<sup>68</sup> Although Adaskin’s parents saw music as a vehicle of social mobility, Adaskin understood music as offering more than that. He saw it as offering the opportunity of “escaping from provincialism; a jettisoning of outmoded and outworn ideas; an escape from ancient taboos and superstitions; a wider way of looking at the world...not the least of its advantages, an improvement in one’s manners.”<sup>69</sup> In short, music was a means for Adaskin to transcend the confines of the Jewish community and find community elsewhere, namely in the music section of

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p.63.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., p.67.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p.1.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p.67.

Canada's artistic community, a community which also found itself on the margins of general society. Adaskin's substitution of Jewish community for music community eventually provided him with the means to *assimilate* into general society, as was demonstrated by his careers with the CBC and UBC.

### ***Early Canadian classical music and Jewish integration***

How could music have provided Adaskin with a refuge from anti-Jewish sentiments and propelled him out of the lower-middle class insular Jewish community in which he was raised? To answer this question it is necessary to look at the role that music played in Canadian society and in the lives of Eastern European Jewish immigrants.

Immigrant musicians have had a long history of influencing classical music in Canada.<sup>70</sup> For instance, as far back as the mid-eighteenth century, United Empire Loyalists escaping political upheavals contributed a great deal to Canada's music heritage. Later waves of immigrants during the early part of the nineteenth century would help to sustain Canada's classical music culture, including educated immigrants from France, Belgium, Austria, and Germany. Most Jewish musical immigrants did not arrive in Canada until the turn of the twentieth century. They brought instrument making skills<sup>71</sup> and a rigorous dedication to performance and composition.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Clifford Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey*, (Agincourt, Ontario: GLC Publishers Ltd., 1982), p.2.

<sup>71</sup> The first known Jews to be involved in Canada's music industry were the Nordheimers. Brothers Abraham and Samuel Nordheimer established A & S Nordheimer Company, which existed between 1844 and 1927. Acting as musical instrument dealers and sheet music publishers, A & S Nordheimer Co. was active in Kingston and Toronto, with less successful branches of the company throughout Ontario, Manitoba and Québec. The Nordheimers soon embraced Christianity and became almost completely assimilated into the middle-class society of Canada's West. "Jewish Music and Musicians," in 2010

Beginning in the twentieth century, music conservatories and examination boards appeared in major centres throughout the country, particularly in Montréal and Toronto. The establishment of the Toronto Conservatory of Music in 1886 was crucial to the institutional development of music during this period. Within its first year of operation, TCM offered courses in chamber music, students formed classes in ensembles, while practicing in trios or quartets.<sup>73</sup> Canadian music conservatories were unlike their European counterparts in that they were not elite institutions; rather they were open to anyone who could afford the tuition. As one commentator noted:

American and Canadian conservatories were similar to European ones in name only. They were anything but professional schools. They taught all comers, anyone who would pay a fee. Lacking state support, they had no salaried staff, no prescribed courses. Teachers were paid on a commission basis which had a disastrous influence on the teacher-to-student ratio: [conservatories] were, in fact, conglomerations of private studios vaguely held together by a name.<sup>74</sup>

More than other institutions in Canada, music conservatories tended to value interest in music above all else. This was perhaps accentuated by the fact that within the British Empire music was normally considered a trade (or a gentlemanly past-time pursuit). As a result of this categorization, the broad-scale establishment and development of music

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Historica-Dominion, cited February 16, 2010,

[<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=u1ARTU0001760>].

<sup>72</sup> Ford, *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey*, p.3.

<sup>73</sup> It was not long before the TCM created a professional club, the Conservatory String Quartette Club, and included the likes of Bertha Drechsler Adamson, one of Adaskin's early teachers during his formative years. In fact, Adamson went on to found the Conservatory String Quartet in 1901. In essence, the Conservatory String Quartet and the Academy String Quartet (est.1914) laid the foundations for Harry Adaskin's career as an ensemble violinist in the Hart House String Quartet. Robert William Andrew Elliott, *The string quartet in Canada*, (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto, 1990), p.5.

<sup>74</sup> Arnold Walter, *Aspects of Music in Canada* (Toronto, Ontario: University of Toronto Press, 1969), p.251.

departments and faculties within universities across the country did not take place until midway through the twentieth century.<sup>75</sup>

Jews from Tsarist Russia would have been particularly inclined to take advantage of the opportunities within Canadian conservatories on account of their previous experiences in Europe.<sup>76</sup> For many Tsarist Jews the pursuit of music was seen to represent the synthesis of art and the universal path of enlightenment (as inspired by the *Haskalah*).<sup>77</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century, music had emerged as a major medium through which Tsarist Jews could achieve social mobility within society.<sup>78</sup> By the beginning of the twentieth century scores of Jewish parents had their children learn

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<sup>75</sup> Music courses (generally oriented towards organists) made their first appearance at the University of Toronto and Laval University in the mid-nineteenth century. Paul Helmer, *Growing with Canada: The Émigré Tradition in Canadian Music*, (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), p.85.

<sup>76</sup> A similar phenomenon took place in Central and Western Europe with varying outcomes. By the early nineteenth century, classical European musical culture had become middle-class rather than ecclesiastically oriented. Therefore in combination with the *Haskalah* movement and the attainment of a middle-class status, Jews were able to play an integral role in the cultivation of European music. In some regions, Jewish acceptance of Christian artistic ideals was not intended to catalyze their conversion to Christianity; and in places such as France and Poland Jews remained Jews even as musicians. French Jews were treated equally both politically and professionally. Jews in Poland were able to become musicians without converting, albeit for a host of different reasons, including a large percentage of traditionalist Jews. Rubin and Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture*, p.223. Among German speaking Jewish musicians however, conversion was often synonymous with entrance into the profession. Rubin and Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture*, p.207. They found that although they could enter the music profession easily enough, they were met with hostility even after they established themselves as proficient musicians. In order to achieve professional development, most of these Jewish musicians converted to Christianity during the first half of the nineteenth century, including Isaak Moscheles, Ferdinand Hiller, Stephen Heller, Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, Gustav Mahler and Arnold Schoenberg. Peter Gradenwitz, *The Music of Israel: From the Biblical era to Modern Times, Revised and Expanded* (Portland, Or: Amadeus Press, 1996), pp.174-175.

<sup>77</sup> The entry of Tsarist Jews into the realm of classical music did not happen until the mid-nineteenth century, well after the same phenomenon took place in Central and Western Europe. James Loeffler, "*The Most Musical Nation*": *Jews, Culture and Nationalism in the Late Russian Empire*, (2006), p.42. At this point, there arose a class of Russian Jews who were committed to the idea of Jewish participation in Russian institutions of higher learning, as well as Jewish acculturation. An education and ultimately a career in music offered Jews a modern cultural identity, one that was secularized and that inserted its participants into middle-class Russian artistic life. Between 1860 and WWI Russian music schools and conservatories were one of the most popular destinations for Jewish students pursuing higher education. Nearly one quarter of all music students in Russia were Jewish. *Ibid.*, p.2. In Odessa and St. Petersburg that proportion increased to half. *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

how to play the violin and piano in hopes that their musical talents would secure them a bright future.<sup>79</sup> As Jewish musicians made their way to North America during the first few decades of the twentieth century, some of them achieved extraordinary reputations. Known to their audiences as exponents of European music, they became permanent fixtures on the North American concert stage and were primarily known as Russian musicians.<sup>80</sup>

By the end of WWI, there were considerable numbers of Jewish musicians in North America, both immigrants and the children of immigrants. Classical music was being promoted and funded, and immigrant Jews working in sweat shops were eager for the possibility for their children to leave poverty behind. As Jews had done in Tsarist Russia, greenhorns in North America saw the possibility for social mobility in classical music. Similarly, the Adaskins may have seen music as a safe profession, whereby their children could successfully move away from the ranks of the impoverished class. With the existence of university quotas, language and cultural barriers, music offered Jews a chance to surmount all of these obstacles. This does not mean that the Adaskins expected their children to reject Jewish tradition. After all, they raised them in an Orthodox household. Nor could the Adaskins have anticipated the degree to which their own children would *assimilate*.

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<sup>79</sup> Jascha Heifetz (1901-1987), Mischa Elman (1891-1967), Arthur Friedheim (1859-1932), Nathan Milstein (1904-1992), David Oistrakh (1908-1974) Arthur Rubinstein (1887-1982) and Vladimir Horowitz (1874-1951) were some of those who succeeded. Rubin and Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture*, p.229.

<sup>80</sup> Loeffler, "*The Most Musical Nation*": *Jews, Culture and Nationalism in the Late Russian Empire*, p.283.

*Adaskin's early career*

When Adaskin began teaching privately at the age of fourteen, he initially charged twenty five cents for his half-hour lessons. His fees later increased to fifty cents when he became swamped with pupils. Brought up without ever indulging in luxury items, Adaskin began spending his earnings on concerts, books and movies, especially silent Charlie Chaplin films. Adaskin claimed that the movies were his inspiration for eating in first-class restaurants.<sup>81</sup>

The onset of WWI hampered the development of the Canadian classical music scene. Adaskin did not let circumstances prevent him from pursuing his dream. Finding that he learned more on his own and feeling alien in a somewhat prejudiced learning environment, Adaskin took advantage of lax public school attendance regulations and dropped out of Harbord Collegiate in 1916 in order to pursue a career in music full time.<sup>82</sup> He then became an official member of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and card carrying member of the musicians' union.<sup>83</sup>

At the age of seventeen Adaskin left the TCM to join the Canadian Academy of Music (CAM) as teacher and student. There he studied under the tutelage of violinist Luigi Von Kunits. Adaskin left Von Kunits in 1921 to study with Henri Czaplinski, who was Jewish. Von Kunits accused Adaskin of abandonment, reportedly claiming that Jewish pupils always preferred Jewish teachers. However, Adaskin stated that he had not known that Czaplinski was Jewish and that he did not choose his teachers based on their religious or ethnic backgrounds. The comment made a life-long impression on Adaskin,

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p.69.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p.63.

who remained acutely aware of group prejudice.<sup>84</sup> In 1923 Adaskin began studying with Geza de Kresz. Adaskin noted that while he himself was the product of “uneducated European provincialism,” de Kresz was the product of “educated European provincialism.” De Kresz was a man of the world. He spoke four languages; he was from a well-to-do professional family; and he was connected socially. In essence, it seems that de Kresz was all that Adaskin aspired to achieve for himself.<sup>85</sup> In 1924, de Kresz and Adaskin, along with cellist Boris Hambourg and violist Milton Blackstone, formed the Hart House String Quartet, where Adaskin served as second violin.<sup>86</sup> This was the first professional Canadian ensemble dedicated solely to chamber music.<sup>87</sup>

It was during the interwar era that Adaskin began to play an active role in laying the foundations for Canadian classical music of the twentieth century. At that time, world-class performers began emerging from the ranks of Canadian musicians, including Canada’s “first musician of national stature,” Sir Ernest MacMillan.<sup>88</sup> Concert halls and arts centres were expanded and established; festivals, recording studios and broadcasts were inaugurated. Music faculties in universities, such as Toronto (1918), McGill (1920), and Laval (1922), were also established. New orchestras were formed and old ones were re-established (after disbandment during WWI), including the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra (VSO) in 1930 under the sponsorship of Mary Elizabeth Angus

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<sup>84</sup> Ford *Canada's Music: An Historical Survey*, p.87.

<sup>85</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.98.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100.

<sup>87</sup> Elliott, *The String Quartet in Canada*, p.12.

<sup>88</sup> MacMillan later became Canada’s acclaimed chamber music composer, and was knighted for his efforts. Kallmann, *Music History*.

(Mrs. B.T. Rogers).<sup>89</sup> The Hart House String Quartet played an active role in promoting this growing Canadian classical music sector.

### *The Hart House String Quartet*

Filling a niche left void by disbanded ensembles such as the Academy String Quartet, the HHSQ soon earned a favourable reputation for itself across North America and Europe.<sup>90</sup> Subsidized by the Massey Foundation, the Quartet was the first subsidized quartet in Canada. The HHSQ was named by its patron after the Hart House Theatre in Toronto.<sup>91</sup> The Massey Foundation supported the HHSQ upon the condition that the group never refuse an engagement in a small town that could not afford the fee. The group kept their promise and for thirteen years Adaskin toured with the HHSQ across Canada, stopping in every town, village and school from Halifax to Victoria. The Quartet's first concert took place on April 27, 1924 in front of an audience of 500 patrons, all crowded into the Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto. The debut concert took place on a Sunday and provoked accusations of violating the Lord's Day Act, which prohibited charging admission on Sundays. The String Quartet Club of Toronto was formed in order to circumvent these regulations, where membership fees

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<sup>89</sup> McIntosh, *History of Music in BC, 1850-1950*, p.101.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>91</sup> Incorporated in 1918, the *Massey Foundation* was created out of the trust of Hart Massey, a nineteenth century agricultural equipment industrialist. Due to Massey's Methodist background and the family penchant for music, the Foundation tended to fund musically based projects. Aside from providing the funds for the establishment for the *HHSQ*, the Massey Foundation financed the Hart House Theatre, purchased an instrument collection, known as the Hart House Viols, and in 1933 renovated *Massey Hall* (established in 1894). "Massey," in *The Canadian Encyclopedia Historica-Dominion* [database online]. [cited 2010]. Available from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002242#SUBReadings>.

replaced Sunday ticket sales, and Sunday concert goers were not required to show their tickets.<sup>92</sup>

Within its first season the HHSQ performed twenty-three quartets. During one of these concerts, the group premiered Ernest MacMillan's String Quartet in C minor. During their second season, the HHSQ was hired by the radio department of the Canadian National Railways to perform a series of nationwide broadcasts. They gave nearly seventy concerts during their second season, two of which were in New York and Boston. The success and fame of the HHSQ continued through the 1920s and into the 1930s. As such, all of its members were provided with a steady source of income and none of them ever experienced economic difficulties during the Depression era.<sup>93</sup> The HHSQ was received so enthusiastically in New York City that they were offered the opportunity to take up permanent residence there. The group and its patron, the Massey Foundation, declined, citing that the education of the Canadian public in classical music was its primary goal—something that would be unachievable if the group re-located to the United States. While Adaskin remained in the ensemble, the group gave thirty recitals in New York City and had twelve tours across North America, including one to Mexico and Cuba, and two extended tours in Europe including the British Isles, Scandinavia and Russia.<sup>94</sup>

By the time Adaskin left the HHSQ in 1937, the group had secured an international reputation for Canada in Chamber music circles. The group had also increased awareness and appreciation of chamber music across the country. The HHSQ

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<sup>92</sup> Elliott, *The String Quartet in Canada*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Charles Hill, *Canadian Painting in the Thirties Exhibition Records*, ed. Harry Adaskin, (Ottawa, Ont.: National Gallery of Canada Library and Archives, 18 November 1973).

<sup>94</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.120.

was one of the first Canadian ensembles to participate in radio broadcasting, and it was the first ensemble to make recordings in Canada, including the first recording of MacMillan's "Two Sketches for String Quartet." The group also premiered pieces by other Canadian composers, setting a precedent for including Canadian work in the Canadian string quartet repertoire.<sup>95</sup> Pursuant to the HHSQ tours and broadcasts, string quartet ensembles were created across the country.<sup>96</sup> When Adaskin retired from the Hart House String Quartet, he left a position of high status to become, in his words, "just another Toronto fiddler."<sup>97</sup> However, the freelance aspect of his career never seemed to bother him. Indeed, as long as he could meet his basic living expenses, Adaskin's only ambition was to play music "like an angel."<sup>98</sup>

#### ***Adaskin's career, 1938-1946***

Adaskin's thirteen-year stretch with the HHSQ had earned him a reputable name in Canada's burgeoning classical music world, and as such Adaskin was never at a loss for employment opportunities. As mentioned earlier, Adaskin taught at Upper Canada College and TCM between 1938 and 1946. He also began hosting a series of radio broadcasts on CBC.<sup>99</sup> Founded in 1933, the CBC was instrumental in commissioning and broadcasting performances by Canadian musicians and works by Canadian composers.<sup>100</sup> Adaskin's youngest brother, John Adaskin, was a producer with the CBC, and the connection may have helped get him the job. Starting in 1938, Adaskin also began organizing a series of recitals, known as "Presenting Toronto Violinists," which

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<sup>95</sup> Elliott, *The String Quartet in Canada*, p.15.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

<sup>97</sup> Harry Adaskin, *A Fiddler's Choice: Memoirs 1938 to 1980*, (Vancouver: November House, 1982), p.2.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>99</sup> Harney and Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890-1930*, p.31.

<sup>100</sup> Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*, p.331.

lasted until 1946. In addition to teaching, hosting, and organizing concert series, Adaskin and his wife Francis Marr formed a violin and piano duo and performed on tours across the country. They premiered several Canadian works.<sup>101</sup>

Both world-class musicians and music facilities continued to emerge with increasing abundance during and following WWII. As music historian Helmut Kallmann explained, “This growth was concomitant with a new pride in Canadian achievement and a conscious will to establish and maintain a cultural identity.”<sup>102</sup> National standards were set by nationwide organizations and resources coordinated in order to promote talent, while at the same time protecting legal interests of musicians and lobbying governments for funding. Government subsidies and private grants ensured the advancement of music research and education, as well as performances with Canadian compositional content. Music school programs were enriched, and well over thirty music faculties were added to increasing numbers of universities, for example UBC. Universities created music courses to be taught by professorial performers and school music educators. Festivals in places such as Stratford (1953) and Vancouver (1955) were established. Later, the recordings of such concerts were broadcast on CBC. By the 1950s, CBC employed its own symphony orchestra and opera company. The Canadian music scene was irrevocably changed when Canadian composers were able to establish composition as a primary musical occupation. By allowing the composers to take on

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<sup>101</sup> “Adaskin, Harry,” in *Historica-Dominion* [database online]. Available from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0000018>.

<sup>102</sup> Kallmann, *Music History*.

both national and international roles, this ended the isolation of Canadian composers from contemporary musical developments in Europe and the US.<sup>103</sup>

### *Adaskin's early career in BC*

Harry Adaskin once recounted that he only held two long-term permanent jobs in his life.<sup>104</sup> The first was his thirteen-year stint with the HHSQ and the second was the job he landed during a stopover in Vancouver. While on tour in Western Canada in 1946, Adaskin was invited to play at a private party hosted by Margaret Mackenzie, wife of then UBC president Norman Mackenzie. Mackenzie took the opportunity to inform Adaskin of a large grant donated to UBC by the head of a local brewing company for the purpose of starting a music department. Mackenzie then invited Adaskin to head the new department. Up until then, Adaskin would never have considered living in Vancouver. Adaskin noted, "Vancouver was a charming, sleepy, stodgy small town."<sup>105</sup> In comparison to the music scene in cities like Montréal and Toronto, Vancouver's music scene was sparse.<sup>106</sup> The city had very few job opportunities for musicians, especially prior to the re-establishment of the VSO in 1930.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, Vancouver lacked an

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.293.

<sup>105</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's Choice: Memoirs 1938 to 1980*, p.58.

<sup>106</sup> The development of the radio industry also affected Vancouver's music scene. Increased sales of phonographic records and availability of radio concerts resulted in diminished live audience attendance. Furthermore, the transformation of silent movies into 'talkies,' created the situation whereby live musicians were no longer needed to provide soundtracks.

<sup>107</sup> The most notable orchestra being the twenty nine member ensemble, which was known as the Spare-Time Symphony, established under the direction of Oscar Ziegler in 1914. Ziegler's orchestra performed only on Sundays and faced opposition from supporters of the Sunday "Blue Laws" which forbade buying concert tickets on the Christian Sabbath. In any case, the ensemble soon dissipated during WWI when Ziegler and several other orchestra members fell ill with the Black flu. Ford, *Canada's Music an Historical Survey*, p. 89. At this time it is not known for certain whether Oscar Ziegler was Jewish, although his name does indicate that possibility. In 1919 another attempt was made at establishing an orchestra; this time the fifty two member orchestra lasted three seasons. Dale McIntosh, *History of Music in BC, 1850-1950*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1989), p.100.

established music school; most advanced teaching was done privately.<sup>108</sup> The first university level music course was not taught until 1939, when Ida Halpern was contracted to teach a music appreciation class. The course was taught infrequently until 1946.<sup>109</sup>

Not surprisingly, Adaskin had concerns about the viability of the city for a practicing musician. He worried about having to give up his broadcasting gigs. He was also concerned that heading up a new music department would be too administrative. Most importantly, Adaskin wondered at the possibility of attracting enough of an audience to enjoy the type of music he played, noting that in any given population only approximately 1.5 percent of the population enjoyed high culture.<sup>110</sup> Despite his reservations, Adaskin accepted Mackenzie's invitation. Due to Vancouver's housing shortage in 1946, the Adaskins were housed in vacated army huts set up on UBC's Endowment Lands.<sup>111</sup> Adaskin was given a half a carpenter's storage room for his practice space.

When the Adaskins arrived at UBC, they quickly realized that there were very few music enthusiasts amongst students and faculty alike. Together they continued to develop Ida Halpern's course in music appreciation. Frances Adaskin would accompany

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<sup>108</sup> At the beginning of the twentieth century there were only two notable classical musicians in Vancouver, J.D.A. Tripp and Jean Robinson (later Mrs. Walter Coulthard). Instrumental music instruction had been inaugurated at the secondary school level in 1914. McIntosh, *History of Music in BC, 1850-1950*, p.165. Tripp settled in Vancouver in order to establish a TCM examination centre in Vancouver, while Coulthard was a piano teacher. In that capacity, Coulthard helped found the Vancouver Women's Musical Club and the British Columbia Music Teachers' Federation. Ford, *Canada's Music an Historical Survey*, p. 89. Her daughter, Jean Coulthard later joined UBC's Music Department under the direction of Harry Adaskin. During that first decade, a handful of musical societies were established in Vancouver and there were several unsuccessful attempts to found an orchestral ensemble. Dale McIntosh, *History of Music in BC, 1850-1950*, (Vancouver, British Columbia: Sono Nis Press, 1989), p.100.

<sup>109</sup> McIntosh, *History of Music in BC, 1850-1950*, 165, p.183.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p.59.

her husband's lecture with demonstrations on the piano or vice versa with Adaskin on the violin. Sometimes they would play together.<sup>112</sup> Adaskin also organized a series of noon hour concerts.<sup>113</sup> For years UBC's music department was a two-person operation. In fact, Harry Adaskin was the only official member of UBC's music department. Frances Adaskin worked for free for twelve years until she was appointed to the faculty under the direction of Welton Marqis.<sup>114</sup> Gradually, Adaskin enlisted the talents of Barbara Pentland and Jean Coulthard.<sup>115</sup> Adaskin retired as head of the department in 1958, but continued to teach there until 1973.

### **Adaskin's Identity**

The extent to which Adaskin was dedicated to music and involved in the Canadian classical music community, as discussed in the previous pages, alludes to how distant he had become from his ethno-religious upbringing as an *acculturated* Jew. Adaskin was obviously integrated into Canadian society but the details of his musical career do not necessarily elucidate which of Barkan's phases he may have attained. Fortunately, other evidence is available to clearly place Adaskin within Barkan's *assimilation* phase. For instance, a religious Jewish professor and next-door neighbour of the Adaskins in UBC's Acadia camp in the 1940s, claimed that Harry Adaskin was not religiously observant.<sup>116</sup> Perhaps the greatest attestation of Adaskin's status as an *assimilated* Jew is his marriage to Frances Marr. Intermarriage has long been considered

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., p.60.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p.65.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p.65.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p.64.

<sup>116</sup> Moses Steinberg, communication September 21, 2010, Vancouver, BC.

by sociologists to be an index for assimilation and as such, it will provide a useful tool in understanding Adaskin's identity.<sup>117</sup>

### *Adaskin's intermarriage*

Reasons for the occurrence of intermarriage vary. Factors such as premarital pregnancy, length of residency, social and economic status, social boundaries, education, modernization, *institutional completeness*, group type, immigration rate, marriage market selection, male-female ratios, population density, regional concentration and residential segregation have all had an impact on the historical occurrence of Jewish intermarriage in Canada.<sup>118</sup> Modern Western society is known for its creation of increased personal autonomy,<sup>119</sup> and as people move away from traditional social structures, invariably their freedom of choice in everything from occupation to marriage partner increases. This was certainly the case for Harry Adaskin. Yet, in looking at the statistics on religious intermarriage among Canadian Jewry between 1926 and 1936, Adaskin was clearly among a minority of Jews who chose to intermarry. Judaism traditionally prohibits intermarriage, which raises the question of why Adaskin, who was raised in an Orthodox household, chose to marry outside of his ancestral ethno-religious group.

Adaskin met Frances Marr in 1924, the same year that he joined the HHSQ. At the time, Adaskin also played in a trio, which had a regular gig in a restaurant across the

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<sup>117</sup> Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) and Madeline A. Richard, *Ethnic Groups and Marital Choices: Ethnic History and Marital Assimilation in Canada, 1871 and 1971* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1991).

<sup>118</sup> L.N. McDonnell, *Blurring the Boundaries: A Survey of the Historical Occurrence of Intermarriage among Canadian Jewry*. Unpublished Research Paper, HIS 9081 Socio-Cultural History, University of Ottawa, Professor Rebecca Margolis, December 2006.

<sup>119</sup> Van Leeuwen, Marco H. D, *Endogamy and Social Class in History: An overview*, pp.10-15.

street from the King Edward Hotel in downtown Toronto. When the trio's regular pianist cancelled, Adaskin was forced to look for a substitute. He was given the name of Frances Marr. Marr was a small town girl, raised in Ridgetown, Ontario where her father was the local doctor and her mother was an organist and choirmaster in the local Anglican Church. Although Marr was a competent and skilled musician, she was not yet a member of the musicians' union and therefore she hesitated before agreeing to play with a professional group. After their first performance, Adaskin and Marr decided to continue playing sonatas together regularly. It was not long before their musical courtship turned romantic. Adaskin had dated other women before meeting Marr. He claims that he had fallen in love with two non-Jewish women, Audrey Morine and Helen Hunt. The first he met while summering in the Muskokas and the other played second violin in the students' quartet. Adaskin's only Jewish girlfriend was Pearl Greisman—a fellow musician—whom he dated in 1921. Greisman's mother disapproved of Adaskin because she believed he was too poor to support her daughter in the lifestyle to which she was accustomed. The pair thought they were in love and decided to elope. In the end, they got cold feet and called the whole thing off. The relationship ended shortly thereafter.

Nishe-Bashe Adaskin had always told her sons that if they married “shiksas” (see footnote for definition) it would “kill her.”<sup>120</sup> Adaskin was aware that his parents

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<sup>120</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.133. The term *shiksa* is a cultural expression once particular to Eastern European Jews, but now adopted by all of North American Jewish culture. The term was coined in Yiddish, but derives its etymological roots from the Hebrew word *sheketz*, indicating something impure or abominable. Despite the term's pejorative roots, North American Jewish culture often uses the word *shiksa* sarcastically and at times even affectionately. Christine Benvenuto. *Shiksa: The Gentile Woman in the Jewish World*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2004), pp.xii,xiii. It is used to describe attractive non-Jewish women who threaten to lure away Jewish men out of the Jewish fold. Within religious circles, young Jewish women who display immodest behaviour may also be referred to as

considered Marr a “shiksa.” Nevertheless, he decided that only he had the right to decide whom he wanted to marry and he proposed to Marr while on tour in Detroit. At the time, Marr was visiting her parents in Ridgetown, not far from Windsor and the Canada-US border. Adaskin asked her to meet him in Detroit so that they could elope. He also asked Marr to keep the event a secret, neglecting to invite fellow quartet member, Milton Blackstone, who was also staying in Detroit, as well as an uncle who lived in Detroit. The reason behind the secrecy was that Nishe-Bashe Adaskin was very ill with heart disease and Adaskin did not want anything to upset her fragile condition.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, his brother Murray Adaskin had married soprano Frances James, in a United Church ceremony in Banff a year earlier in 1925.<sup>122</sup>

Marr, however, decided not to keep the wedding a secret from her parents and sister. The three of them accompanied Marr to Detroit from Ridgetown. Adaskin described the wedding as a father’s dream: cheap and no fuss.<sup>123</sup> One of the reasons Adaskin may have chosen Detroit was that it was the closest place where people could marry in a civil ceremony. In Canada, during that time, only Manitoba and Saskatchewan had provisos for civil marriages. Other provinces only permitted religious

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shiksas. E. H. Friedman, *The Myth of the Shiksa and Other Essays*, (New York: Church Publishing, Inc., 2008), p.57. The male equivalent is *shaygetz*. Ann R. Shapiro, “The Ultimate Shaygets and the Fiction of Anzia Yezierska,” *Melus*, Vol. 21, No. 2, Varieties of Ethnic Criticis (Summer, 1996), pp.79-88.

<sup>121</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler’s World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.133.

<sup>122</sup> Lazarevich, *The Musical World of Frances James and Murray Adaskin*, p.331. Dorothea Larsen was Murray Adaskin’s second wife. John Adaskin married Naomi Granatstein, who was also a singer. Gordon Adaskin first wife was Eleanor Campbell; his second wife was Jan Adaskin. Courtesy of Jan Adaskin, August 30, 2010.

<sup>123</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler’s World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.133.

clergy to perform marriage rites.<sup>124</sup> Marr's mother was disappointed that her daughter did not marry in a church.<sup>125</sup>

The couple was married on Saturday August 7, 1926, by a Detroit jurist and family friend, named McKinley. Upon their return to Toronto, Marr and Adaskin moved in with Adaskin's parents and siblings. Once the couple was married, the Adaskins warmly accepted Marr as their daughter-in-law and welcomed her into their home, although Nishe-Bashe Adaskin did die a year after the nuptials took place. Khayim-Laib Adaskin remarried after the death of his first wife. He went on to have a son, Gordon Adaskin. It was decided that should Khayim-Laib Adaskin die before Gordon reached the age of maturity, that Adaskin and Marr would adopt him as their own son. Gordon Adaskin's biological mother, Rifke Charles, was in complete agreement with this arrangement, as she had no means of supporting herself and a child. Therefore, in 1937 when Khayim-Leibe Adaskin died, Gordon Adaskin was adopted by his eldest half-brother. Rifke Adaskin remarried shortly thereafter.<sup>126</sup>

Adaskin's religious intermarriage was atypical among Jews for the period under discussion. Between 1926 and 1936, the tendency for Jewish exogamy across religious lines fluctuated incrementally. Within this ten-year period, 3.49 percent of all Jewish men intermarried, while only 1.65 percent of Jewish women married men from other faiths. The tendency for religious intermarriage was greater among Jewish men than it

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<sup>124</sup> Rosenberg and Weinfeld, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, p.101.

<sup>125</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.123.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, p.135.

was among Jewish women.<sup>127</sup> These rates were considerably lower than the equivalent religious intermarriage rates among Catholics and Protestants in Canada.<sup>128</sup>

Although intermarriage was uncommon among Jews, Adaskin's choice to marry a protestant was not uncommon among Jews who intermarried. In fact, in 1926, 1928, and 1936, Jewish intermarriage was most likely to occur between Jews and Protestants than with other Christians. In 1926, 77.36 percent of all Jewish intermarriages occurred between Jews and Protestants. In 1928, the figure rose to 87.36 percent, while in 1936, it was 74.74 percent.<sup>129</sup>

Religiously intermarried Canadian Jews were more likely to marry Protestants rather than Catholics because of there was a greater variety of Protestant denominations. Furthermore, Catholics accounted for only thirty percent of the population, while Protestants accounted for over fifty percent of Canada's population;<sup>130</sup> in contrast to Catholic clergymen, Protestant clergymen readily performed intermarriage ceremonies.<sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, when broken down into their respective denominations, given their high internal intermarriage trends, 24.9 percent of Jewish intermarriage partners were Roman Catholics. They were followed by 21.1 percent with Anglicans,

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<sup>127</sup> Rosenberg and Weinfeld M, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, p.100.

<sup>128</sup> Between 1926 and 1936, intermarriage occurred among 7.80 percent of marrying Catholic men and 10.09 percent of marrying Catholic women and among 6.54 percent of marrying Protestant men and 5.33 percent of marrying Protestant women. Although between 1926 and 1936, exogamy increased by forty four percent among Protestants, it was most likely to occur among Roman Catholics. In 1936, 14.98 percent of Catholics married outside of their faith, while only 11.94 percent of Protestants intermarried. *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, Table 26, 40.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

17.3 percent with United Church members, 11.3 percent with Presbyterians, 5.3 percent with Lutherans, and 4.9 percent with Greek Catholics.<sup>132</sup>

Canada's lower rates of Jewish religious intermarriage were due to the fact that the Eastern European Jews, who made up the bulk of Canadian Jewry, had little exposure to the assimilating pressures of their Western and Central European co-religionists,<sup>133</sup> nor were Canada's Jews part of the cosmopolitan classes of Eastern European Jews. For the most part, Canadian Jewry was still traditionally oriented and held the ban on marrying outside of the faith in high regard. Canadian society as a whole was also more religiously and ethnically centered, if not a more closed and prejudiced society.<sup>134</sup> Yet, despite social barriers within Canadian society and among Canadian Jewry, intermarriage did exist.

Sociologists indicate that all groups have a tendency towards in-group marriage preferences.<sup>135</sup> Despite tendencies towards endogamy, one of the overriding factors in

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<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104. Between 1926 and 1936 from amongst 16,237 Jewish marriages, eight hundred twenty three Jews married non-Jews. The Canadian Jewish average for intermarriage was 5.06 percent among a total population of 156,726. Jewish exogamy was not the same across the country. British Columbia had the highest percentage of Jewish intermarriage at 26.03 percent. Of the two hundred and forty two Jewish marriages in BC, sixty three Jews married non-Jews. Québec had the lowest rate of Jewish intermarriage with 2.92 percent, or one hundred and eighty nine intermarried Jews. Ontario's Jewish intermarriage rate was 4.79 percent, where three hundred and thirty three Jews intermarried. Overall, Canada's Jewish intermarriage rate was low when compared to Europe. In Germany in 1930, 26.60 percent of Jewish men and 17.60 percent of Jewish women intermarried. In Hungary in 1929, 17.03 percent of Jewish men and 11.90 percent of Jewish women intermarried. The percentages in Russia were somewhat lower with 7.41 percent of Jewish men and 6.21 percent of Jewish women intermarrying between 1924 and 1926. Only Latvia had lower intermarriage rates than Canada, with less than two percent of both Jewish men and women intermarrying. *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>133</sup> Twentieth century Jews in Central and Western Europe had been exposed to nearly a century of assimilationist pressures, including bans on Yiddish in business transactions, requirements to learn German in order to marry, and had their rabbinical leadership somewhat cut from centres of Jewish learning in Eastern Europe.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>135</sup> In fact, even in Canada, where multiculturalism is the norm, most couples are religiously homogamous. *Ibid.*, p.106

determining marriage partners are marriage market constraints.<sup>136</sup> In other words, people marry those they meet. Therefore, where people meet determines who they will meet and potentially marry. In the past, people typically married those who lived within twenty kilometres walking distance. The historical geographical marriage horizon for most people did not expand beyond this distance.<sup>137</sup> Group-size is another factor in determining one's mating tendencies. The proportion of co-religionists in a given geographical area also affects a group's likelihood to intermarry.<sup>138</sup> If there are few co-religionists in a given community, most religious groups will seek intermarriage as the alternative.<sup>139</sup> Similarly, if there are more men than women in a given group, the men may have a higher rate of exogamy and vice versa.<sup>140</sup> Clearly, Adaskin's time spent in Toronto's *institutionally complete* Jewish neighbourhoods indicated an increased likelihood for marrying a fellow Jew.<sup>141</sup> However, by the time he was an adult Adaskin spent most of his time playing music and fraternizing with other musicians. Although a portion of these musicians were Jewish, most were not. Among the Jewish musicians, it seems that there were fewer female Jewish musicians than male ones.

As Blau's *deductive macrosociological theory* indicates, people have a multiple set of group affiliations and amongst these, one primary group affiliation. This primary affiliation may be based on occupational, residential, ethnic, economic or religious

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<sup>136</sup> Individual preferences and social pressure also influence one's selection of a marriage partner. See Matthijs Kalmijn, "Intermarriage and Homogamy: Causes, Patterns, Trends," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, (1998): pp.395-421.

<sup>137</sup> Marco H. D Van Leeuwen, "Endogamy and Social Class in History: An overview," *International Review of Social History* 50, (2005): pp.1-23.

<sup>138</sup> Evelyn L. Lehrer, "Religious intermarriage in the U.S, Determinants and Trends," *Social Science Research* 27, no. 3 (1998): pp.245-263.

<sup>139</sup> Warren Clark, "Interreligious Unions in Canada," *Canadian Social Trends* Catalogue no.11-008 (Ottawa, Ont.: Statistics Canada, 2008), p.17.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Jack Jedwab and Michale M. Rosenberg, "Institutional Completeness, Ethnic Organizational Style," *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology* 29, no. 3 (1992): pp.266-287.

interests.<sup>142</sup> These may change throughout one's lifetime, but the primary affiliation one has at the time of mate selection is an important factor in determining one's marriage partner. The possibility for religious intermarriage dramatically increases if one's primary group affiliation differs from one's religious background. Adaskin had no interest in living as an Orthodox Jew, preferring instead to direct most of his energy into his music and Adaskin's association with Jewish culture and religion came to play a minor role in his life. Therefore, it seems that Adaskin's primary group affiliation was with his profession as a musician. Hence, Adaskin chose a marriage partner from within his primary group affiliation and he married a fellow musician (who happened to be a non-Jew).

### *Jewish musicians in Canada: Adaskin's colleagues*

Canadian musicians from the early part of the twentieth century were an eclectic group of Canadian-born and immigrant musicians. In looking at Harry Adaskin's immigrant background and his choice of a career in music, one wonders how many other Jews found careers as musicians in Canada.

It seems that music was a relatively popular profession among Canadian Jewish immigrants of European origin. Of the 2,489 Jewish professionals in Canada in 1931,<sup>143</sup> Jewish musicians numbered 252 and were located predominantly in Toronto and

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<sup>142</sup> Blau, Beeker, and Fitzpatrick, *Intersecting Social Affiliations and Intermarriage*. pp.585-606.

<sup>143</sup> Of the 61,900 gainfully employed Jews in Canada in 1931, 4.04 percent were professionals. Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s*, Table 114, 172.

Montréal (there were only six Jewish musicians in Vancouver).<sup>144</sup> They represented the third most popular profession after doctors and lawyers.<sup>145</sup>

The Adaskins were among a significant number of Jewish Eastern European immigrants, including Percy Faith, Louis Greensway, Samuel Hersenhoren, Adolf Koldofsky, Isaac Mamott, Paul Scherman, Maurice Soloway, Berul Sugarman, and Harold Sumberg, who opted for musical professions.<sup>146</sup> During the post-WWI era, Jewish immigrants continued to enter the Canadian music scene. These musicians were secularly oriented, and unlike their predecessors, they were not raised in the Orthodox milieu. They had little or no background in Jewish music nor were they steeped solely in the musical traditions of Western Europe.<sup>147</sup> Following WWII a notable number of Jewish musicians appeared in BC, after private funds were donated to invigorate the province's music sector.<sup>148</sup>

Adaskin's primary identity as a musician can be put into context by making some comparisons between Adaskin and the lives of some of his musical Jewish colleagues

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., Table 114, 172.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., p.362 Table 234. In 1931, Montréal's professional Jewish musicians included eighty five male musicians and twenty seven female musicians. In Toronto, there were eighty five male musicians and twenty five female ones. The number of professional musicians decreased dramatically in Winnipeg and Vancouver, but remained proportionate to the Jewish population. Winnipeg had twenty nine male musicians and twenty female musicians, while Vancouver was home to only four male musicians and two female musicians. Ibid., p.370 Table 235.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., Murray Adaskin took up composition in 1944, after studying with John Weinzweig.

<sup>147</sup> During the Depression years Jewish musicians began arriving in Canada from both Western and Eastern Europe. These included Leo and Sara Barkin, Boris Berlin, Jan Cherniavsky, and Eli Spivak. With the onset of WWII, a number of Jewish musician refugees found their way into Canada via Shanghai, including Lotte Brott, Emil Gartner, Oskar Morawetz, the Joachim brothers, Andreas Barban, Erwin Marcus and Herbert Ruff. Walter Kauffman escaped via India, while Istvan Anhalt, Lazlo Gati, Emmy Heim, Charles Reiner and Heinz Unger settled in Canada following WWII. Canada also received a number of Jewish musicians from amongst the Jewish prisoners interned in Canada during that era. These included Freddie Grant, Franz Kraemer, John Newmark, Walter Hamburger and Helmut Kallman. Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> The Jewish musicians in BC included Ida Halpern, Irwin Hoffman, Malcom Taitalso, Edwina Heller, Ernst Friedlander, Otto Low, Erika Nalos Hans Gruber and Nikolas Goldschmidt. The Jewish music patrons included Leon and Thea Koerner, Paul and Edwina Heller, Eva and Herbert Schaefer, as well as the Bentley and Prentice families. Helmer, *Growing with Canada: the Émigré Tradition in Canadian Music*, pp.221-224.

from his own generation including: Percy Faith, Samuel Hersenhoren, Adolf Koldofsky and Paul Scherman, as well as Adaskin's brothers Murray and John. These musicians are only a small sample of Jewish musicians who began their careers in the early twentieth century.

Percy Faith was born in Toronto in 1908 and like Adaskin, his parents were Eastern European immigrants, and he was raised in the Ward. Faith was the eldest of eight children and his parents avidly encouraged his musical inclinations. Faith began playing violin as a child prodigy at age seven. He studied music at the Toronto Conservatory of Music and switched to piano at age ten. As a teenager, he too worked as an accompanist in movie theatres. In 1928, Faith married his Jewish sweetheart, Mary Palange. Like Adaskin, Faith also found employment with the CBC in the early 1930s, where he worked as an arranger and a conductor. With the debut of his radio program *Music by Faith* in 1937, Faith became a celebrity in his own right. However, unlike Adaskin, Faith accepted an employment opportunity to work in the US, citing budget cuts and antisemitism at the CBC among his chief reasons for leaving Canada. Faith eventually became known as the father of "elevator music."<sup>149</sup>

Born in Toronto in 1908, Samuel (David) Hersenhoren, another Adaskin contemporary, also showed strong musical capabilities at an early age. Hersenhoren studied music at the Hambourg Conservatory and made his musical debut at Massey Hall at the age of eleven. He began as a violinist and later switched to conducting. In 1925, he made his radio debut, and between 1927 and 1944 Hersenhoren was the first

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<sup>149</sup> "Contemporary Musicians: Percy Faith." In eNotes.com 2006, cited 2010, [<http://www.enotes.com/contemporary-musicians/faith-percy-biography>]. Percy Faith," in Historica Foundation, cited 2010, [<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>].

violin for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. In 1933, he began appearing as a guest conductor for various orchestras, including the CBC orchestra. In 1945, Hersenhoren began his association with the famous comedian duo of Wayne and Schuster, and he conducted their radio and television programs.<sup>150</sup> In 1947, Hersenhoren married Jeanie Gibbard, the daughter of an Ontario furniture maker. Other than the fact that she was nominated as one of Toronto's best-dressed socialites, little is known about Gibbard, including whether Jeanie Gibbard was Jewish, although Gibbard is not a typically Jewish last name.

Adolf Koldofsky was born in London, England in 1905 to Russian-Jewish parents. Koldofsky came to Canada in 1910. He was a pupil of the young Harry Adaskin before he returned to Europe for advanced violin studies. Koldofsky played with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra intermittently between 1923 and 1938. In 1938, he took Adaskin's place as second violin in the HHSQ. Koldofsky also conducted a series of CBC broadcasts during the spring of 1943. In 1943, Koldofsky married Gwendolyn Williams, a non-Jewish musician. Williams was a pianist in her own right and like her husband, she had studied in Europe. In 1945, Koldofsky and Williams moved to California, where they spent the remainder of their lives. He died in 1951.

Paul (Isidor) Scherman was born in Toronto in 1907. Raised in London, England, Scherman returned to Toronto where he studied music at the TCM. Scherman made his career as a violinist and conductor. Feeling the pressure to integrate, Scherman changed his name from Isidor to Paul. He studied and worked in Toronto, New York,

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<sup>150</sup> "Samuel Hersenhoren," In *Historica Foundation*, cited 2010, [<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>]; Kieran Simpson, *Canadian Who's Who*, "Hersenhoren, Samuel," XVI (1981), p.444.

Paris and London. In the 1940s, he also conducted orchestras for several CBC radio programs.<sup>151</sup> Scherman married Donna Creed, daughter of Jack Creed, a Jewish furrier and member of Toronto's illustrious high society in the early twentieth century. Like his son-in-law, Creed had Anglicized his name. Despite the fact that Scherman married a Jewish woman, their four children had very little exposure to Judaism. Instead, art and music became their pseudo-religions. In fact, Scherman's son describes himself as having absorbed a second-hand Christianity as they toured the art in churches and museums around Europe.<sup>152</sup> Like Adaskin's adopted son, Gordon, one of Scherman's sons also became a painter.<sup>153</sup>

From among Adaskin's own siblings, some intermarried while others did not. Murray Adaskin was a violinist and composer and went on to become the head of the School of Music at both the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Victoria. Like his brother, Murray Adaskin married a fellow musician, Frances James. After James' death in 1988, Murray Adaskin married Dorothea Larsen in 1989. Larsen helped to produce a compilation of Murray Adaskin's musical works, 1995-2001. Neither of Murray Adaskin's wives was Jewish and he never had any children. John Adaskin was the only other professional musician in the family. John was a cellist, conductor, and radio producer. He married Naomi Granatstein, a Jewish pianist from Toronto. John Adaskin died in 1964, and Granatstein later remarried a fellow musician, Reginald Godden, in 1979. Very little is known about Adaskin's remaining brother, Lesley, the

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<sup>151</sup> "Encyclopedia of Music in Canada: Paul Scherman. "In Historica Foundation , cited 2010, [<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>]

<sup>152</sup> DeRemer, *Contemporary Musicians: Percy Faith*.

<sup>153</sup> "Outrageous Fortune," in Toronto Life, cited 2010, [<http://www.tonyscherman.com/articles/TorontoLifeFeb2007.pdf>].

only non-musical sibling.<sup>154</sup> Each of the musically inclined Adaskin brothers made their way into the middle-class professional echelons of Canadian society.

It seems that from among Adaskin's above mentioned colleagues, including his brothers, their occupations influenced who they married, more than any other affiliation. Like Adaskin, the majority married musicians, be they Jewish or non-Jewish. In terms of intermarriage, although Harry Adaskin was not the only one to marry outside the faith, many Jewish musicians married other Jews, possibly implying that they were not as *assimilated* as Adaskin, but given the limited availability of sources it is difficult to know for sure.

The fact that Adaskin was a musician cannot wholly account for why he intermarried. Adaskin's intermarriage is also a reflection of his active rejection of religious institutions and what he saw as his ancestral religion's outmoded strict codes of conduct. Despite this rejection, Adaskin never denied his own heritage. The old world values and mores of his ancestors were not applicable to him, or so Adaskin thought. Adaskin's social network tended to consist of other fellow musicians and artists.<sup>155</sup> Adaskin replaced the *institutionally complete* Jewish community he was raised in with connections directed solely to the outside world. As such, he allowed his profession to be more than just an employment opportunity. Adaskin's music provided him with a replacement community, with its own specialized training and modes of conduct. Adaskin took music into the spiritual realm. Although ultimately, Adaskin was a secular Jew who sought social and spiritual connections outside of Judaism, as an adult he never

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<sup>154</sup> "John Adaskin; Naomi Granatstein; Murray Adaskin;" in The Canadian Encyclopedia Historica-Dominion [database online]. [cited 2010]. Available from <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>;

<sup>155</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, p.146.

stopped pondering the great mystery of life. In 1982, Adaskin wrote, “The violin meant much more to me than violin playing...It led me to see a glimmer of reality in a world which chooses to escape from reality.”<sup>156</sup> Adaskin stated that it was his aesthetic struggles with the violin which allowed him to gain spiritual insight. For Adaskin, his violin was a continuous source of enlightenment.<sup>157</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks**

Jews have not created one musical style moulded in a “crucible of continuous geographical proximity” in the same way as Brazilians, Celts or other peoples have.<sup>158</sup> Yet, music has played an integral cultural role in the lives of Jews for thousands of years; biblical and archaeological studies attest to this fact. Jews have absorbed musical styles from every culture in which they have ever lived, from the Klezmer music of Eastern European Jews, through to the Middle Eastern melodies in the music of Sephardic Jews, to the music for the Israeli hora dance, to the music played by the Cochin Jews of India as well as those in Azerbaijan.<sup>159</sup> Jews have also become musicians of non-Jewish music in the lands in which they have lived. In other words, music provided a medium through which Jews could interact with other cultures.

Harry Adaskin was among the first of his generation to *assimilate* into Canadian society. The eldest son of Eastern European Jewish immigrants who made their way to Canada during the first decade of the twentieth century, Adaskin was imbued with a

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<sup>156</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's Choice: Memoirs 1938 to 1980*, p.6. In his later years Adaskin preferred to look to spiritual thinkers such as Krishnamurti and Gurdjieff, and Zen Buddhism to a minor extent, for guidance, suggesting that he maintained a degree of spirituality despite his rejection of institutionalized Judaism.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>158</sup> Rubin and Baron, *Music in Jewish History and Culture*, p.xxiii.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, p.xxiii.

strong musical sense from an early age. Eastern European Jewish families, like the Adaskins, were prone to believe that a career in music was an upwardly mobile career. The success of Jewish musicians in nineteenth-century Tsarist Russia had inspired a phenomenon among Tsarist Jews of ensuring that their children receive musical training, in hopes that their musical talents would one day bring prosperity. When the Adaskins arrived in Canada at the turn of the century and found employment as industrial workers, they surely thought this could happen to their children and ensured that all four of their children studied music. Furthermore, in comparison to other professions, Canadian society was more open to Jews becoming musicians. At that time, Anglo-Canadian society did not hold the music profession in high esteem, considering it to be a trade or a gentlemanly past-time pursuit. Moreover, music institutions primarily valued interest in music among their accepted pupils. Throughout its history in Canada, the music trade had depended upon immigrants to replenish its professional ranks. Therefore, acquiring a music education was a question of finance rather than a question of talent alone. As long as parents could afford the conservatory's fees, a child would be accepted. (Presumably, it was assumed that untalented people would give up eventually.)

Adaskin was raised in a religious household, but as an adult, he displayed little interest in traditional Judaism. Several factors may have contributed to Adaskin's distance from his ancestral faith including the overall experiences of Toronto's Jewish community with the deterioration of kosher observance, the increased display of *shabbos* violators, the public school system whose main agenda was to Canadianize its pupils, and Anglo-nativism, which predominated in Toronto. All of these factors likely contributed to Adaskin's loss of interest in traditional Judaism and played a role in his *assimilation*. Although Adaskin's involvement in Canada's burgeoning classical music

world came to represent his primary identity and ultimately replaced his ancestral ties, it would be difficult to argue that Adaskin disliked Orthodox Judaism because of his music. Rather, music was Adaskin's primary passion and thus influenced Adaskin's life choices more than anything else. It helped to determine his social networks as well as his choice of a marriage partner. Indeed, music provided a replacement community for Adaskin. It was a way of life for him, and it even provided spiritual inspiration. However, had Adaskin not been a musician, it is quite possible that he would still have had little interest in traditional Judaism.

For the purposes of this discussion, Adaskin's most significant contributions occurred in his capacity as the second violinist in Canada's first subsidized quartet, the HHSQ and as UBC's first official head of the university's music department. In both of these capacities, Adaskin was responsible for introducing Canadian and British Columbian audiences to the works of late nineteenth-century musicians. Prior to his performances and teachings, Adaskin's audiences and students in Canada and BC were quite unaware of these works. The pace of the expansion of classical music in Canada set the rate at which Adaskin could integrate into Canadian society. Unlike other professions, there were fewer social barriers preventing one from gaining entrance into the music profession in Canada. As we have seen, many of Adaskin's colleagues integrated in a similar way. This integration is in part explained by the transition of classical music from the amateur to the professional domain during the early part of the twentieth century and the interwar years. Adaskin secured a foothold in music just as it was becoming a full-fledged profession and thus bypassed many of the social ineptitudes that befell other professions during the turbulent Depression and WWII years. There can

be no doubt that it was Adaskin's role as a prominent musician, which allowed him to contribute to Canadian and British Columbian society during these eras.

Unlike the other chapters, the Adaskin microhistory explores the arena of cultural production. By entering the world of cultural production, Adaskin was able to use cultural knowledge as a lever for social mobility. Since cultural knowledge was an essential component of being a professional musician, invariably Adaskin *assimilated* into the symbolic norms of his profession as well as those of the host society. In many ways, the study of Jewish Canadian musicians is an unexplored topic. Library and archive catalogue source-searches with those very same keywords reveal no resources, while searches for Jewish musicians in the United States provide several. Yet, Jewish musicians in Canada have contributed a considerable pool of talent to the development of all areas of Canadian classical music.

## CHAPTER 6 NATHAN NEMETZ: HIS JUSTICE

### POST WWII AND THE DAWN OF THE MULTICULTURAL ERA

Vancouver, British Columbia

#### Introduction

Nathan “Sonny” Nemetz was inspired by his parents to work towards the betterment of society and to contribute to the public good, first as a lawyer and then later as a jurist. For those who knew him, Nemetz was courteous, intelligent, and easy to like—a people-person, whose warmth naturally attracted others to him.<sup>1</sup> His social networks extended across many boundaries, be they sectarian, political, cultural, class, or national. During his lifetime, Nemetz knew personally every president of UBC, as well as every prime minister and BC premier.<sup>2</sup> Nemetz remained committed “to the betterment of society,”<sup>3</sup> and it could be easily argued that throughout his career and he used his social networks to advance the public good through law.<sup>4</sup> One former member of the UBC Faculty of Law described Nemetz as bringing the law closer to the public.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, bridging the gulf ‘between town and gown’ was one of two ideals which permeated Nemetz’s career.<sup>6</sup> The other was his value of a liberal education, which he

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<sup>1</sup> *Ex-BC Chief Justice, a Fighter for Human Rights, Dies*, B4. David and Alice Strangeway, *Programme Remarks*, Funeral programme, October 1997), JHSBC Box 15, 30.

<sup>2</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One 13.14.

<sup>3</sup> Cohen, *Chief Justice Nemetz’s Judicial Record: Judicial Decision-Making and Judicial Values*, p.97.

<sup>4</sup> From the outset of his law career, Nathan put his sociability to good use: his early cases came mostly through acquaintances and he made a point of meeting the people whose cases he was arbitrating in a social context, hoping that a change in atmosphere would elicit a mellowing of attitude. Often he was right. *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side Two 11.04, time runs backwards

<sup>5</sup> David S. Cohen, “Chief Justice Nemetz’s Judicial Record: Judicial Decision-Making and Judicial values,” *UBC Law Review, Nemetz Edition 1988-1989* 23, no. I (1988-1989), p.99.

<sup>6</sup> Peter Burns, “Introduction,” *UBC Law Review, Nemetz Edition* 23, no. I (1988-1989), p.xi.

believed provided the foundations for an open and lasting society.<sup>7</sup> It was his value of education that inspired his near life-long association with the University of British Columbia.

Nathan Nemetz began his legal career in 1937, at the tail-end of the Depression era and just prior to the onset of WWII. By the end of his first decade of practicing law, Nemetz became involved in labour arbitrations, and earned the reputation of being an ingenious labour lawyer.<sup>8</sup> Thirteen years after entering the profession, Nemetz became the youngest lawyer to be recommended for King's Counsel (K.C.).<sup>9</sup> Although Nemetz joined the Liberal party in the mid-1950s, during the tumultuous thirties and WWII era, Nemetz was a member of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF). Despite his shifting political allegiance, Nemetz's social philosophy to make society a safer and fairer place never deterred.

Known for his fair settlements and pursuit of justice, Nathan Nemetz was appointed as a Justice to the Supreme Court of BC (J), trial circuit, in 1963. Between 1968 and 1975, he sat as a Justice to the Court of Appeal (JA). In 1972, Nemetz was elected Chancellor of UBC, a position which he held until 1975. From 1973 until 1978, Nemetz was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia (CJ) and from 1979 until 1988 he served as the Chief Justice of BC (CJBC), the highest court in the province. From 1988 until his death in 1997, Nemetz returned to private practice.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.xi.

<sup>8</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side Two 9.53 time runs backwards.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 25.00 time runs backwards. The first Jew to be recommended for King's Counsel in British Columbia was Max Grossman, admitted to the bar in 1917. Cyril E. Leonoff, *The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1941* (Vancouver: Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia, 2008), p.111.

<sup>10</sup> "Nemetz," in *Canada's Who's Who* (Toronto: University of Toronto press, 1996), volume xxiv.

Nemetz's full professional resume is extensive and includes appointments to numerous boards, commissions, inquiries, publications, chairmanships, and presidencies of various organizations. As one observer noted, Nemetz was involved with so many organizations and received so many honours that it is best to look at his curriculum vitae for all the details.<sup>11</sup>

Nemetz disagreed profoundly with the notion that judges did not make the law, they simply followed it.<sup>12</sup> Rather, Nemetz ascertained that although jurists are bound by the law, their personal points of view affect their judgement.<sup>13</sup> As a jurist, Nemetz was aware that "law and justice are not necessarily consonant and [that] sometimes justice cannot be done because of law."<sup>14</sup> As an adherent of Lord Denning's, who believed that "justice must be seen to be done,"<sup>15</sup> Nemetz often looked at the law to see whether his own inclination towards being fair and just "could be applied to bear [just] results."<sup>16</sup> Nemetz ascertained that the public had "an innate sense of justice" and that, in the long term, the legal system would be more respected if it were seen to bear a just result.<sup>17</sup> As

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<sup>11</sup> Honours bestowed include: honorary doctoral of law degrees from the Notre Dame University College of Nelson, BC, SFU, and UBC in 1975; University of Victoria in 1976; Tel Aviv University in 1991; as well as several awards including the Companion Order of Canada in 1989, the Negev Award Dinner in 1989, and the Order of British Columbia in 1990 to name a few. Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Cohen, *Chief Justice Nemetz's Judicial Record: Judicial Decision-Making and Judicial Values*, p.97.

<sup>13</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side Two 6.06 time runs backwards.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 5.05 time runs backward.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 5.05 time runs backwards. British jurist Alfred Thompson Denning, (1899-1999), commonly known as Lord Denning, was highly respected during his nearly thirty-eight-year career. He made changes to the common law, campaigned against the common-law principle of precedent, and was appreciated for his role as 'the people's judge' and his support for the individual. Alfred Thompson Denning, Baron Denning. In *Britannica Book of the Year, 2000*. Retrieved on 25 Feb. 2011 <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/157914/Alfred-Thompson-Denning-Baron-Denning>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 6.06 time runs backwards.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 5.05 time runs backwards.

such, Nemetz tried to make his judgements speak to the public, a stance that was considered to be too 'results oriented' by some.<sup>18</sup>

In terms of his minority status as a Jew, Nathan Nemetz has often been described as a pioneer in the field of law with regards to many of the positions he held. Nemetz was the first Jewish Justice of the Supreme Court of BC. He was the first Jewish person to be a member of the Senate and Board of UBC as well as being the first Jewish Chancellor of UBC. He was one of the first Jews to be allowed membership in the Vancouver Club since the time of David Oppenheimer, one of the club's original founders.<sup>19</sup> Yet among his colleagues in the law profession, being a Jew was not what made Nemetz's contributions noteworthy. For those who worked with him, Nemetz's efforts and personality alone warrant commemoration. That being said, the focus of this work is to explore Jewish integration in BC and therefore Nathan Nemetz's Jewishness will be highlighted.

This chapter will explore the impact of growing-up as a member of Vancouver's Jewish community during the 1930s and WWII era. It will also follow the influence of Nemetz's Jewish identity on his career as a jurist and vice versa. Although Nemetz made many contributions to society, it is his endeavours in law, with special attention paid to the field of labour relations, which will be explored in depth. The discussion will touch on the following topics: family life, Vancouver Jewry, legal decisions, and liberalism. Unlike members of his extended family, in his adult years Nemetz was not intensely affiliated with, or actively involved in, Vancouver's Jewish communal institutions. Instead, he made his contributions to general society, through the BC legal system, while

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 4.05 time runs backwards.

<sup>19</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz.*

identifying himself as a secular Jew. In this way Nemetz could be placed within Barkan's *integration* phase. In light of all of his professional accomplishments Nathan Nemetz seems to stand out. His history is remarkable because his accomplishments represent a historical turning point in the possibility for Jewish integration in BC. In the public eye, he could be both a Jew and a jurist.

### **Family roots and early life**

Nemetz's father, Samuel Nemetz (d.1952), came from a large family of nine children, all raised in the town of Svatastroiske, Ukraine. Sam Nemetz's father, Avrum Nemetz, owned a butcher shop and also sold corn to local milleries. Nemetz's paternal grandmother, Tuva (Toby) Nemetz, would occasionally help her husband with business, but her main duties revolved around keeping the home and looking after her nine children. According to Nemetz's aunt, Esther Dayson, the senior Nemetzs had a large beautiful home, with a yard full of lilac trees, fruit trees, horses, pheasants and peacocks. The family lived next door to a shokhet and a rabbi, and they were relatively affluent—a fact demonstrated by their owning a sewing machine and having servants in the house. The children were educated in the home and tutored in Russian and Yiddish. The boys were eventually sent to the *gymnasium* (secondary school).<sup>20</sup> From amongst all of the Nemetz siblings, Sam Nemetz received the most training and graduated in Odessa as an electrical engineer.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The name *Nemetz* actually means German in Russian. In the Ukraine, the name is sometimes written as "Deutcher." There were between 100 and 200 Jewish families living in Svatastroiske, enough for the existence of two synagogues, one for the working class and one for the middle class patrons, to which the Nemetz's belonged. *Interview with Judith Nacht and Rose Narvey*, ed. Irene Dodek (Vancouver, BC: JHSBC, October 14, 1994), Tape One side one page 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Tape one side one page 1.

The Nemetz family fled the Ukraine in stages.<sup>22</sup> Sam Nemetz was the first Nemetz sibling to immigrate to Canada.<sup>23</sup> Before the pogroms of 1905, Sam Nemetz brought out his brothers Dave and Charlie; Harry and Sonia (Sarah Victor) followed, arriving weeks before the onset of WWI.<sup>24</sup> Upon arriving in Canada some of the Nemetz siblings moved to Watrous, Saskatchewan, including Sam and his brothers Dave and Harry. Financially supported by their oldest brother Charlie, the brothers bought eight coal generating plants throughout Saskatchewan.<sup>25</sup> For many years they made a living by supplying power to rural communities in that province and financed the immigration of their remaining family members.

By 1923 the Nemetz siblings had successfully facilitated the immigration of their parents, Avrum and Tuva Nemetz, and their younger siblings Bill, Eva (Chava Wosk), Leo, and Nadia (Esther Dayson), as well Eva's husband Abrasha Wosk, her one-year old daughter, and her brother-in-law, as well as an additional Nemetz cousin.<sup>26</sup> The brothers continued to support their younger siblings and parents after their arrival in Canada. When various family members began moving to the West coast in the 1920s, the Nemetz name quickly became synonymous with community involvement as various members took up active roles in the city's Jewish as well as general community.

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<sup>22</sup> Lisa Smedman, "Escape from Ukraine," *The Vancouver Courier* 99, no. 37, Wednesday 7 May 7 2008, p.6.

<sup>23</sup> Nathan claims that this happened in the 1890s. *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*,

<sup>24</sup> The eldest brother Charlie was actually the first Nemetz to leave the Ukraine for the Americas. However he went back to the Ukraine in order to relieve his brother Sam of military duty, so that Sam could finish his education. Dave Nemetz, "Dave Nemetz: Prominent Pioneer, Vancouver Businessman Tells His Own story" *The Scribe*, no. 23 (1985), p.6.

<sup>25</sup> Whoever immigrated out of the Ukraine with the Nemetz family used the Nemetz family name. Only when they arrived in Canada did they revert to their proper family names. *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*.

<sup>26</sup> Dave Nemetz, "Dave Nemetz: Prominent Pioneer, Vancouver Businessman Tells His Own story," *The Scribe* no.25, March (1986), p.7.

Not much is known about Nemetz's mother's side of the family. Like her husband, Rebecca Bardach (d. 1953) was also from the Ukraine, but she was a city girl and grew up in Odessa.<sup>27</sup> She was one of twelve siblings and her father made his living in the liquor business. Like their in-laws the Nemetzs, the Bardachs were well off. Unaccompanied by her parents, Bardach immigrated to Canada as a "youngster" with two of her sisters.<sup>28</sup> The sisters were later followed by a younger brother. Her remaining brothers were killed in WWI and her parents never immigrated to Canada.<sup>29</sup> In Nemetz's estimation, his mother was an exceptional woman, who showed tremendous strength and courage, characteristics Nemetz would come to admire in women.<sup>30</sup>

### *Family life in Saskatchewan*

Nathan Theodore Nemetz was born October 6, 1913 in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Named after a maternal uncle, Nemetz was his parents' eldest son. His brother Herman was born in 1916, the same year that the family moved to Watrous, Saskatchewan. There Sam Nemetz owned a general store, by the name of MacMillian, Rivers, and Nemetz, with the other names indicating the previous owners. According to Nathan Nemetz, there were between 800 and 900 inhabitants in Watrous when the family arrived. Only a handful of the other residents were Jews. Not far from Manitou Lake, Watrous was a transitional point on the old Grand Trunk Railway line, where Nemetz's paternal grandfather, Avrum (d.1927), later did some work in the 1920s.<sup>31</sup> Nemetz maintained

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<sup>27</sup> The original family name Bardach was changed to Birch when Becky and her sisters immigrated to Canada.

<sup>28</sup> *Interview with Judith Nacht and Rose Narvey*, p.6.

<sup>29</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 side one 9.03.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:012 side one 10.07.

<sup>31</sup> The only salt lake in the country prized for its healing properties. *Ibid.*, T4340:012 side one 11.24.

that Watrous was a very stratified town. It was divided mainly between the Anglo-Saxon Protestant professional class, which included of two doctors, three lawyers and a banker, and the Mennonite farming class.<sup>32</sup> Nemetz noted that although fitting in was difficult, his mother made a successful effort to get along with everyone.<sup>33</sup> Sam and Becky Nemetz's home in Watrous was very basic. It had no indoor plumbing; the cooler was a trap door in the floor with a ladder leading to the basement. Nemetz remembered life in Watrous as being very rustic, so much so that the family rarely had access to fresh vegetables. Nemetz indicated that perhaps this was the reason why he was shorter than his brother Herman!<sup>34</sup>

Like many Jewish immigrants, Sam and Becky Nemetz considered education a “door to the world” and the key to a successful future in a new land.<sup>35</sup> Becky Nemetz always encouraged her children to do well and taught them to value education and hard work.<sup>36</sup> Her dream was that her eldest son would one day become a lawyer, even going as far as introducing him to all three lawyers in Watrous.<sup>37</sup> She also bought young Nathan a violin, in hopes that he might one day become a great musician (perhaps like the Adaskins, for reasons of social mobility). However, her son did not take to music in the way his mother wished. Instead he used the bow as a bat in many of his after-school

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 11.47.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 11.47.

<sup>34</sup> Nathan attributed his small size to an early childhood diet of meat and potatoes, and a lack of fresh fruits and vegetables. Ibid., T4340:012 side one 20.42.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 19.01.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 20.24.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 19.01.

fight<sup>38</sup>. Nevertheless, when the family moved to Vancouver, Becky Nemetz insisted that he continue his music lessons.<sup>39</sup>

In 1922, with the onset of a mini depression on the Prairies, Sam Nemetz's brothers opted to sell their power-plant holdings, and as he did not have a controlling share in the company, Sam Nemetz had little choice but to go along with the plan.<sup>40</sup> Although Sam Nemetz had intended to resettle the family in California, Nathan, who by this point had been sufficiently immersed in British imperialist thinking, argued that American society would not have adequate social standards and therefore the family should stay in British territory.<sup>41</sup> When the family stopped-over temporarily in Vancouver in 1923, Becky Nemetz also became concerned about the lack of educational possibilities in Los Angeles, and the family plans changed permanently.<sup>42</sup> At this point it may be useful to understand the Jewish context in Vancouver and the times during which Justice Nemetz's Jewish upbringing in took place.

### **Vancouver's Jewish community**

Until the completion of the CPR, Vancouver had been home to only seven Jewish families; of Vancouver's 528 registered voters in 1886, seven were Jews.<sup>43</sup> The first Jewish family to take up permanent residence in what was then known as Granville, incorporated as Vancouver in 1886, were Louis and Emma Gold along with their son

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 17.50.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 18.18. Roy, Reginald *The Vancouver Club, First Century 1889-1989* The Vancouver Club UBC, 1989, 10.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 23.59.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 24.26.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 26.36.

<sup>43</sup> These included Louis and Edward Gold, Jack Levy, David and Isaac Oppenheimer, H.S. Ripstein, and M.A. Rothschild. Cyril Edel Leonoff, "The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in BC, 1858-1948," *The Scribe* xxviii (2008), p.45.

Edward, in 1872.<sup>44</sup> Other families such as the Oppenheims, the Levys and the Ripstein-Goldblums soon followed suit. Vancouver's first Jewish settlers were from established families in Victoria and the United States.<sup>45</sup> Like their compatriots in Victoria, they had *adapted* aspects of American and British social norms into their lives. This group was mostly made up of corporate business people, landowners and professionals.

With the arrival of Eastern European Jews swelling the ranks of Vancouver's Jewish population beginning in 1886, the city's original Jews eventually formed an elite upper-class sector within the Jewish community, due in a large part to their professions and integration into Anglo-society. These more integrated and professional Jews settled in the more affluent neighbourhoods of the west-end on Vancouver's downtown peninsula.<sup>46</sup> This type of internal stratification was common among all Canadian Jewish communities at the turn of the century. Montréal Jewry for example was stratified between British and early East European Jewish immigrants versus a downtown core community of Yiddish speakers. Social gaps between Jews existed in terms of class, networks, levels of integration and visibility, not to mention significant differences among each of the Jewish cultures (see Table 3).

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<sup>44</sup> Leonoff, *The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1941*, p.44.

<sup>45</sup> Unlike Victoria, the city of Vancouver did not play a prominent role in the province's history until the completion of the CPR terminus at port Moody in 1887, at which point it began its commercial domination as the hub of the province. The first generation of Jewish settlers to Vancouver witnessed the railway boom of the city, as well as the severe depression of the mid-1890s, which was followed by the economic revival sparked by the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898 to 1901. During the early decade of the 20th century, Vancouver's economy continued to expand congruently with the economic growth in British Columbia's interior as well as that in the Prairie Provinces. *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p.60.

Table 3 Jewish Population of BC, 1871-1931.<sup>47</sup>

Year	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
British Columbia	100	104*	277*	554*	1384*	1696	2743
Canada total	1333*	2455	6503*	16,717	75,838	126,201	156,726

(\*=Jews by religion)

The Eastern European Jewish immigrants in Vancouver brought with them traditional Orthodox Judaism, folkways and Yiddish. In terms of class, professions and even language, they differed greatly from their co-religionists in Victoria and predecessors in Vancouver (see Appendix M for discussion on Vancouver's religious institutions). There were very few professionals among them. Rather, they worked as horse and wagon peddlers, i.e. junk men, rag men, and bottle men, second-hand dealers, tailors, pawnbrokers, loan officers, goldsmiths, jewellers and grocers. Their businesses were located in what is known as the Gastown district and they lived in the nearby east-end working-class neighbourhood of Strathcona.<sup>48</sup> They could be initially placed within Barkan's *contact* phase later moving to the *acculturation* phase.

By the 1930s, Strathcona's Jewish residents became more economically and geographically mobile, relocating their neighbourhoods and communal institutions to the Fairview district, while Vancouver's more affluent Jews also left the west-end and moved in to the districts of Fairview, Shaughnessy, and Point Grey. Some abandoned Vancouver altogether, and moved to more economically promising regions such as Southern California.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Table 10, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Leonoff writes, "At its peak in the 1920s, Strathcona housed an Orthodox synagogue, Talmud Torah School and hall, the *Well Baby Clinic*, the Zionist hall, *National Council of Jewish Women Neighbourhood House*, Jewish grocery stores and kosher butcher shops." Ibid., p.60.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.96.

The choice of residential locations by Sam and Becky Nemetz demonstrates not only their economic status but their communal and social aspirations as well. When they first arrived, they moved to the west-end, not Strathcona where Vancouver's less affluent Jews lived. They later moved to Point Grey on the border with Shaughnessy rather than the Fairview district, indicating their continued identification with Vancouver's more upwardly mobile and affluent Jews.

### **Family life in Vancouver**

After moving to Point Grey, just outside the Vancouver city limits, Sam Nemetz initially went into the car business, but soon returned to the electrical business. As youngsters, both Nathan Nemetz and his brother Herman attended Cecil Rhodes elementary school, a place which Nemetz later described as a "cesspool" of antisemitism.<sup>50</sup>

In Vancouver, the Nemetz boys were enrolled in private after-school Hebrew classes. Nathan was first sent to the Hebrew school in the old B'nai Yehudah synagogue building which was attached to the newly built (c.1921) Shaar Tsedek synagogue on 700 E Pender Street at the corner of Heatley Street; it took him three streetcars to get there. He was often late and reprimanded for his tardiness. Later, his parents hired a private tutor. Nemetz later recalled resenting his Hebrew lessons because, among other things, they prevented him from participating in recreational after-school activities, like his beloved baseball. After he became bar mitzvah, Nathan's Hebrew lessons stopped.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, the family continued to observe all of the major Jewish holidays, as Sam

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side two 31.43. *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz.*

<sup>51</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 side two 31.43.

Nemetz was adamant about keeping Jewish traditions. It is difficult to know precisely which of Barkan's phases the Nemetz family fit into. However, as highly acculturated, urban and professionally trained Jews who looked towards general society to measure their accomplishments, they seem have exhibited elements from both the *adaptation* and *accommodation* phases.

### **Education**

Throughout his teenage years, Nathan Nemetz was actively involved in a number of extra-curricular activities at Prince of Wales High School. He was chairman of the dance committee and editor of the school's *The Black and Gold Gazette*. Aside from writing and editing, as a teenager Nemetz enjoyed debating and entered many elocution contests.<sup>52</sup> In high school, he became interested in history and thought that one day he might become a history professor. It was during his campaign for school elections at Prince of Wales High that he first became known as "Sonny" to his peers and family alike. Later, even his legal colleagues would address him as Sonny. Nemetz later explained that he received this nickname because he often stole the spotlight.<sup>53</sup> Just prior to the Depression the family had moved from Point Grey to the Endowment lands, in anticipation of their sons' expected matriculation at UBC. They did not move closer to Vancouver's Jewish religious or communal institutions, showing a preference for higher education over religious life.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side two 31.43.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 side one 20.42; *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*, p.1.

Despite their middle-class status, the Nemetz family, like many Vancouverites during the Depression era, had a difficult time making ends meet.<sup>54</sup> With the onset of the Depression, Becky Nemetz rented out rooms in their new home to help with family finances.<sup>55</sup> After completing high school in 1930, Nathan Nemetz attended UBC where he pursued a bachelor's honours degree in history. He began his undergraduate studies at a time when UBC was seen as an overgrown agricultural college. Its student body numbered less than 2000 and the university housed three faculties: arts, agriculture and applied science.<sup>56</sup> He financed his studies by living at home, working all summer—often at various law firms, playing the banjo and the fiddle in a band, and working as a freelance writer for the *Vancouver Sun* and the CCF News.<sup>57</sup> Generally, this gave him enough money to pay for his first semester of studies. For the second semester, he would borrow money from various people, including members of his extended family.<sup>58</sup> While in university, Nemetz continued his involvement in debating and participated in a number of other student organizations, including the Jewish fraternity of Kappa Theta Rho, which later became Zeta Beta Toth. Although many of his university friends were Jewish, he also had many non-Jewish friends and acquaintances because of the small student body and Nemetz's extensive participation in school affairs.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> The family also had difficult financial times during the twenties. In Point Grey, Sam Nemetz could not afford to pay the tax difference required for his sons to attend King Edward High School located in the Vancouver municipality, although it was only five blocks from his home in Point Grey. Instead, Nathan and Herman were sent to Prince of Wales High School, which was some fifteen blocks away. Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 side two 31.43.

<sup>55</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 side two 40.17.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:012 side two 41.54.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:012 side two 41.54.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:012 side two 40.17.

<sup>59</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz.*

One of the more memorable events that occurred while Nemetz was studying at UBC was the petition brought forward by faculty and students against the Kidd Report. In 1932 the provincial Conservative government was faced with a Depression era economy. In order to deal with its continuing budget cuts and increasing provincial debt, Premier Simon Fraser Tolmie set up a committee of five prominent businessmen, chaired by George Kidd—later president of the B.C. Power Commission, in the hopes that a solution to lighten the financial burdens of the province could be found. The committee recommended the implementation of several austere measures; including a reduction in the size of the Legislature and Cabinet, an amalgamation of government departments, salary reductions for teachers and civil servants, the cessation of free education after the age of fourteen, and the closing of UBC, the province's only university.<sup>60</sup> The faculty and the students were outraged and they worked together to deal with the crisis. Under the leadership of Professor Henry Angus, a counter committee was initiated, of which Nemetz was a member. The students organized a petition and went out en masse to present it before the Speaker of the House. The collective efforts of students and faculty were so successful that none of the recommendations from the Kidd report were adopted.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Peter N. Nemetz, *The Vancouver Institute: An Experiment in Public Education* (UBC Vancouver, BC: JBA Press, 1998), p.11.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

## Marriage

It was during the crisis over the Kidd Report that Nemetz fell in love with his wife to be, Bel Neuman.<sup>62</sup> Born July 6, 1916, Bel Neuman was three years old when she immigrated to Canada from Poland with her parents, Emmanuel and Fanny Neuman. Her father was a cultured businessman who spoke several languages and imbued his daughter with an intellectual curiosity and a strong social consciousness. He owned a successful furniture chain, Dominion Furniture, with ten stores throughout the Lower-Mainland. At university, Bel Neuman was not a regular participant in the Jewish social scene and in fact she had very few Jewish connections.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, with the small student population at UBC, it was not long before Nemetz noticed Bel Neuman with her long blonde hair streaming in the wind as she drove to school. Looking back, Nemetz noted that in the thirties only a few students drove their own cars.<sup>64</sup> By Nemetz's own account, Bel Neuman was not only pretty, but she was very smart and known to be at the top of her class. When Nemetz was invited out on a double date with another girl, Bel Neuman and her date happened to be the other couple. Nemetz was soon smitten with her and by the end of the evening he had managed to swap dates.<sup>65</sup> The couple avoided a traditional wedding and in 1935 eloped in Seattle.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*, Nathan and Bel first met briefly in high school. Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One 23.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side One 23.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side One 23.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side One 23.

<sup>66</sup> Strangway, *Programme Remarks*, B4. Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One 23.

Despite having been accepted to study law at Osgood Hall, Bel Nemetz gave up her dream of becoming a lawyer in order to marry the future Chief Justice.<sup>67</sup> Although Bel Nemetz did not become a lawyer, she did have a career as entrepreneur and was ahead of her time in terms of balancing a career and raising a family. After graduating from university with an honours BA in economics, Bel Nemetz went to work as an advertising clerk in her father's furniture business. While managing her father's Dominion Furniture chain, Bel Nemetz supported and guided her husband's legal career. In 1940, Bel Nemetz's father died, leaving her in charge of the company affairs at age twenty five. Five years later, the Nemetzs welcomed the birth of their only child, Peter Nemetz. Since both Nemetz and his wife worked, a housekeeper and nanny were hired to help on the domestic front. However, Peter Nemetz was far from neglected and accompanied his father on many of his business trips.

Throughout their life together, Nemetz and his wife formed a very strong partnership. When he was nominated to the bench in 1963, Bel Nemetz was forced to resign from Dominion Furniture. As Nemetz incredulously explained, in those days women were not allowed to be in business if their husbands sat on the bench.<sup>68</sup> Despite her resignation from the business world, Bel Nemetz continued to play an active role in the public domain, particularly through her involvement with the Vancouver Institute, a voluntary organization devoted to public education and civic discourse. Bel Nemetz worked for the Vancouver Institute both as a member at large and later in a more official capacity as program chairman from 1973 until 1990.<sup>69</sup> In Nathan Nemetz's estimation,

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side One 23.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side One 26.40.

<sup>69</sup> Nemetz, *The Vancouver Institute: an experiment in public education*, p.12.

his wife had an enormous impact on the intellectual and cultural life of Vancouver and for the most part, she worked without acknowledgement. In 1977 Bel Nemetz was awarded the Queen Elizabeth Silver Jubilee medal for her efforts in Vancouver's Rape Relief centre. In 1985 she received an award from the International Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. In 1988 Bel Nemetz's intellectual curiosity as well as her sense of social justice was recognized when UBC awarded her an honorary Ph.D.<sup>70</sup>

### **Religious affiliation and the influence of Jewish values in the home**

As an adult, Nathan Nemetz primarily identified himself as a secular Jew and expressed his Jewishness in cultural rather than religious terms.<sup>71</sup> Like his father before him, Nemetz was involved with B'nai Brith. He was also a big fan of traditional Jewish baking, particularly that of his aunt, Esther Dayson, whom he is known to have visited enroute to the courthouse in order to pick up special treats.<sup>72</sup> Nemetz's family did observe all the main Jewish holidays, and Nemetz himself was known to have quoted often from the Prophet Micah among his professional peers.<sup>73</sup>

However, Nemetz was not a religious man. Throughout his life, he remained indifferent to the tenets of religious practice. His family did not attend synagogue services regularly and likewise his involvement with Jewish religious institutions remained distant throughout his adult life. According to Peter Nemetz, both of his parents were lifelong adherents to Albert Einstein's Credo, and like the great thinker they too strove after "knowledge for its own sake," had a "love of justice," and believed

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<sup>70</sup> Jewish Museum and Archives BC, *Nathan Nemetz obituary*, 1996), JHSBC Nathan Nemetz file #30, 19-96:01.

<sup>71</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*.

<sup>72</sup> Shirley Barnett communication August 2009 Vancouver, BC.

<sup>73</sup> Nemetz, Peter Correspondence, September 2009 Vancouver BC.

in “the quest for personal independence.”<sup>74</sup> It was according to these principles that they lived their lives.

Given that neither Nemetz nor his wife were particularly religious and that Nemetz’s own experience as bar mitzvah was not memorable, neither of them insisted that their son Peter Nemetz go through the ritual bar mitzvah, although he was given the Torah to read on his own.<sup>75</sup> By the late 1950s and 1960s the public bar mitzvah ritual was becoming a central component of Jewish identity among Reform and Conservative affiliated middle-class North American Jews. Perhaps the Nemetzs’ disregard for the son’s bar mitzvah ceremony was as much a reflection of their drifting away from the identity markers of their middle-class co-religionists as it was from institutionalized religion.

Nemetz ascertained that religious Jews and secular Jews should mutually respect one another and he firmly believed that religious and secular Jews could coexist, without offending one another.<sup>76</sup> It is perhaps this line of thinking that explained Nemetz’s preference to be cremated rather than follow traditional Jewish burial customs upon his death.<sup>77</sup> That is not to say that Nemetz did not respect Jewish religious institutions; rather they did not resonate with his daily experiences, and thus they did not have a significant place in his life. Nemetz recognized the importance of the role that religion played in the Jewish community and for this reason he maintained that he was always

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<sup>74</sup> Nemetz, *The Vancouver Institute: An Experiment in Public Education*, 3. Ester Reiter, “Secular Yiddishkai: left politics, culture, and community,” *Labour/ Le Travail Issue* Spring (2002), [<http://www.historycooperative.org>]. In August of 1932 Einstein wrote “My Credo” in Caputh, Germany and he later read it for a recording to benefit of the German League of Human Rights. For a translation see [http://www.einstein-website.de/z\\_biography/credo.html](http://www.einstein-website.de/z_biography/credo.html)

<sup>75</sup> Nemetz, Peter Correspondence, September 2009 Vancouver BC.

<sup>76</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz.*

<sup>77</sup> Shirley Barnett communication August 2009 Vancouver, BC.

respectful of those who adhered to tradition and was on good terms with many of Vancouver's rabbis. Nemetz's eulogy over Rabbi Pastinsky portrays his appreciation of being accepted as a non-religious Jew. He writes, "What more need we say of a man who cared not whether his supplicant was Orthodox or reform, religious or non-religious, Jew or gentile; his rule read only, 'Was he in need?'"<sup>78</sup> In these sentiments Nemetz was not alone. From the 1940s to the 1960s, many Jewish Vancouverites of Nemetz's generation were starting to feel distant from religious life and institutions.

The religiosity of Christian Vancouverites was also beginning to diminish. Throughout the 1940s to the 1960s the mainstream Protestant denominations also tried to strike a balance between religious tradition and modern aspirations. People increasingly ascertained that it was they, not their ministers or their church, that shaped the moral foundations of their lives.<sup>79</sup> Although the Jewish religious institutions of Vancouver had made concerted efforts to meld tradition and modernity, by the time successful efforts were undertaken—beginning in the 1930s in the case of Beth Israel, and in the late 1940s in the case of Shaar Tsedek—Nemetz was already an adult, and his modern aspirations were set firmly in place.

### **The influence of Jewish values on Nemetz's humanitarian causes**

One of the ways that Nathan Nemetz's Jewishness influenced his identity was through his concern for humanitarian causes. This likely stemmed from an initial concern over the survival of the Jewish people which was then extended to include humanitarian and civil liberty causes in general. Hitler came to power during Nemetz's

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<sup>78</sup> "Nathan Nemetz for Rabbi Mayer Pastinsky," *Jewish Western Bulletin* 16, no. 7, Friday 20 February 1948.

<sup>79</sup> Margaret Conrad and Alvin Finkel, *Canada: A National History* (Toronto: Longman, 2003), p.499.

formative years as a student at UBC, and Nemetz immediately voiced his opposition against the Nazi regime. In 1933 in a debate between UBC's Jewish fraternity Kappa Theta Rho and the Menorah Club (the precursor of the Jewish student association Hillel) Nemetz and debating partner Milton Share successfully argued that Zionism was the only way to resolve the threat that someone like Hitler posed to the Jews of Germany. Little did they know that their stance would be echoed by the majority of world Jewry, culminating with the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948.<sup>80</sup>

Nemetz continued to be a proponent of the Zionist cause as a way of ending discrimination against Jews. In 1948 he led a panel discussion on "Palestine and world peace" at the Canadian Legion.<sup>81</sup> In 1949 Nemetz served as President of Vancouver Lodge B'nai Brith as well as chairman of the Joint Public Relations Committee (JPRC). That year a controversy broke out with regards to the possibility of preventing the use of the works of "Oliver Twist" by Charles Dickens and the "Merchant of Venice" by William Shakespeare in public schools. At that time a lawsuit was being heard in New York regarding that very possibility. In his capacity as chairman of the JPRC, Nemetz expressed himself publicly in favour of keeping such books off the public school curriculum. In a statement reported by the *Vancouver Sun*, Nemetz argued that works such as "Oliver Twist" and the "Merchant of Venice" were unsuitable for public schools. He commented that:

...although I dislike censorship, nevertheless it is my opinion that works like Oliver Twist and the Merchant of Venice are not suitable for public school instruction as both caricature a minority group. The prejudices thus engendered

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<sup>80</sup> "Kappa Theta Rho Menorah Debate," *Jewish Western Bulletin* 8, no. 4, 25 May 1933, p.7.

<sup>81</sup> *Nathan Nemetz for Rabbi Mayer Pastinsky.*

overshadow by far the literary value of these books to the young and impressionable mind.

He went on to say that:

If we were living in an era of enlightenment it would, of course, cause no harm to examine all types of racist literature, even in our public schools. But unfortunately discrimination of minorities plays so great a part in our modern society that classical purists should not make the lives of minorities even more difficult.

As we know from previous chapters, the era surrounding WWII in Vancouver was fraught with genteel antisemitism. It is therefore not surprising that the *Vancouver Sun* responded to Nemetz's comments with an editorial attacking his position. Nemetz nevertheless remained adamant and reiterated his concerns:

The theory has been put forth that there are times and places when even great literature cannot be freely used for the education of the young. There are times when such literature has to be either expurgated or put on the curriculum for older students rather than the elementary classes. In this category I would place many works of D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce, Ibsen, G.B. Shaw and even some works of Shakespeare and Dickens, namely, the "Merchant of Venice" and "Oliver Twist."

I cite these last two examples because in these a vulnerable minority is caricatured—a minority that has suffered most greatly in the last decade and a half.

The brotherhood of man is the greatest desideratum in the world today, and even my good friend Dr. Sedgewick can agree that there are many other classics. They can be used with prejudice to none.

To my knowledge, there is no net effort on the part of anyone to influence the choice of study in Vancouver schools. However, it may be of interest to your readers to know that this entire subject is being fully discussed in the current issues of the Saturday review of literature.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> "The Oliver twist controversy is raised in Vancouver," *Jewish Western Bulletin* 17, no. 4, 7 April 1949, p.1.

Nemetz also supported humanitarian causes in general. For many Canadian Jews, particularly communist or socialist Jews, Franco's fascist takeover represented an affront to humanity and the cause of the Spanish Civil war (1936-1939) was taken up by some Canadian Jews.<sup>83</sup> For his part, Nathan Nemetz began serving as the Honorary Vice Consul for Spain in 1936 and circa 1938 he served as the chairman for the Jewish Committee for Medical Aid to Spain (commonly known as the "Aid to Spain" drive). Nemetz's humanitarian efforts continued throughout WWII. Unable to serve in the Canadian Military due to a heart condition, during the war Nemetz was assigned to a special task force that organized aid to allied countries such as Russia and Yugoslavia.<sup>84</sup>

Motivated by the suffering experienced by Europe's Jews, Nemetz continued to fight discrimination after WWII. During the mid-1950s Nemetz lobbied on behalf of the CJC and the Vancouver Civic Unity Council to abolish municipal covenants prohibiting certain ethnic groups from buying property in restricted areas, such as the West Vancouver neighbourhood known as the British Properties, overlooking Burrard Inlet.<sup>85</sup> This action eventually resulted in the implementation of a 1968 Vancouver bylaw which outlawed discrimination based on race and religion in the business and housing sectors. The bylaw was pushed through by the CJC and the Chinese Benevolent Association. Nemetz was a founding member of the Canadian Civil Liberties Union, Vancouver

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<sup>83</sup> For example, when an international brigade was set-up to help Spaniards counter Franco's fascists, a Canadian battalion, known as the MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion, was part of these efforts. Sixty five percent of all Jewish enlistees in the MacKenzie Papineau Battalion, were born in Canada. *Ibid.*, p.279.

<sup>84</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 side two 31.43. *Ibid.*, p.T4340:013 Side Two 18.00, time runs backwards.

<sup>85</sup> When the *Vancouver Civic Unity Council* which was founded in 1954, Nemetz was a founding board member. The CJC had been instrumental in forming and funding the *Vancouver Civic Unity Council*, which was composed of representatives from the *Labour Council Vancouver*, the *Chinese Benevolent Association* and other minority groups.

Branch, founded in 1962. He was also a founder of the B.C. Civil Liberties Association in 1962.<sup>86</sup>

Nemetz's interest in civil and human rights issues included involvement in Vancouver's United Nations Society and the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, for which he was awarded the Human Relations Award in 1958. He served on the board of the Vancouver Community Chest, later the United Way; he was also director of the Sick Children's Foundation and served as honourable chairman for the Crusade against Cancer cause. When he was nominated to the bench, Justice Nemetz's legal decisions continued to reflect his concern of human rights and justice. The rise of Nazism and the atrocities committed against Jews profoundly affected Nathan Nemetz. Although it was Jewish suffering that prompted his initial concern over humanitarian and civil liberties, his concern eventually spread to include all those who encountered injustice.

### **Entering the law profession**

When Nathan Nemetz graduated from UBC in 1934 with an honours BA in history, several of his professors encouraged him to apply to graduate school in the USA. Although he was accepted at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts, Nemetz could not afford the train fare. Instead, he began studying law through the Law Society of British Columbia (LSBC), during which time he was financially supported by Bel Nemetz.<sup>87</sup> Before the establishment of a law faculty at UBC, there was a curious arrangement between the LSBC and practicing lawyers, whereby an individual could obtain the right to practice law if he spent five years articling. At the end of the training,

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<sup>86</sup> *Ex-BC Chief Justice, a Fighter for Human Rights, Dies*, B4. *Jewish Museum and Archives*, (Vancouver, British Columbia:, September 2009), permanent display.

<sup>87</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*.

the individual was essentially trained as a solicitor. This arrangement was reasonably satisfactory if the student articulated with a lawyer who actually took an interest in teaching. However, most law firms simply used the articling students as cheap labour. Nemetz articulated under the firm of Claude McAlpine, where he prepared briefs and observed court proceedings. He was exposed to a wide array of legal cases because, as he noted, “In those days there was no such thing as specialization and the McAlpine firm handled a wide range of cases from criminal cases to insurance.”<sup>88</sup> Despite this exposure, like most articling students at that time, Nemetz was seen by his supervisors as convenient help rather than as someone to teach.<sup>89</sup>

After working for several years for the McAlpine firm, Nemetz decided to leave the firm and start an independent practice. Partners Jack Austin, John Bruk-Bosnic and Norma Christie would later join the firm. Given the social climate, Nemetz’s first few years establishing himself as a lawyer were not easy. It is perhaps for this reason that Nemetz started a practice with a fellow Jew (Jack Austin) and a woman. From the outset Nemetz was attracted to labour law. His sociable nature proved to be an asset and his first cases came from people he already knew, including the bakers’ union, the boilermakers’ shipyards, and the Vancouver secondary teachers, to name a few.<sup>90</sup>

### ***Labour law***

As Canada moved into the post-WWII era, Canadians as a whole began to develop a much greater sense of social entitlement to minimum standards of living,

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<sup>88</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side one 28.46.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side one 28.46.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:013 Side Two 22.13, time runs backwards.

which before WWII had been left up to individual attainment. The devastation of the 1930s, in combination with the federal government's ability to plan for WWII, increasingly prompted Canadians to argue for improvement to the collective standard of living and to the belief that the government had a duty to plan for peace times as adequately as it had planned for war. Health care, pensions, child care, minimum housing standards and decent wages were high on the list of popular priorities.<sup>91</sup> Nemetz's interest in labour law resonated with collective social concern. By 1950 Nemetz's reputation as a labour relations lawyer garnered him notice by a small group of people who understood the importance of his skill at negotiating fair labour settlements, and Nemetz was awarded his K.C. designation.<sup>92</sup> However, when Nemetz first started to practice law, labour law was almost non-existent, labour relations were mostly resolved by strikes, a method which was costly and ineffective. In an interview with legal historian Maryla Waters, Nemetz explained that because the employers and the unions only engaged in negotiations after a contract had expired, problems erupted every time a contract ended. In order to avoid the strike cycle, Nemetz's approach as a lawyer and later as an arbitrator was to set up a series of meetings, months in advance of the contract end-date, dealing first with complaints and added benefits, and addressing wage negotiations closer to the time of contract signing. This made wage negotiations much easier to deal with when the time came, and often helped avoid strikes. Although Nemetz was still brought in at the last minute to resolve labour disputes, he observed that in such cases the atmosphere was so highly charged that it often overshadowed the

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<sup>91</sup> Conrad and Finkel, *Canada: A National History*, p.442.

<sup>92</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side Two 9.53 time runs backwards.

issues at hand. In order to bring about a resolution, Nemetz often invited both sides into a different atmosphere, allowing them to cool down, after which meaningful negotiations could resume.<sup>93</sup> Nemetz was not an ideologue and always sought fair settlements. Considering BC's volatile labour climate, the fact that Nemetz was respected by both sides was a rare achievement indeed.<sup>94</sup> When Nemetz was still acting as counsel, he was sometimes asked to represent labour in one case and then represent employers in another case. At times this was interpreted negatively, particularly by the labour side. Nemetz tried to avoid such situations as much as possible, and it was one of the reasons he became an arbitrator. Nemetz's contemporaries credited him with making labour law respectable at a time when it was not taken seriously.<sup>95</sup>

### *Socialist liberal values*

By Nathan Nemetz's own admission, his preoccupation with labour law can be attributed to his experiences and observations during the depression era—the twenty-five percent unemployment rate, the lack of unemployment insurance and social welfare and riots, all made a life-long impression.<sup>96</sup> During the thirties, Nathan Nemetz became greatly impressed by Soviet society and was attracted to socialist philosophies. He admired work by the American socialist Lincoln Steffens (1866-1936) and the English Marxist John Strachey (1901-1963),<sup>97</sup> both of whom he became friends with. Indeed, Peter Nemetz was named after the son of Lincoln Steffens. As mentioned earlier,

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 13.38.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two time runs backwards 15.26.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., T4340:013 Side Two 15.55, time runs backwards.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 Side Two 57.37, time continues from side one.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 Side Two 57.37, time continues from side one.

Nemetz was a member of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation (CCF) and worked as a freelance journalist writing articles for the CCF News.<sup>98</sup>

Socialist inclinations were not rare among Jewish immigrants to Canada, particularly those who arrived from Tsarist Russia after the 1905 Revolution, where they had been radicalized in the dying days of the regime.<sup>99</sup> However, not all Eastern European Jews came to Canada as socialists; many learned their socialism once they arrived in Canada and became part of the proletariat.<sup>100</sup> By acting as an agent for economic benefits, while at the same time providing quasi-familiar cultural associations through fraternal organizations, the Jewish labour movement offered solace to exploited Jews steeped in religious teachings but alienated from tradition. Although the first coalition of Jewish socialist groups in North America was the Arbeiter Ring, established in New York City at the turn of the twentieth century, the Toronto Arbeiter Ring was established in 1908. The Arbeiter Ring never officially linked itself with the communists. As historian Gerald Tulchinsky notes, Jews never made up more than ten percent of the membership of The Workers Party of Canada—the public face of the Communist Party of Canada, whose majority were members of either Finnish or Ukrainian descent. In spite of this, the general opinion was “that although not all Jews were communists most communists were Jews.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., T4340:012 Side Two 59.14, time continues from side one.

<sup>99</sup> The various socialist groups among Jews all agreed that the resolution of antisemitism would come about only when the world was free of hatred, hunger and oppression. Reiter, *Secular Yiddishkai: Left Politics, Culture, and Community*, p.4.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p.4.

<sup>101</sup> Faith Jones, “Between suspicion and censure: attitudes towards the Jewish left in postwar Vancouver,” *Canadian Jewish Studies* 6 (1998): pp.1-24; Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey*, p.282. It should be noted that regional differences varied across the country. In Montréal Jews made up a significant percentage of Communist sympathizers.

The fact that the majority of Canada's Jewish proletariat was located within a few square blocks along the Main in Montréal, in the Ward in Toronto, and north of the CPR tracks in Winnipeg, “gave the Jewish labour movement economic and political clout far beyond what its relatively small membership warranted.”<sup>102</sup> In these neighbourhoods Jews dominated the garment industry, giving them a prominent place in public perception.<sup>103</sup> As Irving Abella noted “No other ethnic group dominated a single industry the way Jews dominated the garment industry and then expended as much energy and funds on behalf of progressive candidates and causes.”<sup>104</sup> However, unlike Montréal, Toronto, Winnipeg or even Calgary, Vancouver’s Jewish community did not have a proletariat history. Early Jewish inhabitants were involved in business as either wholesalers or petty merchants. Vancouver’s own early urban history did not include large scale industry: mines, mills, and work camps of significant scale were located in BC’s Interior and on Vancouver Island. Lacking industrial facilities limited the development of a proletariat sector in Vancouver.<sup>105</sup> And as a result, no one group visibly dominated the city’s working-class sector. By the 1930s Vancouver’s Jewish community was increasingly becoming less Orthodox; yet, it was still largely religious and middle-class. Furthermore, Vancouver Jewry was far more homogenous than their eastern Canadian counterparts. These attributes along with a lack of industry in Vancouver, translated into a less entrenched Jewish involvement in the labour

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<sup>102</sup> Irving M. Abella, “Portrait of a Jewish Professional Revolutionary: The Recollections of Joshua Gershman,” *Labour/ Le Travailleur* 2 (1977): p.186.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.185.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186.

<sup>105</sup> Paul Delany, “Introduction: Vancouver as a Postmodern City,” from P. Delany, ed. *Vancouver: Representing: The Postmodern City* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1994): pp. 2, 8.

movement on the West Coast when compared to elsewhere in Canada.<sup>106</sup> Despite this, Jewish-leftists as well as secularists still existed in Vancouver.

Most Jewish-leftists along with other secular Jews arrived in Vancouver as part of a larger post-war migration from other parts of Canada, especially the Prairies. This post-war migration resulted in a slight influx of secular, socialist and Zionist<sup>107</sup> orientations among new and existing institutions, e.g. the Peretz Institute, a secular Jewish educational and cultural centre founded in 1945.<sup>108</sup>

Within Nemetz's own extended family, supporters of both Zionism and socialism could be found. His uncle David Nemetz was an ardent and lifelong supporter of the Zionist cause, travelling to Israel as early as 1949. His aunt Sonia Victor was known not only for her astute business skills and compassionate persona, but also for her involvement in various socialist factions. It is said that she was involved in the founding of the CCF party, when it was first established in Saskatchewan.<sup>109</sup> Victor was friends with Grace and Angus McInnis and J.S. Woodsworth, as well as Golda Myerson (Meir), who stayed at the Victor home during a trip to Canada.<sup>110</sup> Victor was also involved in the Jewish socialist movement, the Arbeiter Ring in Vancouver, and she and her husband, Baryl Victor, were instrumental in founding the pre-cursor of the Peretz School, known as the Shalom Aleichem School.<sup>111</sup> That being said, Victor was the most

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<sup>106</sup> Jones, *Between Suspicion and Censure: Attitudes towards the Jewish Left in Postwar Vancouver*.

<sup>107</sup> Leonoff, *The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1941*, p.124.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Shirley Barnett, *Nemetz Family Album* (Vancouver, British Columbia: 1998), Sarah Nemetz Victor.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. Gold Meir was the future Prime Minister of Israel (1969-1974). J.S. Woodsworth together with Angus McInnis founded the CCF Party in 1932. Grace McInnis (née Woodsworth), was the first woman elected as an MLA in the BC legislature, 1941-1945. Later Grace McInnis was elected as CCF Member of Parliament, from 1965-1974.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Nathan's aunt and uncle, Esther and Ben Dayson, hosted Tommy Douglas in their home in Viscount, Saskatchewan. Irene Dodek, *Interview with Esther Dayson*, 14 October 1994.

prominent socialist among the Nemetz family. If other members of the Nemetz family supported socialism, they did so more casually and as a result of the times rather than as devoted socialists. About his university associates at that time Nemetz later observed “we were all socialists, there is no doubt.”<sup>112</sup> Nemetz’s own socialist leanings lasted until he finished his schooling, at which point his opinions about the political saliency of socialist parties began to wane.<sup>113</sup>

By the end of WWII Nathan Nemetz was becoming disillusioned with the left and began to moving away from it. The Soviet invasion of Finland in 1939-1940, the protest by some on the left that England was declaring an unnecessary Imperialist War against Hitler’s Germany, the equation of Hitler with simple imperialism and the dogmatic and fanatical leanings of some, inspired Nemetz to seek change.<sup>114</sup> Nemetz's change in attitude coincided with the peak of McCarthyism in the United States, a time when “killing communists was more acceptable than killing former Nazis.”<sup>115</sup> Anti-communist sentiment infiltrated the Jewish community in Vancouver in 1951 when the Canadian Jewish Congress expelled the United Jewish People's Order (UJPO), at the request of the RCMP which had noted with alarm the increasing membership of the UJPO within the CJC and was afraid of an attempt by UJPO members to split Congress or gain control of it.<sup>116</sup> The year that McCarthyism reached its peak in the United States

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<sup>112</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 Side Two 49.00.

<sup>113</sup> It is perhaps not surprising to learn that left-leaning Jews have been referred to as non-Jewish Jews by scholars such as Isaac Deutscher and Arthur Liebman, *Jews and the left* (New York, Toronto: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), p.7.

<sup>114</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One.

<sup>115</sup> Jones, *Between Suspicion and Censure: Attitudes towards the Jewish Left in Postwar Vancouver*, p.16.

<sup>116</sup> Sam Bronfman was the head of the CJC at the time. As a hardline capitalist, Bronfman was not one to let fears about the spread of communism subside, although by then, fears may have dwindled in certain circles. *Ibid.*, p.6.

with the Rosenberg execution in 1953, was also the year that the liberal government of Louis St. Laurent began a campaign aimed at enticing borderline CCFers and wayward liberals to re-join the Liberal fold. In an attempt to attract new members, Louis St. Laurent announced that CCFers were really “liberals in a hurry.”<sup>117</sup> This notion appealed to Nemetz and that same year he joined the Liberal party of Canada. The decision was also a practical choice; Nathan Nemetz realized that if he were to affect social change, it was better to do it from within a majority political party, rather than from a minority one. Despite changing his political stripes, Nemetz remained true to his ideals.

Nemetz's change in political affiliation was also reflected among other Canadians. Beginning in 1945 until 1975 many Canadians embraced what is often referred to as a “post-war liberal consensus:”<sup>118</sup> essentially a welfare state where liberalism conformed to the goals of freedom of trade, freedom of speech and freedom of worship while also setting citizen security as a priority.<sup>119</sup> Following the experiences of the Depression and WWII, Canadians yearned for a minimum standard of living guaranteed by the state. In turn, the notion of the welfare state became a priority for both major federal political parties in Canada, while relations with Britain—which had previously been a priority, became almost irrelevant. Both Liberal and Conservative parties also supported the notion that the world had become polarized between two axes of power: communism and democratic capitalism (the preferred option). Therefore, although they understood the need to appease public demands for social security, both

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<sup>117</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One.

<sup>118</sup> Conrad and Finkel, *Canada: A National History*, p.442.

<sup>119</sup> This priority is commonly known as the notion of the welfare state, whereby the state assumes the responsibility to guarantee minimum income, minimum wage, programs for employment creation, farm subsidies, public education, health insurance, social assistance and pensions. *Ibid.*, p.442.

parties favoured cautious additions to social programs.<sup>120</sup> Because of the similarities between the two parties, personalities and regional interests—rather than ideology—determined the outcome of the election.

In post-1945 British Columbia, the memories of the Great Depression and WWII were still painfully fresh but fast disappearing.<sup>121</sup> As returning war veterans re-settled themselves in British Columbia, housing subsidies were put in place. Facilities of higher education were opened up and for the first time people from working-class backgrounds began receiving post-secondary education and entering professions such as teaching and law. The high employment rates gave a huge boost to the union movement, particularly the International Wood-Workers of America (IWA) union. The presence of the IWA allowed for stabilization of equitable employment standards.<sup>122</sup> In 1952, an independent Baptist backbencher from Kelowna, who had crossed the floor from the Conservative side of the coalition in 1951, ran in the leadership race for the Social Credit Party of British Columbia (Socred). In 1952 the tea-totalling W.A.C. Bennett was elected Premier of British Columbia. W.A.C. Bennett and his Socred government would remain in power until 1972, when he and his party were defeated by David Barrett and the New Democratic Party (NDP). When Bennett came to power he did much to distance his political rhetoric from any socialist associations.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p.442.

<sup>121</sup> Immediately following the War, Premier John Hart led a coalition Liberal/Conservative government and the provincial economy underwent drastic changes. Vancouver became a shipbuilding centre and began manufacturing products instead of simply supplying raw materials. The Americans brought employment to the region by way of the construction of the Alaska Highway. Rural electrification was achieved throughout the province through the work of the BC Power Commission. An aluminum smelter was opened in Kitimat. Employment was high.

<sup>122</sup> *BC Times no.4: The War and Beyond 1939-1959*, ed. Image Media (Vancouver, BC: 1996).

<sup>123</sup> Despite his vociferous objections against so-called socialist notions, Bennett nationalized both BC Hydro and the BC Ferry Corporation. W.A.C. Bennett, *History Television the Canadian Series. Great North Productions Heritage Project*, (CRB Foundation, 1997). At heart, W.A.C. Bennett was a populist,

It is not known how Nemetz personally related to the provincial Social Credit Party. However, early on in his career, Nemetz felt comfortable enough to approach W.A.C. Bennett in order to facilitate the establishment of married student quarters at UBC.<sup>124</sup> The two remained on amicable terms through Bennett's term as Premier.<sup>125</sup> As Nemetz himself admitted, having friends in the political arena did make it easier to get things done.

After joining the federal Liberal party in the 1950s, Nemetz was prompted by the Scottish women of the Masonic organization the Eastern Star, which his mother and Aunt Esther Dayson also belonged to, to consider running for office under the Liberal banner in the Burrard Street riding in the 1957 election. However, his wife dissuaded him from running, suggesting that such a political career would destroy any chance of future success as a lawyer.<sup>126</sup> Nemetz followed his wife's advice. However, he did become Liberal party chairman for the party election in 1957.

### **Legal decisions and achievements**

Throughout his legal career, there is no doubt that Nemetz strove to make the Canadian legal system better than he found it. Like many jurists, Nemetz sought to bring about justice for Canadian society in as fair a manner as possible. Certainly he was influenced by the institutionalized thinking of the Canadian justice system, but he was

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who believed in "standing up for the little guy," while at the same time supporting free enterprise. Bennett also increasingly distanced himself from party headquarters in Alberta and the antisemitic rhetoric that stained the party, and led BC through one of its most prosperous eras. Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One 17.50.

<sup>125</sup> In the 1960s Nathan suggested to the labour minister and W.A.C. Bennett that they send him to Sweden so he could study how the Swedish system worked. He wrote a report on the Swedish labour laws and practices. Ibid., T4340:014 Side One 19.40 .

<sup>126</sup> Nathan was also a mason. Ibid., T4340:013 Side One 3.57 time runs backwards.

also influenced by his own cultural background. As Nemetz himself observed, judicial decisions can also reveal the personal values of jurists. In this way, the type of law Nemetz practiced and the decisions he made can be viewed as reflections of who he was and where he came from. Nemetz's dedication to social causes—developing first as a concern over the persecution of Jews and gradually evolving into a broader concern over for the functioning of a just general society—provided an important foundation for his legal decisions. In reviewing many of Nemetz's rulings and judicial accomplishments from 1964 onwards, it becomes clear that his interest and ability to negotiate issues revolving around labour law largely stemmed from early socialist leanings of his youth. Although Nemetz dealt with thousands of cases, those reviewed below are only a selection of some of his more prominent ones that reflect his more liberal leanings.

***Regina v. Medical Superintendent for Medical Defectives***

On February 18, 1964 Nemetz struck-down an order-in-council which stipulated that it was possible for hospitals and other such public health facilities to run wait-lists for admission without setting any definite time limits. By deeming it *ultra vires*, he ruled that it exceeded its constitutional authority. Nemetz specifically ordered the superintendent of the Woodlands School in New Westminster to admit six-year-old Gail Elizabeth Albert to the facility. Her name had been wait-listed for two years, even though the Magistrate for the City of Vancouver, A.L. Bewley, Esq., had ordered that the little girl be admitted to the school. The provincial government appealed the decision all the way to the BC Supreme Court. Nemetz agreed with the family's representative, NDP MLA Gordon Dowding, who argued that the wait-list (by way of the order-in-Council) illegally circumscribed the rights of the physically and mentally disabled. The 1960

Schools for Mental Defectives Act, c347 specifically stated that care, custody and training in a government school were to provide for such individuals.<sup>127</sup>

### *Voting fraud*

In another case from the summer of 1965, Nemetz was appointed to the Royal Commission to investigate election irregularities. By August he found there was no evidence to support the allegations that the NDP had committed widespread voting fraud in the 1963 federal election in B.C. Journalist Ormond Turner had made the allegations in his column in the Vancouver Daily Province, claiming that the NDP had benefited from illegal voting practices carried out by six unions in the 1963 elections. The journalist had based his articles on information supplied by Moreland Brown, a pharmacist in the Burnaby-Coquitlam electoral district who served as a poll captain in the election. Turner's accusations provoked NDP leader Tommy Douglas to ask for judicial inquiry. In handing down his judgment, Nemetz reported, "After reviewing the whole of the evidence I have arrived at the ineluctable conclusion that nothing of substance emerges that would support any of the serious charges made by Turner in the articles under review."<sup>128</sup> The Justice went on to say, "that Brown appeared to be an honest and straightforward witness...it appears to me that in a mood of zealous investigatory journalism, Turner drew inferences from Brown's statement and materials which cannot be supported."<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ruth Worth, "BC appeals court ruling on retarded," *The Globe and Mail*, Thursday 20 February 20 1964, front page. *Regina v. Medical Superintendent for Medical Defectives, Ex parte Albert British Columbia Supreme Court*, Nathan Nemetz, February 18, 1964; 44 Dominion Law Reports (2d) s96-102

<sup>128</sup> Anthony Westell, "No widespread fraud in BC poll, Judge finds," *The Globe and Mail*, 19 August 1965, front page.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, p. front page.

### *IWA and FIR dispute*

When a dispute erupted in May of 1966 between the IWA and Forest Industrial Relations, Limited (FIR), and strike notice was served, the provincial government was at a loss over what to do in order to avoid a strike of 28,000 workers in BC's main industry. The IWA and the FIR had tried other mediators and nothing worked, not even the intervention of the premier.<sup>130</sup> Then in early June, with a flash of insight, Labour Minister Leslie Peterson suddenly appointed Nemetz as the provincial government's Industrial Commissioner to intervene in the prolonged dispute. The clash of IWA and FIR interests revolved around the staggering of shifts to permit a seven-day-a-week operation, amelioration of fringe benefits including portal-to-portal pay, and an across-the-board wage increase of \$0.30 per hour in a one-year contract.<sup>131</sup> Although it came as a surprise that as a judge Nemetz would undertake the arbitration, Nemetz agreed to accept the position as long as the workers did not strike while negotiations were underway. By the end of the month, Nemetz made his recommendations, which included a wage increase of \$0.40 an hour over a two-year period.<sup>132</sup> Although the employers complained bitterly about the outcome, they accepted it because everybody was happy to see a conflict finally resolved.<sup>133</sup> Upon the publication of Justice Nemetz's report, one of

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<sup>130</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:014 Side One 11.20.

<sup>131</sup> George McFarlane, "Commissioner makes peace bid today: woodworkers prepared to strike BC lumber industry," *The Globe and Mail*, Monday 6 June 1966, p.26.

<sup>132</sup> i.e. an increase of \$0.20 per year above and beyond the base rate at the time, which was \$2.36. This was a compromise between what the union had demanded—\$0.30 an hour in a one-year period, and what the employer had offered—\$0.22 over two years. CP, "Big Locals of IWA vote to accept Nemetz proposals," *The Globe and Mail*, Monday 27 June 1966, Business and Finance section, p.24.

<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, in the long run they had little to complain about because, as Nemetz noted, the difference between what the FIR were willing to negotiate and what they actually negotiated was so small that it really made no difference, \$0.16-17 cents versus the \$0.20 cent agreement. Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:014 Side One.

his dear friends, Leon Koerner—a former lumber baron himself commented, “I come from Europe...inflation in a few years will... eat up that \$0.40 so it will look like the best judgment that was ever made.”<sup>134</sup>

### *Swedish system of arbitration*

It was after finishing negotiations between the IWA and the FIR in 1966 that Nemetz suggested to the labour minister Leslie Peterson and to the premier WAC Bennett that he be sent to study the Swedish system of arbitration, which was very successful at the time. In 1967 Nemetz took his son with him, and—by his own account—the Swedes treated them royally. Upon his return Nemetz wrote a report on the Swedish labour laws and practices in hopes that Sweden's system could be implemented directly in Canada.<sup>135</sup>

Nemetz's report proposed that two large confederations of employers and employees be created, through which the economic standards for the upcoming year(s) could be set. The two groups would approximate a general forecast for salary increase, with wages set by each unit. Essentially, Nemetz proposed an umbrella union over all unions and an umbrella union over all employers. These would then be brought together in a super-mediation process or economic council, which would serve as economic adviser to the government. By Nemetz's own admission, this line of thinking was somewhat naïve. In his estimation, neither was the government intelligent enough, nor were the unions internally friendly enough to implement such practices. Furthermore, his

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid., T4340:014 Side One.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., T4340:014 Side One.

report was criticized for attempting to suggest such binding arbitration practices with his critics arguing that free enterprise, not government was the answer.<sup>136</sup>

### *Career as Chief Justice*

Although Nemetz possessed the qualities needed to be a good mediator and arbitrator—such as analytical skills, perceptibility, sense of justice, manoeuvrability and a keen sense of human nature—when he was officially appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1973, Nemetz ceased his involvement in dispute resolution outside of the courtroom. In 1978 Nemetz was appointed by the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau as the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal of British Columbia, the highest court in the province. Chief Nemetz succeeded Chief Justice John Farris.<sup>137</sup> Nemetz's appointment as Chief Justice occurred concurrently with the appointment of Justice William Rogers McIntyre to the Supreme Court of Canada. Justice McIntyre's appointment was celebrated for the fact that a British Columbian replaced an Ontarian. Although Nemetz was in the running for appointment to the Supreme Court, Justice McIntyre was chosen for his expertise in criminal law, an area which at the time was the Supreme Court's greatest weakness. The Prime Minister intuited that although Nemetz was the more liberal judge, and thus more similar to the retired judge, his talents would be of better use in British Columbia.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid., T4340:014 Side two 1.00-10.00. Nathan agreed that compulsory arbitration in the private sector brings the law into disrespect, Australia was a prime example. Nathan was not suggesting compulsory arbitration.

<sup>137</sup> Ferris resigned after Vancouver Police found his name in a notebook picked up during a vice investigation. CP, "BC Judge joins top court, Nemetz goes to Farris Post," *The Globe and Mail*, Friday 22 December 1978, p.9.

<sup>138</sup> Geoffrey Stevens, "Letters to the editor section a significant appointment," *The Globe and Mail*, Thursday 28 December 1978.

Peter Nemetz once described his father “a liberal on social issues, [and] hard-nosed on criminal issues.”<sup>139</sup> As Chief Justice of BC, Nemetz was in a position to assign cases to himself. Generally, he took on high-profile cases as well as cases which were pertinent to public interest, Nemetz understood that the public expected the Chief Justice to hear such cases, whether they appealed to his personal interests or not.<sup>140</sup> He also remained faithful to the idea that sentences should have a deterrent effect on guilty parties. Although this belief was the subject of argument among judges, he remained firm in this conviction.<sup>141</sup> Following this vein, Nemetz strongly believed that women had the “short side of the stick on sexual matters in male courts.”<sup>142</sup> In one particular case of incest, the defendant was given a warning and put on probation, a mere slap on the wrist. In the Chief Justice’s estimation the criminal punishment meted out was so slight that a new precedent was needed. Nemetz increased the sentence to two years less a day and three years of probation.<sup>143</sup> Nemetz also had definite views with regards to impaired driving cases, particularly those cases where parties were found guilty of criminal negligence causing death. Again in cases where the guilty parties were given light sentences, Nemetz often incarcerated guilty parties for longer periods of time rather than

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<sup>139</sup> Don Downey, “Obituary BC Chief Justice ruled on God,” *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday 25 October 1997, p.E14.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:016 Side two 8.08.

<sup>141</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:017 Side two.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:017 Side two.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:017 Side two. *Regina v. Gerald Reymond Moulton* (1979) 3W.C.B. 192 179 CLB 1857, 21 C.L.Q. 275 British Columbia Court of Appeal Nemetz, C.J.BC, Hinkson and Craig, J.J.A. February 12, 1979.

putting them on probation, as some jurists in the lower courts did.<sup>144</sup> (See Appendix L for later cases which are more reflective of his more humanitarian leanings.)

Although Nemetz was a positive influence on the bench, he was never known as a profound legal authority. He was unquestionably a highly respected and well liked jurist, but he did not contribute any radical changes to the legal landscape. Yet, his interests and strengths went beyond the confines of the delivery of justice. As this discussion has already noted, Nemetz was a highly skilled arbitrator and mediator. He was also a strong advocate and competent administrator. When Nemetz was appointed as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court in 1973, one of his first priorities was to reform and modernize the court; he fought to maintain an independent judiciary and prevailed. Part of his reforms also included building a new courthouse in Vancouver.<sup>145</sup>

When he first started promoting the idea that independence of the judiciary was already integrated into Canadian legal thought, he was criticized for applying what was seen as an American separation of power onto the Canadian legal system. Despite the criticism, Nemetz persevered with this notion until he found proof from Canadian and English law that demonstrated the existence of a *de facto* separation of power regarding

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., T4340:017 Side two 8.50. NB: When making decisions, all jurists must take into account precedents and standard sentencing practices for the alleged crimes. Although the sentences for the above crimes may seem low, they were among the tougher sentences for those crimes during that time period.

<sup>145</sup> Justice P. D. Seaton, "The Judicial Administration of the Honourable Nathan T. Nemetz, Chief Justice of British Columbia," *UBC Law Review, Nemetz Edition* 23, no. I (1988-1989), p.1. The old courthouse housed twenty five judges, but was actually built for thirteen. Nemetz's basement office did not make him a huge fan of the building. It took twenty one years of activism in his spare time before the new courthouse, designed by Arthur Erikson, was erected. Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:017 Side One 9.43. The new BC Supreme courthouse became known as "the house that Nathan built." Ibid., T4340:012 side one 2.42. However, like the old saying goes, *plus ça change, plus c'est reste*, because today judges are still grumbling about having to work in such a decrepit building.

the administration of the judiciary.<sup>146</sup> Justice Peter Seaton of the BC Court of Appeal commented that Nemetz was a leading judicial administrator in Canada. Under his direction, British Columbia was the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize the separate administrative role of the Chief Justice and to allocate a separate budget for its administration.<sup>147</sup> Nemetz also worked towards the modernization of the Court of Appeal Act, as well as the Court of Appeal rules and the Court of Appeal criminal rules. Changes included creating standby list for urgent appeals, pre-hearing conferences and an automated case tracking system.<sup>148</sup>

In sum, Nemetz's strong awareness of social inequalities pervaded his career and likely found its roots in his initial agitation against discrimination suffered by Jews during WWII. This awareness gradually evolved into persistent action against all forms of social oppression, especially concerning labour issues. Until the end of his life, Nemetz believed social inequalities could be balanced, and he worked hard throughout his careers towards these ends.<sup>149</sup> Not only did Nathan Nemetz's Jewishness provide the platform for his social consciousness but it also became an aspect of his public persona. And over the course of his legal career he was known and respected as a Jew by general society.

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<sup>146</sup> Interestingly, unlike other jurists, Nathan was not concerned with the proliferation of tribunals and boards that began in the late 1980s, as he was with what he foresaw as their inability to maintain governmental independence, particularly since many boards were government appointed. *Ibid.*, p.T4340:016 Side two 9.33.

<sup>147</sup> Cohen, *Chief Justice Nemetz's Judicial Record: Judicial Decision-Making and Judicial values*, p.99.

<sup>148</sup> *Ex-BC Chief Justice, a Fighter for Human Rights, Dies*, p.B4.

<sup>149</sup> Justice Nemetz noted that, "we live in a century where so many enjoy extensive privilege and yet so many at the same time have no advantages... Whole segments of our population have not yet been touched by the significant aspects of the Canadian dream." *Ibid.*, p.B4.

## Multiculturalism and Jewish Integration

The reason that Nathan Nemetz was able to be both a Jew and a jurist has a great deal to do with the period that he lived in. He began his legal career just as significant changes were taking place within Canadian society. Much has been written about the effects of multiculturalism and this discussion will touch on it only briefly. As previously established, among all of the western allied countries, Canada had the most restrictive immigration policy against Jews during the WWII era.<sup>150</sup> However, by the 1950s, BC and Canada in general experienced an economic boom, which provided the setting for an opening of Canadian society as well as an increased tolerance towards differences. One of the reasons for this change was Canada's need for unskilled labour, which resulted in less restrictive immigration policies.<sup>151</sup> By the 1960s immigration regulations shifted away from judging an applicant's desirability based on religion or ethnicity, and this allowed for the possibility of large-scale immigration from Asia. By 1967, a potential immigrant's desirability was based on skills and attributes. Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government introduced the points system, dramatically changing the face of Canadian immigration.<sup>152</sup> By 1971 the majority of immigrants entering Canada were of non-European origin.<sup>153</sup>

The changes to immigration policy were part of a general socio-cultural shift in Canadian society. In Québec, society was undergoing what is commonly referred to as the Quiet Revolution (1960-1966). In response to this, Trudeau's Liberal government

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<sup>150</sup> Marla Brettschneider, ed, *The Narrow Bridge: Jewish Views on Multiculturalism* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p.74.

<sup>151</sup> Valerie Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1997*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), p.145.

<sup>152</sup> Troper, *New Horizons in a New Land*, p.17.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

implemented the Official Languages Act in 1969, which was designed to promote the equality of the French and English languages within all federal government departments and agencies.<sup>154</sup> The Act did not receive widespread support among other Canadian communities (particularly in Western Canada) of non-French or British heritage, who demanded to know why they too were not given some form of official recognition. In response, the federal government responded by implementing an official policy of multiculturalism in 1971. Multiculturalism was based on the notion that cultural pluralism was an essential element in Canadian society. As such, cultural communities of non-French or British origin were entitled to receive government assistance in order to make a contribution to Canadian society in ways which were derived from their heritage and yet made them distinctively Canadian.<sup>155</sup>

Nemetz began establishing himself as a lawyer and as a judge just as ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism were beginning to sprout and gain political legitimacy among politicians. Furthermore, by the mid- to late-1950s, Jewishness was less a target for discrimination than it had been in earlier eras. Even parties like the Social Credit Party went to great lengths to remove pronounced antisemitic propagandists from within their ranks. Essentially, the post-WWII era was more open than the previous two decades had been and it sowed the seeds for the multicultural era.

Nathan Nemetz integrated into general society by holding positions of stature while concurrently being recognized as a “Jew,” something that had not been possible in British Columbia since the WWI era. Indeed, Nemetz was often credited with being the

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<sup>154</sup> Knowles, *Strangers at Our Gates: Canadian Immigration and Immigration Policy, 1540-1997*, p.178.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.172. Multiculturalism was implemented in a bilingual framework and aside from allowing all Canadians to celebrate their diverse backgrounds it also encouraged them to accept bilingualism. *Ibid.*, p.178.

first Jew to hold many of the positions he did. In other eras, although Jews may have held positions of power or stature within general society, they were not necessarily recognized as being Jews while they held such positions; their Jewish identity was either actively or passively subverted by the Jews themselves, society at large, or both.

### **Nemetz's identity**

When compared to highly involved “community Jews,” like members of his own extended family, Nemetz appears to have had weak Jewish institutional ties. Yet, Nemetz never denied his Jewishness, he was simply not particularly institutionally-oriented and he preferred a secular or an ethnic brand of Jewishness, rather than regular synagogue attendance or the maintenance of other religious proscriptions. Indeed, Nemetz's Jewishness formed an integral part of his personal identity. To general society Nemetz appeared as a Jew, especially when he reached positions of social stature within the general community. Nemetz's admittance into the Vancouver Club illustrates this point.

One of the popular meeting places for members of the BC judiciary, not to mention Vancouver's business and political elite, was the Vancouver Club. Although one of the original founders had been the well-known Jewish Mayor David Oppenheimer, Jews had been banned from becoming members of the club, particularly throughout the 1930s and WWII era. When Nemetz was appointed as the Chief Justice of the BC Supreme Court, it became apparent that he was unable to meet with his subordinates at their preferred meeting place. When someone suggested to Nemetz that he apply for membership, Nemetz replied that he thought Jews were barred from

entering.<sup>156</sup> The response he was given was that actually the Vancouver Club already had several Jewish members, including the Koerners and the Bentleys. When Nemetz applied for his club membership, of the 900 members who voted on whether to accept Nemetz as a member, only two voted against his admission.<sup>157</sup> According to Nemetz's first cousin, Rosalie Segal (née Wosk), when the Vancouver Club began accepting Jewish members, it first accepted concealed Jews, i.e. Jews who did not identify themselves publicly as Jews. Then the Vancouver Club began accepting non-community affiliated Jews. In other words, the Vancouver Club accepted Jews it deemed integrated enough, but not Jews who were overtly affiliated with the Jewish community. To illustrate her point, Segal added that another prominent Jewish Vancouver businessman, Jack Diamond, had also applied for admission at around the same time as Justice Nemetz. However, his membership application was rejected. Segal ascertained that this was because he was too affiliated with the Jewish community and was seen as a "community Jew." It was for this reason that in later years she advised her husband, business mogul Joe Segal, to decline an invitation to join the Vancouver Club. Instead, Joe Segal became a member by default when the Vancouver Club and the University Club amalgamated in 1987.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Maryla Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, October 4, 1988) *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*, eds. Irene Dodek and Ron Stuart, (Vancouver, BC: Jewish Museum and Archives, 19-96:01, Archives Box #15, Reference Box #30, 1996).

<sup>157</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*; "Ex-BC chief justice, a fighter for human rights dies," *The Vancouver Sun*, Wednesday 22 October 1997.

<sup>158</sup> Reginald Roy, *The Vancouver Club First Century, 1889-1989* The Vancouver Club, UBC Vancouver, 1989, 277; Rosalie Segal, Communication Vancouver BC August, 2009. Segal is prominent in the Vancouver Jewish community and she is also a first cousin to Nathan Nemetz.

### *Other integrated Jews*

Nemetz's integration does not represent the experience of the majority of BC's Jews, which in 1961 had reached 7,816. The majority of BC Jewry could have been placed in Barkan's *adaptive* phase and, unlike Nemetz, they were primarily connected to the established Jewish communal institutions.<sup>159</sup> Rather, Nemetz's *integration* into BC public life is a reflection of a smaller trend towards *integration* that was experienced by a group of his professional peers who were primarily concerned with contributing to the betterment of public life. These individuals included Muni Evers, Simma Holt and even Dave Barrett.

Muni Samuel Averbach (d.2002) was the son of a prominent member of Winnipeg's Jewish community, Myer Averbach. He changed his name to Muni Evers in order to bypass a quota restricting the certification of Jewish pharmacists in BC. Evers served in the Royal Canadian Air Force until 1946, and subsequently moved to New Westminister where he established the Medical Arts Pharmacy. He also founded the Canadian Arthritis and Rheumatism Society and served as the president of the BC Pharmaceutical Association. Evers went on to serve as the Police Commissioner of New Westminister, as well as alderman for the city, and between 1969 and 1982 he served as mayor of New Westminister. When Evers first moved to the city, there was a small Jewish community of approximately twenty families, mostly professional Jews. Although the Jewish community of New Westminister was informal, the Evers, as well as their two daughters, were very much part of it and also belonged to Jewish

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<sup>159</sup> Rosenberg, *Jewish Community in Canada, 1931-1961; A Study of the Changes in the Population Characteristics*, Table 1, 1.

organizations in other municipalities. In time New Westminster's Jewish community dwindled, and the Evers family were one of the few families who remained in the city. In 1984 Muni Evers was recognized for his contributions to general society when he was awarded the Order of Canada.<sup>160</sup>

Simma Holt (nee Milner), an Alberta native, came to Vancouver after landing a job with the *Vancouver Sun* in 1946, where she worked for several decades as one of the few women journalists outside the fashion and home-economics sections. Holt's stories focused on a variety of topics including crime and prison reform and were often featured on the front page. In 1974 Holt was elected a Liberal MP for the Vancouver-Kingsway riding, making her the first Jewish woman to serve in Parliament. Simma Holt was married to Leon Holt and the couple never had children. Holt readily associated with the established Jewish community and the couple also maintained a close circle of Jewish friends. Holt was a great admirer of Golda Meir and Menachem Begin.<sup>161</sup>

Dave Barrett grew up in the east-end of Vancouver, where his father ran a produce shop. After receiving his Masters of Arts in Social Work, Barrett worked as a staff training officer at the Haney Correctional Institute. Frustrated with his inability to effect change, Barrett entered politics in 1960 when he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of BC, a position not held by a Jew since the election of Henry Nathan, Jr. in 1870. Barrett was later elected head of the provincial NDP and in 1972 he defeated W.A.C. Bennett of the Social Credit Party, who had governed the province for twenty three years. Dave Barrett became the first Jew in Canada to be elected as a premier.

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<sup>160</sup> Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon* (Victoria, BC: Sono Nis Press, 1978), p.172; Irene Dodek and Isaac Stofman, *Muni Evers Interview Summary Tape 4376-6*, ed. Jewish Museum and Archives, (Vancouver, British Columbia:, Summary Tape 4376-6).

<sup>161</sup> Simma Holt, *Memoirs of a Loose Cannon* (Hamilton, ON: Seraphim Editions, 2008), p.248.

Although his term as Premier only lasted four years, Barrett continued to invest his efforts towards the betterment of both the Jewish and general community. In the subsequent years he continued his work as a social worker while at the same time serving as the director of Jewish Family Service Agency, the executive-director of the Jewish Community Centre, and as a member of the board of directors for Habonim's Camp Miriam. Although Dave Barrett intermarried, he maintained his Jewish identity and raised his children as Jews.<sup>162</sup>

Like Nathan Nemetz, each of the above was secular and liberal-minded. Their careers developed at slightly different phases of the evolution of multiculturalism. While some were more associated with the established Jewish community than others, none appear to have been particularly observant. Regardless of their levels of observance or communal affiliation, each of these individuals broke into a non-Jewish professional environment. It is their open identification as Jews while *integrating* which makes them noteworthy. From a historical perspective, Nemetz was the harbinger of a new era for Canadian Jews with professional aspirations. He heralded the dawn of the multicultural era. Nemetz was the first Jew in post WWII era Vancouver to rise to a position of influence within general society, while at the same time identifying himself as a Jew. He never made any attempt to hide his Jewishness. Nor did he attempt to leave the Jewish fold by intermarrying. He readily identified himself as a liberal secular Jew, with cultural interests rather than religious ones.

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<sup>162</sup> Dave Barrett and William Miller, *Barrett: A Passionate Political Life* (Vancouver/ Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1995).

### *Liberal secular Jews*

The refashioning of identity through integration is an ongoing process and in many ways Nathan Nemetz's Jewish identity represents the shift from a modern religious identity to a modern secular liberal Jewish identity.

The turn of the twentieth century gave rise to the opportunity for several distinctively modern forms of Jewish political and religious expression, including everything from socialist, Bundist, labour Zionist and even Jewish liberalist tendencies, to German Reform, American Conservatism and Orthodoxy.<sup>163</sup> As Jews integrated into modern society, various aspects of these streams came to shape modern Jewish identity.<sup>164</sup> Jews who became liberals were often committed to the cause of making society a better place for minority groups (of which Jews themselves were but one). Indeed, in the 1950s, liberalism was popular among urban residents, labourers, minorities, as well as the highly educated professionals, a class which many Jews like Nathan Nemetz aspired to join and eventually successfully entered. Jewish liberals typically embraced secular education and institutions of higher learning "with an extraordinary passion."<sup>165</sup> It was a time when many believed that "with the spread of education...the world would be liberated from ancient prejudices and intellectual backwardness."<sup>166</sup>

Nathan Nemetz certainly adhered to these principles and spent a lifetime working towards the promotion of liberal education through his work with UBC and the

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<sup>163</sup> Steven M. Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity* (New York and London: Tavistock Publications, 1983), p.153.

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

Vancouver Institute. In fact he firmly believed that all lawyers should be grounded in good liberal education in conjunction with their legal studies.<sup>167</sup> On the bench Nathan Nemetz was known as a liberal par excellence, and in looking back at his contributions it is easy to understand why.<sup>168</sup> As we have seen, Nathan Nemetz's parents also promoted the importance of education and liberal ideals.

Secular liberal education has long been associated with imparting values including cosmopolitanism, cultural relativism, toleration and individualism, which are believed to undermine traditional religious commitment. It perhaps comes as no surprise that ascribing to religious tenets tends to decline amongst those who value secular liberal education.<sup>169</sup> Indeed, many liberal educated Jews of Nathan Nemetz's generation came away understanding that liberalism embodied the very essence of Judaism's core moral values and that the rituals, liturgy and communal organizations were vestiges of the past.<sup>170</sup>

In the 1950s sociologists Sklare and Greenblum conducted a study of young, relatively affluent, suburban Jews from Lakeville, New York, demonstrating the replacement of Judaism with liberal values. The majority of Jews in Lakeville equated being a good Jew with being an ethical and morally good person, qualities which could just as easily define a good liberal. For Jewish liberals coming out of the 1950s, the

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<sup>167</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:012 Side Two 49.

<sup>168</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:016 Side One.

<sup>169</sup> Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, p.79.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28. Although education is certainly a vehicle for acculturation, its influence is most pronounced among first generation participants. Increased secular studies have little effect on the decline or increase of ritual observance among second and third generations. *Ibid.*, p.80.

ritual practices and communal features of Judaism were deemed unessential. Only the part of Judaism which lent legitimization to liberal values was given credence.<sup>171</sup>

Liberal Jews were often very committed to the legal process and the perpetuation of liberal ideals. Voting was one way of demonstrating this. Commitment to liberal principles was also exemplified by high rates of entry into the professions of law, political activism and inter-group relations specialists.<sup>172</sup> These two trends are very much at play in Nathan Nemetz's case, with one slight difference. When he was appointed to the bench in 1963, Nemetz ceded his right to vote because that was the tradition among jurists. Although Nemetz disagreed strongly with this tradition, he never voted as a judge, and only started voting again once he retired.<sup>173</sup>

Nathan Nemetz was not only a liberal, he was a liberal professional. Liberal minded Jews who enter a profession often find that their professions provide surrogate communities.<sup>174</sup> Like ethno-religious communities, professions often require a high degree of specialized training. The training is so extensive that most professionals are lifelong adherents to their profession. This was particularly true during Nathan Nemetz's era. Like ethno-religious communities, professions set their own formal rules and modes of conduct. In order to shield professionals from outside scrutiny; as well as to control recruitment, training, advancement and salaries; professional occupations often aspire towards autonomy. Professions take up significant portions of one's life by way of formal associations, journals, newsletters and other forms of interaction. Members of the same profession may also share common political and economic interests, social values,

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid., p.36.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid., p.37.

<sup>173</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:013 Side One 17.50.

<sup>174</sup> Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, p.84.

commitments and even experiences. “Members of some professions are known for their distinctive cultural tastes, leisure pursuits, political-views, styles of dress, consumer preference, and family life.”<sup>175</sup> Many professions often have a language “replete with arcane terms and jargon”<sup>176</sup> only understood by group members. Because of this and due to the professional group’s aspiration for autonomy, professionals may see themselves as separate from, and perhaps even superior to, society at large. Professionals often feel that they contribute to the public good. The public service orientation of many professions fulfills the need to give meaning and purpose to their lives, a void often filled by religion. Many feel that they are involved in a noble, spiritually uplifting, and ultimately significant professional pursuit, with benefits beyond those of high income and social prestige.<sup>177</sup>

Certain professions allow incumbents to contribute to the public good and in this way professional groupings may supplant communal involvement. This is particularly true for the professions of judges, doctors and professors. Professions qualify their incumbents for middle-class status, a group which tends to over-participate in religious communal institutions and auxiliary associations. Yet, professionals whose careers create surrogate communities do not necessarily fall into this middle-class pattern of religious/ethnic communal participation.<sup>178</sup> According to sociologist Steven Cohen in his study of Jewish professionals in the Boston area in 1965 and 1967—doctors, lawyers and judges are most likely to maintain universalistic or cosmopolitan social attitudes and often see the ethno-religious communal organizations as being dominated by the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid., p.85.

businessman's ethos.<sup>179</sup> That being said, some professional occupations lack the potential to offer a surrogate community, e.g. bureaucrats and the self-employed.<sup>180</sup> Lawyers, particularly those who are self-employed, tend to be overly active in communal affairs, while judges are just the opposite.

Despite the fact that, as described above, being a judge places an incumbent in a very comprehensive and in many ways surrogate community, the career of a judge can be lonely, and the career of a supreme court judge even more so. So it was in Nathan Nemetz's case as well.<sup>181</sup> Although Nemetz knew many people and made an effort to connect with many colleagues in high office, like most jurists during routine working hours, Nemetz was locked away in his office writing decisions. He had little contact with colleague judges. Nemetz explained that as jurists advance through the court system, their interactions with fellow jurists become all the more infrequent because they no longer seek advice from one another about cases. Nemetz noted that when cases are heard before a panel of three judges, as in the case of the appeal's court, there is slightly more camaraderie, an aspect of the appeals court that Nemetz greatly enjoyed. However, like Nemetz, not all jurists spend the majority of their careers in the appeals court.

Throughout his childhood and early adult years Nemetz affiliated nominally with Vancouver Jewish communal institutions. As his career progressed, Nathan Nemetz's affiliation with Jewish communal institutions, (aside from his involvement with B'nai Brith) did not increase along with his prominence in the general community. This was

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid., p.85.

<sup>181</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:015 Side Two 16.20.

contrary to the expectations of some members of his extended family, who were themselves highly involved. The fact that Nathan Nemetz was comfortably part of the middle-class had no bearing upon increasing his communal involvement due to his more prominent identity-defining profession. Being a judge meant that Nathan Nemetz was a member of a surrogate community, one that arguably replaced his need for any form of primary institutional affiliations, religious, ethnic or otherwise. By association, being a judge also outlined Nathan Nemetz's priorities, including his extracurricular involvement with boards and organizations within general society. It would be difficult to say whether high involvement with Jewish communal organizations would have been frowned upon by the judiciary at the time of Nathan Nemetz's appointments. However, this seems unlikely. Rather Nathan Nemetz's low levels of formal Jewish community involvement are better attributed to both his liberal values and profession, which like other professions, intrinsically met the communal needs of its incumbents.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Nemetz was often asked what allowed him to rise to his social position, how did he become the Chief Justice of British Columbia? The reasons for Nemetz's social mobility and integration may be at least partially attributed to the changes in economic conditions, an increasingly open Canadian society, expanding career opportunities, and, perhaps most importantly, Nathan Nemetz's own desire to succeed in law and contribute to the public good.<sup>182</sup> At the same time, Nathan Nemetz's Jewish upbringing certainly

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<sup>182</sup> See S. Steinberg, *The ethnic myth New York* (New York: Atheneum, 1980); T. Kessner, *The golden door: Italian and Jewish immigrant mobility in New York City 1880-1915* (New York: Oxford University press, 1977); S. Gorelick, *City College and the Jewish poor: Education in New York, 1880-1924* (New

played a role in guiding his early interests in labour law and civil liberties. In fact, sociologists and social psychologists maintain that personality and morals are often a product of group experience and identity.<sup>183</sup> However, it would be inaccurate to argue that the reason for Nathan Nemetz's success, or even his early socialist aspirations, was solely due to his Jewish heritage.<sup>184</sup> From his own perspective, Nathan Nemetz credited his mother Becky Nemetz for his success. He inherited her ambition and drive and she inspired him to be fair, open minded and non-judgmental in all that he did. Nathan Nemetz believed that having such an outstanding mother was an asset of a lifetime: "[My mother] was a remarkable person [and very able person]. She was the president of this, that, and everything around...She had come over [to Canada] as a young immigrant years and years ago. She studied English...[until] she had it down pat. She insisted that we speak English in the house. She really helped me with ambition, in particular. So I'm indebted to her, I know that."<sup>185</sup>

When he retired Nathan Nemetz was remembered as a liberal jurist who was "devoted to the public good and public service," who sacrificed and dedicated his life "to the betterment of society through law."<sup>186</sup> He was known for fair settlements, sound mediation skills, and balanced judgements. Although not born in Vancouver, like many Prairie migrants from the pre-WWII era, Nathan Nemetz was determined not only to

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Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University press, 1981); Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, p.77.

<sup>183</sup> Nathan Glazer, "The Alienation of Modern Man," *Commentary* April 1947, no. 3 (1947), p.379; Cohen, *Socio-Cultural Changes in American Jewish Life, as Reflected in Selected Jewish Literature*, p.90.

<sup>184</sup> See Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Cambridge, Mass: M.I.T. Press, 1971), p.363; T. Sowell, *Ethnic America: a history* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Cohen, *American Modernity and Jewish Identity*, p.76.

<sup>185</sup> *Oral history interview with Nathan Nemetz*, p. 15.

<sup>186</sup> Cohen, *Chief Justice Nemetz's Judicial Record: Judicial Decision-Making and Judicial values*, p.97.

succeed but to make social contributions. And contribute he did to the field of law, the advancement of education, and to a plethora of boards and other organizations. As one former colleague noted “Chief Justice Nemetz, throughout the course of his judicial career, has articulated and expressed his ideas on several fundamental characteristics of civil liberty which the law preserves—the privacy of one’s home, religious freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of contract and freedom from physical incarceration.”<sup>187</sup> From scandals, to abuse and drunken driving cases, to labour relations mediations, Nemetz reiterated his liberal values. Although these values are not uniquely Jewish, the fact that Nathan Nemetz was Jewish meant that the liberal ideals which he ascribed to were shaped by his history as Jew growing up in BC.

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<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p.111.

## CHAPTER 7 CONCLUSION

### Original contribution

“How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?” the Israelite captives sang in Babylon.<sup>188</sup> By the waters of many lands, Jews have continued to ask and answer this question in a multiplicity of ways. Yet, in the lands of Christendom and Islam for nearly two thousand years, persecution, suppression and segregation have helped to induce both an imposed as well as a voluntary disengagement from Gentile culture. The Emancipation of European Jewry allowed Jews to be treated first as legal and later as social equals. Despite pushing for equality, this gradual acceptance was intimidating and many Jews experienced emancipation, equality, and integration at the cost of their religious and cultural identity as Jews. It is for this reason that today, among Jewish organizations, integration is often equated with assimilation and interpreted in a negative light.<sup>189</sup> Regardless of personal views, Jewish integration is an important area to study from an academic perspective, because it has played an integral role in determining the course of Jewish history.

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<sup>188</sup> Milton R. Konvitz, *Nine American Jewish Thinkers* (New Brunswick, USA and London UK: Transaction Publishers Rutgers University, 2000), p.1.

<sup>189</sup> Cnaan Liphshiz and Dana Weiler-Polak, “Not All Jews Appreciate Israel’s New Anti-Assimilation Campaign: Jewish Agency Project Urges Israelis To Report Particulars Of Jews ‘In Danger’ Of Marrying Non-Jews.” *Haaretz*, September 4, 2009. <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/not-all-jews-appreciate-israel-s-new-anti-assimilation-campaign-1.8487>; Daniel J. Elazar. *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry*, 2nd ed. Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1995: <http://www.jcpa.org/dje/books/cp2-ch1.htm>; Tzofia Hirschfeld, *The Jewish Decade: More Assimilation, Less Identification*. United Israel Appeal/ Keren Hayesod, January 25, 2010 [http://www.kh-ua.org.il/EN/IsraelOnline/Current-Affairs/Pages/Jewish\\_Decade.aspx](http://www.kh-ua.org.il/EN/IsraelOnline/Current-Affairs/Pages/Jewish_Decade.aspx)

Between 1858 and 1971 general society in British Columbia offered Jews a context of coexistence. The relationship between Jews and mainstream society witnessed periods of mutual interpenetration and influence, as well as periods of friction and suspicion. By way of five microhistories which centred on the lives of Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Hannah Director, Leon Koerner, Harry Adaskin, and Nathan Nemetz, this dissertation explored the boundaries that were maintained and crossed by Jews whose careers and social contributions placed them at the vanguard of Jewish integration in BC and led them outside the confines of the established Jewish community.

Ultimately, each of the microhistories was premised upon the notion that an individual's capacity to contribute to the betterment of society-at-large facilitates individual integration at a variety of levels. By all accounts, the individuals in the microhistories were integrated into general society. Each one directly impacted mainstream society and endeavoured to transform the world into a better place. The primary contribution of this study to the knowledge of Jewish Canadian history has been its analysis of Jewish integration to British Columbian society between 1858 and 1971 as expressed through the microhistories of five conjunctural agents.

At the beginning of this study, three main questions were asked: What allowed for Jewish integration to take place in general society? What was it about the Jewishness of each of the individuals, which allowed for integration to take place? And finally, what can be stated about the nature of Jewish integration in British Columbia during this period? In answering these questions, this dissertation has helped to reveal the more complex nature of Jewish history in Canada and thus contributed to the diversification of Canadian Jewish history.

### **Significance of research**

Until now, the vast majority of Canadian Jewish scholarship has focused on centres of large Jewish demographics such as those in Québec, Ontario and the Prairies.<sup>190</sup> Limited study and scholarship exists on the history of Jews in British Columbia, or in other parts of the country where the Jewish demographics have been lower than in the main centres. Indeed, in the writing of this work, comments were often made about the small and relatively non-influential nature of BC Jewish history vis-à-vis that of the rest of Canada. If population figures alone determined topics of historical study, one could easily ask why study Canadian Jewry at all, since they have never accounted for much more than 1.5 percent of the country's total population. For that matter, why study Canadian history? Luckily, historical topics are not determined by numbers alone. By focusing on the historical nature of Jewish integration in BC, this study has both linked BC Jewish history to that of the rest of Canadian Jews as well as emphasized its distinct historical evolution.

This study also expands the focus of Canadian Jewish history outside its traditional focus on secular or religious communal institutions. Although a few studies have looked at the history of Jews outside these domains, including histories of Jewish communists in Canada and Jewish internees from the WWII era, most have not. The historical study of groupings of Jews based on categories outside of established Jewish communities, e.g. Jewish politicians, musicians, entrepreneurs, and so on, has generally been ignored. By examining Jewish integration in British Columbia, this study has

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<sup>190</sup> Works by scholars such as Irving Abella, Pierre Anctil, David Rome, Louis Rosenberg, Benjamin G. Sack, and Morton Weinfeld to name a few.

demonstrated that part of the distinctiveness of Canadian Jewish history lies within its intricacies. In a sense, this research is significant because it has emphasized the need to include the histories of Canadian Jewry whose lives were deeply affected by the ebb and flow of general society.

In a study published by the United Israel Appeal of Canada in 2009, it is projected that by 2011 BC's Jewish population will reach around 29,000. From among these, more than forty six percent of Jews in couples are projected to be living in intermarried households, nearly twenty percent more than the projected Jewish national average for 2011. This trend is projected to increase by about six percent for 2021.<sup>191</sup> This data could be interpreted to suggest that among those not born into observant families, religious Judaism will continue to see a marked decline among BC Jewry. It is possible that these Jews will look towards Jewish secular culture rather than religion to explain their identities. None of the contributions of Cecelia Davies Sylvester or Leon Koerner, nor any of the others examined in this work, have changed the world in the way that Jewish spirituality has as a whole. Nevertheless, the examination of the historical occurrence of integration of these Jews may enable a new generation of integrated Jews to further understand their own Jewish identities.

### **BC's Historical Development**

This study has suggested British Columbia's early historical development was atypical in comparison to other provinces. Part of BC's distinctive historical development lay in the region's remoteness. Its isolation ensured that European

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<sup>191</sup> UIAC's National Task Force on Jewish Demographics. *Vancouver Jewish Demographics Presentation* (Vancouver, BC: November 30, 2009), p.5, 18.

settlement occurred in BC some one hundred years after it transpired everywhere else on the continent. Culturally and politically monopolized by the British, the region was a colonial frontier. The early migrants included Brits, Continental Europeans, and Americans, as well as Jews of various origins, the majority of whom came to BC via California.

The region's plurality gave way to a fluid and flexible social setting and allowed for liberal advancements—especially vis-à-vis religious affiliation—during periods when similar endeavours were less plausible in the eastern part of the country. This was particularly true for the colonial era, and to a lesser degree, during the periods up to and including WWI. As technological and communicative advances were made, British Columbia became more closely tied with the experiences of Canada as a whole. Although BC's atypical characteristics provided the foundation for its later development, its "uniqueness" declined and the experiences of integrated Jews in BC became more aligned with the historical trajectories of Canada as a whole. This process was exemplified by developments such as women's enfranchisement, immigration policies, antisemitism, professionalization of classical music, and multiculturalism. This research has shown that the course of Jewish history in British Columbia was determined by both conditions unique to British Columbia as well as those that influenced all of Canada.

### **Summary and analysis of findings**

This study has viewed integration as a multistage and multidimensional set of overlapping processes that influence individual identities. These processes can lead to various phases in Barkan's model, including *contact*, *acculturation*, *adaptation*, *accommodation*, *integration*, and *assimilation*. Each phase does not necessarily lead to

the next phase and each process is contingent upon individual and societal participation. Few, if any, of the conjunctural agents in this discussion exemplified these phases exactly. Nor did they necessarily remain at the same stage of integration for their entire lives. Rather their lives reflected a combination of these different phases.

For the period of their lives under discussion, Davies Sylvester and Director exhibited various aspects from the phases of *adaptation* and *integration*; Koerner and Adaskin most strongly demonstrated features of *assimilation*, while Nemetz clearly demonstrated the *integration* phase.

### ***Cecelia Davies Sylvester***

During the late Colonial and early Confederation era, when Cecelia Davies Sylvester was most actively involved in civic engagement, one of the main factors that affected the overall potential for Jewish integration was British Columbia's advanced stage of state development. Due to the existence of a more liberal legal system, Jews in Victoria were able to integrate through political civic engagement at a much faster rate than they had elsewhere in the British colonies of North America. The principles of liberalism and equality through the implementation of a laissez-faire economy inspired a legal system based on codified textual law and factual evidence. Such a system guaranteed the economic and political dominion of the colonial authorities through equality before the law, allowing people who had previously been considered alien in British society to integrate. When conflicts did arise, such as the one over the election of Selim Franklin to the Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island in 1860, they were swiftly resolved through liberal legal amendments. This sort of decision-making had

taken previous colonies in Eastern Canada decades to resolve and in England the integration of Jews into the legislature had taken centuries.

Professionally, Victoria's first Jews supplied the region with much needed goods and services. However, it was their familiarity with British as well as American norms and their understanding of the nature of a liberal economy that allowed them to prosper from, and to contribute to, the development of general society as well as integrate into Victoria's overarching social structure. Successful integration of Jews in Victoria was linked to previous familiarity with British social norms. Since they held well-defined expectations of society and conversely understood its expectations of them, they integrated and likely achieved a variety of Barkan's phases.

The professional homogeneity of Victoria's initial merchant Jewish settlers was accompanied by a religious homogeneity. They were all steeped in a Jewish culture that was heavily influenced by the *minhag American*, and sought to harmonize Jewish life with American life. In other words, for the most part early Jewish settlers were flexibly observant Jews, characterized by aspirations towards tradition, while dealing with the necessities of living in a colonial frontier society. This characteristic of the Jewish community also lent itself well to the potential of crossing Jewish and non-Jewish boundaries.

An era of volunteerism and charity characterised nineteenth-century Britain and America. Jews emulated such methods for conducting charity and the concept of *tsedaka* became strongly associated with the idea of doing good deeds. In some communities civic engagement replaced traditional Jewish learning altogether. Voluntary associations in Victoria, as elsewhere, enabled the unification of intersecting communal values in general society. Inspired by notions of *tsedaka* and *gmilot-khesedim* by virtue of their

association of Jewish values with notions of Victorian charity and American volunteerism, Jews readily joined the charitable voluntary organizations as well as other forms of civic engagement such as politics. This held true for both men and women. Voluntary organizations were particularly popular among women, who were encouraged to form and join charitable societies in their capacity as general society's moral guardians.

Cecelia Davies Sylvester exhibited aspects of Barkan's *adaptation* and *integration* phases. As an *adapted* Jew, her primary identity was Jewish, as indicated by her endogamous marriage to Frank Sylvester, her affiliation with Victoria's burgeoning Jewish community, and her strong involvement in the establishment of Jewish institutions. Moreover, she engaged in a high degree of "intercultural borrowing." Her mother tongue was that of dominant society (i.e. English) and the Jewish institutions she was involved in were strongly aligned with counterparts in general society. Unlike Barkan's *adaptation* phase, however, her social status was not determined by her ethnic community. Instead, Davies Sylvester's social status was attained mainly by her accomplishments as a "society lady" involved in all kinds of benevolent institutions and associations and anything to do with improving the quality of life of residents in Victoria. The degree to which she participated in "external organizations" and associated with members of the larger society imbued her with at least some attributes of Barkan's *integration* phase. In comparison to the other microhistories, the nature of Davies Sylvester's integration might have been more a product of historical circumstances (e.g. her parents decision to settle in a colonial frontier and away from a main Jewish centre; the levels of integration achieved by male members of her family and by other

influential members of the community) rather than of her own personal aspirations to meld Jewish and general society together.

### *Hannah Director*

Hannah Director was elected chairman of the local school board in Prince George at the end of the WWI era, despite the fact that her husband was of German origin. Director's election to office was a significant achievement in light of the fact that she was the first woman elected to the Prince George school board, as well as the first Jewish woman to be elected to public office in Canada. Director's position as school board chair was a direct result of the infrastructure already in place regarding the position of women and Jews within British Columbian society.

Owing to the influx of immigrants during the gold rush era, the population of the colonies, and later province of BC, was multi-denominational. The fact that a majority of single young men settled in the region in pursuit of adventure and economic gain promoted a culture oriented towards leisure and materialism. Both of these factors contributed to the deterioration of the religious influence any one church held over the region. The result was that unlike Ontario and Québec, BC entered Confederation free of religious involvement in government, and a new social discourse in British Columbia emerged—one where it was not only possible for non-Protestants to be elected to public office, but where eventually women were included as well. In conjunction with their entry into the public sphere through voluntary organizations in the mid- to late-nineteenth century, middle-class women began to fight for the right to vote. One of the first venues in which women were eligible to run for office and vote was the local school board.

Director's election to public office was also dependent upon her local riding of Prince George. Although nation-wide antagonistic feelings towards Germans would have almost certainly been used to target Director's husband who was born in Prussia, Prince George society was organized primarily on the basis of individualistic aspirations and personal charisma, rather than national sentiments. As noted earlier, the school boards reflected the social dynamics of their locales. The fact that Director was elected is indicative of the overall social harmony that existed within the general society of northern BC during the WWI era.

Like Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Hannah Director exhibited characteristics of Barkan's *adaptation* and *integration* phases. As an adult, her primary language was English, her primary identity was Jewish, and she combined her dedication to Jewish practices, organizations, and institutions with a high degree of participation in external organizations and association with members of general society. However, unlike Davies Sylvester, the balance between her more Jewish-oriented *adaptation* characteristics and her more general-society-oriented *integration* characteristics fluctuated frequently, depending on her location and prevalent social conditions. In Northern BC, Director certainly made a concerted effort to maintain a close social circle of Jewish friends and organize efforts for communal observance of Jewish holidays. At the same, various factors—including the remoteness of the region, the sparseness of the local Jewish community (and the predominance of informal Jewish networks), combined with discriminatory sentiment against Germans, and attractive economic and social opportunities in general social—regularly prompted her to look outside her strongest in-group affiliation for work, entertainment and other interests. In Vancouver, where the Jewish community was more established, Director was able to maintain informal as well

as formal social networks, and participate in Jewish institutions. However, she (and her family) continued an active association with the general community, indicating her readiness to contribute to the general good. Her level of involvement in general society was now more equally balanced by her level of involvement in Jewish life.

### ***Leon Koerner***

Canada's admission of Leon Koerner as a refugee in 1939 was an anomaly. It was due to the expectation that Koerner's capital, forestry experience, and expected investment in Canada's forest industry would stimulate the depressed lumber industry, and it had little to do with his status as a Jewish refugee. Beginning in the interwar period, Canada's social environment became increasingly hostile towards Jews, Canadian and foreign born alike. Prior to fleeing Europe, Koerner had lived the life of a cosmopolitan Jewish businessman with Zionist leanings. While in Czechoslovakia, Koerner's Jewish identity was very much a reflection of the cultural influences experienced by Czech Jewry as a whole. Koerner had successfully integrated into Czech society while maintaining affiliations with Jewish communal institutions and marrying a Jewish actress who had undergone a formal conversion to Lutheranism.

When Koerner came to Canada, all of his Jewish affiliations were subverted, because of his experiences as a refugee and because Canadian antisemitism was at its highest. It was made clear to all concerned that Jews were not welcome in Canada. The subversion of his Jewish identity from the public arena undoubtedly aided Koerner's *assimilation* into BC general society. He attempted to shed his ethno-religious identity and become indistinguishable from the mainstream. This does not mean he forgot who he was, but he did negate his identification with his ancestral group. His *assimilation*

was also facilitated by his business acumen as well as his generosity. Although Koerner did not publicly display his Jewish identity, his sense of social obligation reflected his Jewish background.

### ***Harry Adaskin***

Adaskin was raised in the institutionally complete Jewish neighbourhood of the Ward at the turn of the century in Toronto. His early childhood experiences with what he saw as traditional Judaism had a polarizing and inimical effect on his attitude towards Judaism, resulting in his rejection of traditional Orthodox Judaism. Several factors may have contributed to Adaskin's distance from his ancestral faith, including the overall experience of Toronto's Jewish community with the deterioration of kosher observance, the increased prevalence of *shabbos* violators, attendance in the public school system whose main agenda was to Canadianize its pupils, and Anglo-nativism which permeated Toronto.

Adaskin's rejection of Judaism and his entrance into the music profession paved the way for his *assimilation* into mainstream society. By entering the music profession over the course of the WWI and interwar eras, a time when music was changing its status from that of an amateur trade into a profession, Adaskin had several advantages that fellow Canadian Jews in other professions did not have. Socially the music profession was generally unencumbered by the opinions of general society towards Jews, perhaps owing to its position as a trade and its emphasis on musical interest rather than religious or cultural background for professional entry. Employment for musicians was also steady in an era when employment for other professions was not. Both government and private funds in Canada were concerned with promoting classical music

across the country. Thus, during the turbulent Depression years Adaskin was still able to make a good living.

In essence, Adaskin was easily accepted as a musician and his talents earned his reputation. He was thus able to transition from the status of a working-class Jew into that of a middle-class musician. Adaskin's primary identity became that of musician-artist, while at the same time he negated the identity of the religious community in which he had been raised. In short, Adaskin entered the arena of cultural production and gave up his Jewish religious identity. It was from among his contemporary musicians that Adaskin chose his spouse, his friends, and from where he drew his spiritual inspirations. It was his music that inspired his outlook on life. By becoming a musician, Adaskin absorbed the cultural norms of his profession into his identity. This cultural knowledge later served as Adaskin's lever for his own social mobility and ultimately was the key to his *assimilation* into general society.

### ***Nathan Nemetz***

Nathan Nemetz began his legal career just as significant changes were taking place within Canadian society. BC and Canada in general, experienced an economic boom during the post WWII years of the 1950s. The economic prosperity gave rise to an opening of Canadian society as well as an increased tolerance towards differences. Nemetz began establishing himself as a lawyer and as a judge just as the seeds for ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism were beginning to sprout and gain legitimacy amongst politicians and elite sectors of Canadian society. Furthermore, by the mid to late 1950s, in the wave of post-WWII human rights awareness, Jewishness became less of a target for discrimination than it had been in earlier eras. Nathan Nemetz *integrated* into general

society by holding positions of stature while concurrently being recognized as a “Jew,” something that had not been possible in British Columbia since the WWI era. Nemetz preferred a secular brand of Jewishness rather than weekly synagogue attendance or the maintenance of other religious proscriptions. Nevertheless, his Jewishness formed an integral part of his personal identity. Therefore, to general society Nemetz was seen as a Jew, especially when he reached positions of social stature within the general community. Nemetz’s admittance into the Vancouver Club illustrates this point. Indeed, from among all the individual agents, Nemetz’s history is the closest to the Barkan’s definition of *integration*.

Nathan Nemetz’s Jewish upbringing certainly played a role in guiding his early interests in labour law and civil liberties. One of the ways that Nathan Nemetz’s Jewishness influenced his identity was through his concern for humanitarian causes, which likely stemmed from an initial concern over the survival of the Jewish people, including fighting antisemitism and supporting the Zionist cause as a way of ending discrimination against Jews. His interests soon extended to include humanitarian and civil liberty causes. In many ways, Nemetz’s Jewish identity represents the shift from a modern religious identity to a modern secular liberal Jewish identity. As his career progressed, Nemetz’s affiliation with Jewish communal institutions (aside from his involvement with B’nai Brith) did not increase along with his prominence in the general community, just the opposite in fact. Nemetz’s low levels of formal Jewish community involvement can be attributed to both his liberal values and profession, which like other professions, intrinsically met the communal needs of its incumbents.

### **The nature of Jewish integration in BC**

This study has explored some of the modes and processes involved in Jewish integration in BC, demonstrating just how variable Jewish integration has been in the province. This variability has been reflected in each microhistory. One difference between the chapters relates to how representative the conjunctural agents' experiences of integration were in comparison to their contemporaries. In this regard, the microhistory of Cecelia Davies Sylvester stands out, because, more than the other conjunctural agents, she was part of a relatively larger trend among her contemporary co-religionists to remain involved in the Jewish community while at the same time contributing to the greater good of BC society. The other historical figures were not as directly reflective of the experiences of contemporary Jews throughout the province. Hannah Director's proclivities towards *adaptation* and *integration* were fairly typical of other Jews in Northern BC, but her level of *integration* was not particularly representative of Jews in Vancouver or throughout the province; as a Jewish refugee living in BC, Leon Koerner's interest in *assimilation* was not shared by most of the province's Jews; Harry Adaskin's career as a musician placed him in a unique position to *assimilate* with relative ease, at a time when most Canadian Jews of his generation did not aspire to do so; Nathan Nemetz's level of *integration* was achieved by other BC Jews, but he too was anomalous in that he was the first from his generation to achieve this level.

All of the individual agents were spatially mobile, indicating that they were people whose kinship ties were not bound to the communities of their birth. Although this characteristic may be attributed to the nature of Jews in Diaspora communities, the spatial mobility gave all of the conjunctural agents an economic advantage by enabling them to move towards economic opportunity. In fact, sociological research indicates that

spatial mobility facilitates social mobility.<sup>192</sup> All of the conjunctural agents (or their families) also settled in BC for the primary reason of economic gain.

Another commonality among the microhistories has to do with integration in later generations of descendants. The question of generational differences is an important issue within the sociological study of assimilation. In the past, sociologists were divided into two camps. There were those who argued that assimilation occurred progressively across generations.<sup>193</sup> Others claimed that a pattern of ethnic revival exists amongst the descendants in the third generation.<sup>194</sup> They argued that once the third generation became financially and socially secure, they became interested in the ethnic heritage neglected by their parents and grandparents. What we have seen amongst the descendants of the historical figures is that, of those who remained in British Columbia and/or Canada, none remained Jewish. In the cases of Koerner and Nemetz, there were no direct descendants by the third generation. In Koerner's case, although the majority of his nieces and nephews intermarried and raised their children as non-Jews, one great-great-niece in California exhibited the "Law of Return of the third generation" phenomenon and re-entered the Jewish community. In the case of Nemetz, although his son never had any children of his own, the Nemetz family, including many of Nathan's

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<sup>192</sup> Bernard Barber, *1957 Social Stratification* (New York: Harcourt, Brace), pp.418-21; Stanley Lieberson, "The impact of residential segregation on ethnic assimilation," *Social Forces* 40, (1961), pp.52-7; Seymour M. Lipset, and Reinhard Bendix *Social Mobility in Industrial Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp.157-64; Robert P. Stuckert, "Occupational mobility and family relation- ships," *Social Forces* 41, (1963), pp.301-7.

<sup>193</sup> Robert Ezra Park, *Race and culture* (Glencoe, Ill, Free Press, 1950), p.403; Bruce P. Dohrenwend, and Robert J. Smith, "Toward a theory of acculturation," *South-western Journal of Anthropology* 18 (1962), p.30-9; Milton Myron Gordon, *Assimilation in American life: the role of race, religion, and national origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.276; Ronald Taft, "A psychological model for the study of social assimilation," *Human Relations* 10, (1957), pp.141-56.

<sup>194</sup> Andrew Greeley, "Why Can't They be Like Us?" (1971); Marcus L. Hansen, "The Problem of the Third-Generation Immigrant," (1937); Stanford M. Lyman and William A. Douglass, "Ethnicity: strategies of collective and individual impression management," *Social Research* 40 (1973), pp.344-65.

nieces and nephews remain prominent in Vancouver's Jewish community. Amongst all the historical figures' descendants who migrated to the US, by the third and fourth generations some intermarried, some never married, and some remained Jewish. In looking at the descendants, we see that both sociological camps are correct. In some cases, integration is progressive, in others it is not.

The microhistories are intended to create a greater understanding of the history of Jewish integration in BC. They also show that there is no clear-cut path to creating the conditions for integration. Nevertheless, several conclusions may be drawn regarding the nature of Jewish integration in British Columbia during this 113 year period.

Positive correlations may be drawn between integration and higher socioeconomic status, education and familiarity with the mores and values of general society, as well as with the openness of general society. Higher socioeconomic status positively affected the historical possibility of Jewish integration in BC. Many studies corroborate the idea that members of various ethnic groups are less likely to integrate into general society when they are also characterized by a lower social status.<sup>195</sup> Regardless of what social status they were born into, the individual agents used in this study all achieved upward mobility at the time of their social contributions.

Education and/or acculturation with the mores and values of general society played a large role in the possibility for integration into mainstream society. Familiarity

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<sup>195</sup> W. Lloyd Warner and Leo Srole, *The social systems of American ethnic groups* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1945), p.318; Henry Pratt Fairchild, *Greek Immigration to the United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911); Carl Wittke, *The Irish in America* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956); Irvin L. Child, *Italian or American: The Second Generation in Conflict* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); Albert I. Gordon, "Jews in Transition," (1949), Francis A. J. Lanni, "Residential and occupational mobility as indices of the acculturation of an ethnic group," *Social Forces* 36 (1957), pp.65-72; Jerome K. Myers, "Assimilation to the ecological and social systems of a community," *American Sociological Review* 15 (1950), pp.367-72.

with Canadian or British culture positively affected the ability of each individual to integrate. Davies Sylvester had exposure to British and American education, Director was schooled in Montréal's Protestant public schools, Koerner attended the London School of Economics, Adaskin attended public and music school in Toronto, and the Nemetz attended public school and UBC in Vancouver. All were exposed to a Canadian and/or British education and thus were equipped to deal with social expectations.

Openness of general society also affected the possibility of integration. When there were periods of open social relations (e.g. the pre-WWI and early multicultural eras), more Jews integrated and maintained public displays of Jewish identity, including religious aspects, as can be seen with the histories of Davies Sylvester, Director and, to an extent, Nemetz. During closed periods of social relations (e.g. the interwar and WWII eras), fewer Jews integrated and did so at the cost of public Jewish identification as was the case with Koerner and Adaskin.

### **Areas of difficulty**

#### ***Sources***

One area of difficulty encountered when writing this thesis was that the quality of archival material related to each of the historical figures was not equal. Sources pertaining to Cecelia Davies Sylvester included a great deal of family ephemera and newspaper clippings describing her public contributions, but they lacked substantive material describing her home life and personal views. Archival sources on Hannah Director were limited in a similar way. Leon Koerner's files were fairly rich in comparison to the other two, but there were unfortunately no sources directly describing his views on Jewishness. Sources related to Harry Adaskin focused almost entirely on

his life before arriving in BC, or after the period covered by this study. Little information could be garnered concerning his early years at UBC or other factors that would have benefited this research (e.g. the experiences of other Jewish musicians in BC, UBC's hiring policies towards Jewish professors, etc.). The material on Nathan Nemetz was perhaps the most balanced in terms of its description of his involvement in general society and Jewish life.

### ***Sociological concepts***

Another area of difficulty relates to the use of sociological concepts for the purposes of understanding historical events. Within the field of sociology, integration and associated notions are disciplinary categorizations used for predicting social behavioural patterns of living groups and communities. As such, they rely on access to live subjects and attain much of their data through interviews. Historical studies, including this one, are not typically afforded access to live subjects and therefore must rely on extant sources that may or may not be able to directly answer the questions posed by sociologists. Therefore, using integration as a medium through which to explore history can at times be confusing. When integration becomes a tool for analyzing and understanding the past, it does not necessarily conform easily to sociological categorizations.<sup>196</sup>

### ***Microhistory and Biography***

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the choice to use microhistories based on the lives and experiences of five individuals was due to the paucity and type of

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<sup>196</sup> Statistics and other sources which could have provided insights into this historical phenomenon were also sparse.

available sources regarding Jews in BC. Consequently, the microhistories may prove to be problematic for some scholars who interpret the use of personal microhistories as being too close to the biography genre. However, microhistories are not biographies,<sup>197</sup> and in this study they should be understood as vehicles for understanding the historical nature of integration in BC.

Similarities do exist between the two genres. For instance, both are based on archival research<sup>198</sup> and both favour the narrative mode.<sup>199</sup> However, biographies and microhistories differ on many levels. Biographies are rooted in the “Romantic view of artist as Hero and in the ‘Great Man’ theory of history.”<sup>200</sup> As a result, academic historians often deem biography to be an inferior type of history.<sup>201</sup> Furthermore, biographies are seen to be part of a “belles-lettres” tradition, often written by non-academic historians and thus deemed to be lacking a foundation in some form of social-scientific methodology or rigorous analysis.<sup>202</sup>

Microhistories investigate particular lives, some famous and some ordinary, in order to reveal the fundamental experiences and mentalities of people and the societies in which they lived.<sup>203</sup> Microhistories tend to explore key events, and piece together the story of their subjects through elusive records.<sup>204</sup> Biographies explore the whole life story of an individual and generally investigate the lives of important people, rather than

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<sup>197</sup> Thomas F. Mayer and D.R. Woolf, eds., *The Rhetorics of Life-Writing in Early Modern Europe: Forms of Biography from Cassandra Fedele to Louis XIV.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), pp. 2-3.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 581, see Clifford Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture,” pp. 3-30.

<sup>199</sup> Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” p.132.

<sup>200</sup> Robert Skidelsky, “Only Connect: Biography and Truth,” in Eric Hoberger and John Charmley, eds., *The Troubled Face of Biography* (London: The Macmillan, 1988), pp. 1-16.

<sup>201</sup> Lois W. Banner “Biography as History,” *American Historical Review* May 11, 2009, p. 580.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, p.580.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5, 3.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.133-141.

the lives of ordinary.<sup>205</sup> The “life story” in a microhistory is always a means to understanding culture, whereas biographies tend to recapitulate an entire life’s story and focus on the individual rather than on the surrounding culture. At its heart, each microhistory attempts to answer an historical question,<sup>206</sup> and, through the lives of individuals, microhistories endeavour to provide a fuller understanding “of the social and cultural landscape.”<sup>207</sup> Biographies generally do not do this, and when they do, they are usually re-categorized as microhistories.<sup>208</sup>

### **Areas of further scholarship**

With regards to Jewish history in BC society the areas of additional study are plentiful. Much could be written on the Jewish WWII refugees in BC, particularly professional Jews, such as the Koerners. It would be interesting to find out about the historical nature of the integration of their counterparts in the US, particularly along the West Coast. The historical reasons for Jewish entry into specific professions such as medicine, music, law and forestry are also worth exploring, as are Jewish accomplishments in the areas of politics and business moguls in BC, for example, as represented by the contributions of individuals such as Joe Segal and Simma Holt. Self-taught historians, such as David Rome, Harry Gutkin, Abe Arnold, and Cyril Leonoff also stand out as potentially interesting subjects for future microhistorical studies. Sephardic Jewish history in the province remains largely unexplored and would be a worthy topic of investigation.

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid., pp.131-2.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid., pp.133-141.

<sup>207</sup> Ronald Hoffman, “Introduction,” in *Through a Glass Darkly*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>208</sup> Lepore, “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” p.132.

Cross-cultural comparisons to other non-Christian ethnic communities in BC are also a possibility for further study. However, one should keep in mind that, in the years before the dawn of the era of multiculturalism, there were few, if any, significant minority groups of people who shared a similar social status to BC's Jews. Keeping this in mind, there may perhaps be interesting comparisons to be made between insular, Yiddish-speaking members of Vancouver's acculturated Jewish community and the city's Chinese population during the early twentieth century. Cross-provincial comparison of the historical Jewish contributions and integration to general society in different regions/provinces of Canada could also provide a useful understanding of the development of Jewish integration in Canada as a whole.

An analysis of Jewish integration in British Columbia in comparison to Jewish integration in other immigrant receiving countries, such as Brazil, Argentina, South Africa, or Australia could also prove worthwhile in terms of gaining further insight into the historical occurrence of Jewish integration. In Brazil for example, policies pertaining to religious freedom, potential for economic development and social mobility, as well as cultural tolerance have not only allowed for the establishment of Jewish communities but have also paved the way for the integration of the majority Brazil's Jews into the country's middle-class sector.<sup>209</sup> Today, Jewish participation and visibility within general society is much higher than the 0.01 percent of Jews in Brazil's total population.<sup>210</sup> Although it would be interesting to compare BC Jewish integration

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<sup>209</sup> Roney Cytrynowicz, "Brazil." *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik. 2nd ed. Vol. 4. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007. p.150. *Gale Virtual Reference Library*. Web. 9 Mar. 2011.

<http://go.galegroup.com.proxy.bib.uottawa.ca/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CCX2587503481&v=2.1&u=otta77973&it=r&p=GVRL&sw=w>

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.142-143

history to that in Brazil or Australia etc., as of yet there are no extensive studies which specifically analyze the historical occurrence of Jewish integration in these countries. Such a study would require sound data and most likely available sources would be located in the archives of those countries.

### **Concluding remarks**

The chronology of this thesis spans from the earliest known Jewish presence in British Columbia until the dawn of Canadian multiculturalism, representing more than a century of fluctuating openness by general society towards its Jewish inhabitants. Each of the Jews in this study has been defined by Judaism, but the extent to which they allowed Judaism and their Jewishness to define them throughout their lives varied. These BC Jews may not have consciously considered themselves as captives sitting by the waters of Babylon, but each, in their own way, remembered Jerusalem. Indeed their identities have been as diverse as they have been unpredictable.

In comparison to Jewish history elsewhere in Canada, particularly Eastern Canada, Jewish history in British Columbia was very different during the province's formative decades. After WWI the province's history became more closely associated with that of the rest of Canada. Consequently, the Canadian experience amongst individual Jews became a significant factor in understanding Jewish integration in BC's general society. The social transformations taking place within the wider cultural context of BC and Canadian society are directly reflected amongst Jews who have crossed the boundaries into general society.

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The individual Jews in this study exhibited a multiplicity of conditions, self-perceptions and cultures. This study was premised on the assumption that individuals are expressions and interpreters of society. By exploring the historical possibility of Jewish integration in BC through the mapping out of the histories and identities of five Jewish individuals, this thesis has shown that the actions of general society are reflected in, and affected by, individual action, and that there is a mutually influential and dynamic relationship between society and individuals in history.

In closing, it is appropriate to mention a few words about the first historians of Jewish BC history, David Rome and Cyril Leonoff. Unlike the individuals discussed in this thesis, both these historians were integrated Jews whose main contributions were directed towards the Jewish community. Although they were raised in the Orthodox tradition, both Rome and Leonoff showed little interest in observing traditional religious tenets as adults. Rome was lured away from BC during the 1930s by the promise of community involvement in the more thoroughly Jewish milieu of Montréal. Leonoff has made his career and contributions in BC for more than half a century.<sup>211</sup> Both men invested in their Jewishness through the preservation of Canadian Jewish history for future generations. Rome initiated the compilation of Jewish history in BC, while Leonoff has strengthened it and ensured its continuation. This thesis has been a beneficiary of the pioneering efforts of these two historians.

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<sup>211</sup> Myer Freedman. Interview with David Rome. Tape # 19-75:02 Vancouver, BC: JHSBC Oral History Project, February 7, 1975; Dodek, Irene. Interview with Cyril Leonoff. Tape # 20-01: 58, Vancouver, BC: JHSBC Oral History Project, March 12, 2001; Anctil, Pierre. Personal files: Letter from David Rome to H.M. Cassierman. The Hub, Ltd. 45 East Hastings St. Vancouver, BC: November 17, 1934; Letter from David Rome to Y.Y. Segal Vancouver, BC: April 23, 1935; Notes from H. M. Caiserman Personalia Suite du Congrès juif canadien, Montréal, Québec.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A Frank Sylvester

Previous sources, such as those by Joan Modrall, Cyril Leonoff, and David Rome, relating to Frank Sylvester's origins, date of birth and other particulars, relied mostly on his journal, newspaper clippings and oral history. This thesis takes those sources into account. However, access to passenger lists and census data from England and the USA via websites pertaining to genealogy, such as JewishGen.org, have allowed for the addition of more details, as well as the correction and clarification of certain dates, than was previously possible. The information used here is a combination of all currently available sources. For this reason, the reader may observe differences in the account provided here in comparison to earlier accounts by Joan Modrall and subsequently Cyril Leonoff. Interestingly, Modrall overlooks the 1891 Census data which she includes in her own manuscript. The data from this census clearly states that Sylvester was born in England.

Born Frank Silberstein in Liverpool, England in 1842,<sup>1</sup> to Eula (née Pulvermacher, also known as Julia,<sup>2</sup> Hebrew name Sarah, b.1807)<sup>3</sup> and Heyman<sup>4</sup> (also known as Henry and/or Heinrich, as he spelled it,<sup>5</sup> b.1805,<sup>6</sup> d.1883)<sup>7</sup> of Prussia. The

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<sup>1</sup> British Vital Records Index, Liverpool, October-December 1842. Courtesy of James P. Alsina. Rochester NY; 1897 Census Victoria from Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.134.

<sup>2</sup> Frank's exact birthday may have been December 20, Ibid., p.106.

<sup>3</sup> New York, *SS Europe Ship Manifest*, (June 22, 1843) courtesy of James P. Alsina Rochester NY

<sup>4</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.102.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.106.

<sup>6</sup> New York, *SS Europe Ship Manifest*, courtesy James P. Alsina Rochester NY

Pulvermachers were against their daughter Eula's marriage to Heyman, "a poor but honest tailor."<sup>8</sup> They had already lost one daughter to intermarriage, an act which at that time was equivalent to the death of a child, and they desired that their remaining daughter marry an upwardly mobile Jew.<sup>9</sup> Defying her parents' wishes, Eula married Heinrich and bore him a total of eight children, although only three would survive.<sup>10</sup> The Silbersteins (also known as Silverston and Silverstein) migrated to England in the 1830s,<sup>11</sup> likely between 1834 and 1836. Once in England, the couple worked as labourers in order to support their children: Rebecca (b. 1831 in Prussia), Rachel (b.1833 in Prussia), Aaron (b.1837 in Liverpool, England, died before 1843), Harriet (b.1839 Liverpool, England, died before 1850 in NY) and Frank.

In 1843 the Silbersteins boarded the SS Europe in Liverpool and sailed for America. The ship's manifest records the family as arriving in New York on June 22, 1843. Baby Frank—by then one and half years old, and the rest of the Silverston family, as they were now called, were among the thousands of migrants who crossed the Atlantic in search of a new home in North America.<sup>12</sup>

The Anglicization of Jewish and other foreign-sounding names was common in the mid nineteenth century. By 1850 the family name changed from Silverston to Sylvester, Heyman became known as Henry and Eula was registered as Julia. The New York County census notes that Henry Sylvester worked as a tailor. Of the entire family, Frank Sylvester is the only one born in England, while Frank Sylvester's young nephew

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<sup>7</sup> Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.102.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.102.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

<sup>12</sup> James P. Alsina, *Correspondence*, December 9, 2008.

George W. Prag (b.1849), was recorded as the only American member of the household.<sup>13</sup> Sylvester's youngest older sister Harriet, who was registered on the ship manifest of 1843, is presumed to have died between 1843 and 1850,<sup>14</sup> quite possibly as result of the stressful voyage across the Atlantic. Frank Sylvester's mother, Eula, is mentioned in the 1855 New York census but no mention of her is found after 1855. She too died, presumably shortly after the 1855 census.<sup>15</sup> Modrall wrote that "Henry...must have been a religious Jew, for father and son attended the synagogue every day for a year to say mourner's [Kaddish] after Eula died."<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, unlike the rest of his foreign-born family who were considered alien residents of the United States, the 1855 census lists Frank Sylvester as being native to the USA, like his American-born nephew George W. Prag.<sup>17</sup> Because of his young age when he arrived in the US, Frank Sylvester most likely became a naturalized citizen in the eyes of American census authorities.

After Eula died, Frank and Henry Sylvester joined Sylvester's two sisters in California, in 1856.<sup>18</sup> From there Sylvester made his way north to Victoria. As Sylvester noted in his diary, "the first arrivals [to Vancouver Island] from California and elsewhere in 1858, came to the colony really for two purposes only trading and

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<sup>13</sup> Rebecca married Martin Prag of Poland, tinsmith between 1849-1850. New York County NY, *NY 131 [132]*, New York City, 13 August 1850), Ward 10. Courtesy of James P. Alsina

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. Courtesy of James P. Alsina; Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.103.

<sup>17</sup> Rachel Sylvester was married in either 1854 or 1855 to Henry M. Cohen of Prussia, a pawnbroker. Their first son was also named George W. New York County, *New York City, Manhattan*, 5th Electoral District, Dwelling #5, Family #5, 4 June 1855), 14th Ward. Courtesy of James P. Alsina

<sup>18</sup> In the early 1860s Rachel and Henry Cohen moved to Victoria and opened a men's clothing store on the south side of Yates Street. Business was unsuccessful and the family moved to Reno, Nevada. Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.106.

mining.”<sup>19</sup> Like the thousands who arrived on Victoria’s shores, Sylvester was sent to Victoria in 1858 by his brother-in-law, Martin Prag, so that he could open a hardware store there.<sup>20</sup> Unable to sell the merchandise in Victoria, Sylvester ventured into the gold fields. He was more successful at merchandising along the gold trail than he been in Victoria. Between 1861 and 1864 Sylvester travelled between San Francisco, Victoria and the gold fields, selling goods to the miners and setting up a shop in Victoria as well as participating in the life of the town.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Frank Sylvester, *The Douglas Route From Victoria to Lillooet*, 1908), AR281 Acc. No. 1988-071 1.4.

<sup>20</sup> Frank had already operated a store for Prag in Shasta, California Modrall, *Sylvester, Frank and Cecelia series AR281 Acc. No: 2008-028 1.8 Old Roots New Shoots: All We Know of the Harris/Davies/Light/Sylvester/Brooker/Taylor Families-Family History*, p.107.

<sup>21</sup> Frank travelled to San Francisco on average four times a year. *Ibid.*, p.116.

## Appendix B Selection of photos from Davies Sylvester's photo album



Figure 1 Clarence B. Sylvester, undated  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2005-020.06



Figure 4 Louise George, ca. 1892,  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2005-020-12



Figure 2 Jesse P. Sylvester, undated  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2005-020.03



Figure 5 Sylvester daughter, ca. 1890  
University of Victoria, Special  
Archives, 1.18.3



Figure 3 Sylvester daughter, ca. 1890  
University of Victoria, Special  
Archives, 2001.006.13 OP



Figure 6 Sylvester Sisters, undated  
University of Victoria, Special  
Archives, 2005-020-12



Figure 7 Group photo, c. 1890  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2001.006.18 OP



Figure 8 Sylvester siblings, ca.1890  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2001.006.18 OP



Figure 9 Sylvester Family with rowboat  
and motorboat, ca.1910 University of  
Victoria, Special Archives 2001.006.31  
ON



Figure 10 Sylvester Family with  
rowboat and tree, ca.1910 University of  
Victoria, Special Archives  
2001.006.33ON



Figure 11 Members of the Sylvester  
Family, undated University of Victoria,  
Special Archives 2005-020-18



Figure 12 Frank Sylvester, his four daughters, and child, ca. 1905  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2001.006.23 CP



Figure 13 Two Sylvester daughters and child, ca. 1905 University of Victoria,  
Special Archives 2001.006.21 CP



Figure 14 Three Sylvester sisters and child,  
ca. 1905 University of Victoria, Special  
Archives 2001.006.22 OP

Figure 17 Two Sylvester sons in front of  
Sylvester Seed Co., ca. 1910  
University of Victoria, Special Archives  
2001.006.26 CN



Figure 15 Sylvester Seed, Co. wagon on  
Victoria Street, ca. 1910 University of  
Victoria, Special Archives 2001.006.29 ON



Figure 16 Davies Sylvester and her four  
daughters, ca. 1910 University of Victoria,  
Special Archives 2001.006.34 CN





Figure 18 Two men on hay wagon on Victoria Street, early car in the background, ca. 1910 University of Victoria, Special Archives 2001.006.28 CN



Figure 21 Davies Sylvester and two grandsons, undated University of Victoria, Special Archives 2005-020.26



Figure 19 Young girl with dog, Robbie Burns monument, Beacon Hill Park, Victoria University of Victoria, Special Archives 2001.006.30 CN



Figure 22 Sylvester family, in automobile, ca. 1920s University of Victoria, Special Archives 2001.006.11 OP



Figure 20 Sylvester Sisters with Colin Campbell Sylvester, and Donald Sylvester, undated University of Victoria, Special Archives, 2005-020-07



Figure 23 Colin Campbell Sylvester and Donald MacRae Sylvester University of Victoria, Special Archives, 2005-020-08.



Figure 25 Members of the Sylvester family, undated,  
L-R: Ray Campbell, Louise Sylvester, Cecelia Davies Sylvester, Don MacRae, and  
Ruby MacRae, University of Victoria, Special Archives 2005-02.30



## Appendix D Masons

Jews were attracted to the Masonic lodges of Vancouver Island more than any other organized community-wide society. They helped to found the lodges and were appreciated and active members. When Victoria's first Masonic lodge opened in 1860, twenty eight percent of its founding members were Jews.<sup>1</sup> The close relationship between Victoria's Jews and Freemasonry was well demonstrated in the opening ceremonies for Congregation Emanu-el, when non-Jewish masons were given the privilege to lay one of the founding cornerstones of the building.<sup>2</sup> In his study on the relationship between Jews and Freemasonry, historian Tony Fels argues that occupational affinity was not the only factor which allowed for the high levels of Jewish integration into Freemasonry.<sup>3</sup> The key to the high degree of Jewish integration among freemasonry was due to a shared outlook between American Jews of the mid nineteenth-century and their Protestant brethren.<sup>4</sup> The same could be said for Jews on Vancouver Island. Thus occupational affinities, Jewish cultural aspirations, and shared moral vision allowed Vancouver Island Jews to participate in a variety of community-wide organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Boas Wisenthal, *Insiders and Outsiders: Two Waves of Jewish Settlement in British Columbia, 1858-1914*, MA Thesis ed. Vancouver, BC: Faculty of Graduate Studies, Department of Geography, UBC, April 1987. p.112.

<sup>2</sup>From 1858-1871 Victoria's Jewish Masons included: A. Blackman, H. Cohen, L.Franklin, k.Gambitz, S. Goldstone, J.Keyser, L. Lewis, J. Malowansky, M. Myers, H. Nathan, F. Neufelder, Oppenheimer Brothers, M. Preis, M, Sporborg, C. Strauss, G. Sutro, L. Wolff, F. Sylvester. Members of the Odd Fellows included: JP Davies and Son, N. Koshland, H.Levy, L. Lewis, A. Phillips, M. Sporborg, F. Sylvester. In 1863 Jewish members of the chamber of commerce included: Emil and Gustav Suro, Nathan Koshland, Samuel Goldstone, and Jules Rueff Ibid., p.113.

<sup>3</sup> Tony Fels, "Religious Assimilation in a Fraternal Organization: Jews and Freemasonry in Gilded-Age San Francisco," *American Jewish History* 74, no. 4 (1985), p.381.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p.403.

## Appendix E German Jews

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Jewish life from the Alsace to Tsarist Russia differed little from one place to another. Jews of German lands lived in small, closely knit communities and interacted with their non-Jewish neighbours only for business purposes. The *kahal* structured their community and religion and piety prevailed in their private and public lives. The majority of Jews depended upon some form of petty trade to earn their living. They peddled wares, ran small shops, specializing in dry goods and hardware. They acted as middlemen for peasants and urban distributors, and as such were often despised by all classes. Characterized by flexibility, these Jews easily moved between peddling and shop-keeping, between selling grain and selling horses. Whole families participated in earning a livelihood and would journey long distances just to make a sale. Until the mid-nineteenth century, Jews in German lands, like their co-religionists in Eastern Europe, spoke various dialects of Yiddish and piously observed traditional Judaism. Hebrew and Yiddish books were published in Warsaw and read in Bavaria or Baden and vice versa. From the seventeenth century onwards, Polish, Russian and Galician Jews served as Hebrew instructors in elementary schools, religious seminaries, and rabbis of hundreds of communities in German areas. Some contemporary scholars even claimed that the hands of the German rabbinate lay in the hands of Polish Jews. The major difference between Jews lay in the existence of Hasidism, which had no significant presence west of the Elbe River, but dominated vast areas of Galicia, Poland, and Russia.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820-1880* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p.25.

The blurring of boundaries between Eastern and Central European Jews was further confounded with the annexation of Poznan on the Polish Fringe, by Prussia in 1793, while Bavaria constituted twenty-five percent of Jews in German lands in 1818. Jews were concentrated to lesser extents in the other areas. Poznan gave "Central European Jewry... direct and intimate ties with the Ostjuden," and the annexed Jews of Poznan became known as the hinterberliners, underling their slightly inferior status in the eyes of the Prussian gentiles who deemed them unworthy of emancipation, which was first offered domestic Prussian Jews in 1812. Like their co-religionists to the west, the majority of Poznan's Jews were engaged in trade. However, Poznan's Jews were involved in trades typically associated with Jews from the Pale, i.e. they were innkeepers, liquor distributors, tailors, furriers, hat and cap makers, lace makers, and weavers. There were a higher percentage of artisans among Poznan Jews, thirty-four percent, compared to seven percent of non-annexed Prussian Jews. Poznan Jews were poorer than their co-religionists to the west and more numerous. They were more likely to be beggars, and beggars in other provinces were more likely to be from Poznan. They were prohibited from moving within the province, but were allowed to emigrate. These factors in combination with a general lack of economic opportunity and restrictions on marriage permits made Jews from Poznan the most likely group of Jews to emigrate from Prussia and elsewhere. Since the process of *Bildung* (education) was started much later in Poznan, traditional rabbinic authority remained entrenched longer in Poznan than it did elsewhere. Rabbis in Poznan were not forced into German universities, like rabbis in Bavaria for example, until much later on. For these reasons, by virtue of their greater knowledge and piety, when immigrants from Poznan made their way to America they

often served newly founded communities as lay religious personnel, teachers, cantors, slaughterers, and readers.<sup>6</sup>

#### **Appendix F Selections from Hannah Director's photo album**



Figure 26 Director's embossed album cover  
Letters HD and Prince Rupert etched in

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p.15.



Figure 27 Entrance Class Prince Rupert, undated



Figure 28 Director and Stanley Norman c. 1913



Figure 29 Hannah, Rosalie, and Isidor Director, undated



Figure 30 Four Generations of Diamonds  
L-R: Kate Diamond, Rosalie and Hannah Director,  
and Grandmother Diamond, undated

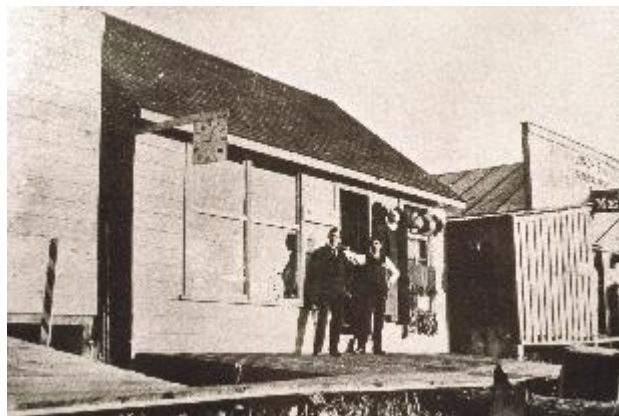


Figure 31 First store in Prince Rupert, Cohen and Director, c. 1910



Figure 32 L-R: Mr. Grossman, Louis Ripstein, Harry Frome, Charlie Cohen, Maurice Cohen, Isidor Director, William Zackon, Morris Soskin, c. 1910.



Figure 33 Inside the Store, c. 1910



Figure 34 Prince Rupert, 1914



Figure 35 Prince Rupert Empire Clothing, c.1909-1910

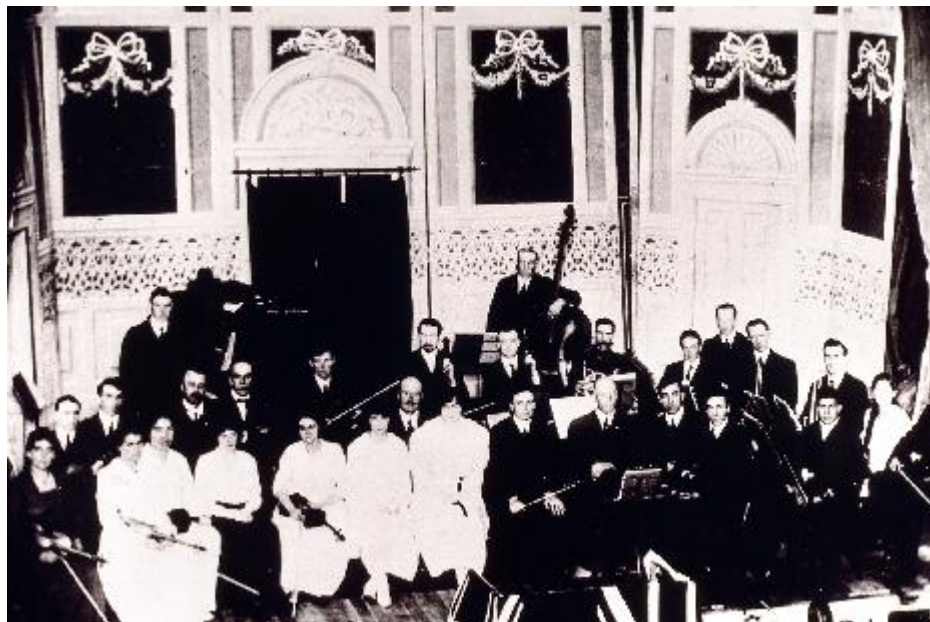


Figure 36 Prince Rupert Orchestra, c.1918



Figure 37 Director in costume, undated



Figure 38 Director and her three children, undated

## Appendix G Koerner Letters

### Letter to Koerner from Otto Bermann, 1946

...we were liberated by the Russians in June of 1946 [sic]. Of the 200 Jews [in Nový Jičín] from before [the War], roughly 40 are abroad and of the remaining, 9 are living, to which we 4 belong, as well as two boys in Mannheim, Jozi Gelb and Zdeni Langer, and Betina Tintner. The others died mostly of starvation or were murdered in various gas chambers. It is a pure miracle that as a family we were able to survive...

...In May of 1941 Dr. Schollich, then mayor [of Nový Jičín] made a proclamation according to which the town of Nový Jičín would take over the [local Jewish] cemetery intending to make a play ground out of it...I did everything to save, at least for the remaining residents, including your sister, the gravestones. As a result of my efforts your sister was able to decide what to do with the gravestones of your parents. A firm from Brno picked up the stone and transported it, what happened after that I do not know...[i.e. The stones had been removed from the cemetery but the bodies remained; Otto Bermann eventually succeeded in preventing a play ground from being built on the site.]

...The Temple stands, which in view of the systematic burning of Jewish houses of worship in November of 1938 [Kristallnacht], is a miracle. Here a fire would have endangered the gas works [next door] way too much. The inside [of the Temple] however was destroyed...During the German State, the Temple served as a market hall, which was later dissolved because the town's inhabitants were reluctant to use a house of worship as a market place.

...My wife, Henriette, who was in your employ in Prague for almost three years, as was her sister, Regina Sandberg, who is dead, thinks you might well be most interested in the fate of Frau Ginz. Frau Ginz was one of the most ill-reputed Jew-baiters here, who outdid herself with antisemitism and came to play a huge role as a propaganda leader in the National Socialist Germany. She died in 1942 from a throat illness. Probably G-d punished her and her lies got stuck in her throat. [Of all people] she would have had the least cause to harm us, since she was always employed by Jews –receiving the highest pay. She was replaced by her younger sister, who upon the arrival of the Russians committed suicide. Schollich ended similarly.

In contrast, your former employee Miss Hermina Fink behaved first class...My wife and I together have lost 27 family members...Circumstances for us are unfortunately still quite insecure and it is not out of the question that in our old age we may still have to make plans for emigration. Even though, on the part of the government everything is being done to combat antisemitism. Nevertheless life is made sour for the few survivors here.

...I would like to tell you that Nový Jičín itself did not suffer much during the war. Apart from all the bridges, only a few houses were destroyed. Of the 14,000 inhabitants, 2000 Germans remain in [deportation] camps and 6000 Czechs have

immigrated here. The deportation of the remaining Germans is to take place imminently. The surroundings of Nový Jičín were only slightly damaged, but the town of Tropa suffered heavily, being destroyed some 80%.<sup>7</sup>

### **Letter from Koerner to Otto Bermann, 1946**

In a letter dated February 21, 1946, Koerner writes in response:

Myself, my brothers, and our families read your letter of January 21st with great interest.

We are very sorry to hear that, with the exception of yourself, your family and five others of our former friends...all lost their lives in a barbarian manner. We had, during the war, feared the worst for all of you over there and it is, therefore, no surprise to hear now about the facts...

I regret very much that the survivors, in spite of assurances of the Government that all Czechoslovak Nationals will be treated equally...the population is not as friendly as could have been expected...

On the other hand, there is little chance for immigration during the near future, and furthermore conditions in the immigration will not be too rosy when a new influx reaches these countries...

I want to thank you for your endeavours in connection with our parents' graves...From our family we have to consider lost our two sisters and their families in Brno who, as you know, perished in concentration camps. Another sister, who used to live in Vienna, was, together with her husband, deported by the Gestapo from Holland and we have no news from her.

Myself, my three brothers, Theodore, Otto and Walter, and our families, are living in Vancouver where we are settled successfully in the lumber industry. One sister and her son, who used to live in Vienna, are also in Vancouver, as well as the sons of two others [sic] sisters who are now in London and New York respectively. The younger generation is working in our lumber industry.

Furthermore, we succeeded in bringing here before the war, five of our former employees and their families and these families are working with us under favourable conditions. We had a permit for entry for five more families who, however, were unable to leave Europe in time.

After the end of the war we endeavoured to obtain immigration permits for some members of our families and friends but we were refused with the indication that under

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<sup>7</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds, Box 13-15 Bermann, Otto, 1946-48.

no circumstances will any immigration be permitted until such time as the Army will be repatriated and the returned soldiers re-established in civilian life.

We all are Canadian citizens and very much obliged to the country which gave us a friendly reception. Comparing with what we hear about Europe, we are living here under particularly favourable conditions...

We were very upset by your news about our former employee, Mrs. Ginz. If we had supposed that this person would ever behave in such a way, then we would have not tolerated her around us for another minute. She received from us a voluntary pension until 1938 after she had left our services more than two years before. God knows how many similar cases have occurred, and you are right in saying that we have to rely on the Lord whose punishment is sometimes late but certain...<sup>8</sup>

#### **Letter to Koerner from FC Blair, 1941**

Dr. Glesinger first came to the attention of this Department when the question of his being allowed entry to Canada was referred to our office in London in August 1940 and Dr. Glesinger was advised that his application could not be granted favourable consideration. A further application was submitted direct to this office and after the matter was given every consideration Dr. Glesinger was again advised that the Department was unable to grant favourable consideration and the previous decision had to stand.

Dr. Glesinger subsequently entered the United States and later applied for entry to Canada when he was rejected owing to his inability to comply with the existing Immigration Regulations and his appeal was dismissed. Apparently he subsequently came to the attention of the United States Immigration Service when he was requested to leave that country and it is on that basis that we are now being requested to allow him to enter Canada.

This is one of many similar cases which come to the attention of this Department from time to time and where there are no circumstances which warrant favourable consideration. I am sorry to have to advise you that, as Dr. Egon Glesinger is inadmissible to this Dominion, this Department is unable to take favourable action in his case...<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., Box 13-15 Bermann, Otto, 1946-48.

<sup>9</sup> Leon Koerner Fonds.

## **Appendix H Chinese and Japanese history in BC**

Throughout the dissertation there is little mention of the Chinese or Japanese residents of British Columbia. From a contemporary perspective, a contentious relationship developed between both Japanese and Chinese residents of Canada and various levels of government contentious throughout the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. The first widely recognized episode of immigration from China to what would become British Columbia first occurred in 1788 and Japanese immigration began in 1877. Chinese immigrants began arriving in significant numbers with the onset of the 1858 Gold Rush. Between 1877 and 1928 Japanese fishermen and lumberjacks settled along the Pacific coast as well as in the Fraser Valley and in Alberta.

Several thousand Chinese workers were imported into Canada to help with the construction of the CPR line between 1880 and 1885. As the need for the Chinese rail-workers diminished the political desire for their departure increased. The Chinese Immigration Act was enacted in 1885 to ensure their departure; thus creating the Chinese head tax. Throughout the twentieth century the head-tax was increased and the Act was amended to prevent wives and children from re-uniting with their husbands. No other group was subjected to such measures.

During the recession year of 1907, Vancouver witnessed a hostile riot against Asian owned businesses. High unemployment rates and beliefs by non-Asian Vancouverites that Asians were taking all the available jobs likely helped to spark the hostility. The federal government later awarded more than \$30,000 in reparation to affected business owners. During that same year, in the interest of controlling immigration and emigration levels, Canada entered into a gentlemen's agreement with

the Japanese as well as the Americans, thus limiting the number of Japanese settlers in Canada. The number of Japanese settlers allowed into Canada was restricted to 450 per year until 1928 when it ceased altogether. The Chinese Exclusion Act was enacted in 1923 and until 1947 only fifteen Chinese people were allowed into Canada.<sup>10</sup>

During the WWII, nearly 22,000 people of Japanese origin were interned in the interior of BC, at least 200 kilometres from the coast. The internment of the Japanese was made possible through the enactment of the War Measures Act of 1914. The Americans also interned nearly 120,000 of Japanese Americans after the bombing of Pearl Harbour in 1941. Between 1943 and 1946 the Canadian government sold off the internees' property and possessions. At the end of WWII the internees were given the choice of settling inland or of returning to Japan. Many chose the former option.

The reason that neither the collective group histories of the Japanese nor the Chinese residents of BC are used as comparisons to the region's Jewish residents has to do with how each was viewed by mainstream society. At no point during the settlement of the Japanese or the Chinese was either group ever considered to be compatible with mainstream society. Conversely, the Jewish histories of the conjunctural agents used in this thesis, have been considered compatible, where the possibility to integrate has been one the key factors for some kind of social acceptance throughout each era. Until the multicultural era, neither the Chinese nor the Japanese immigrants were seen as residents who could readily become part of mainstream society. Furthermore, the conjunctural agents used in this discussion are based on the lives of individuals. Therefore, should a comparison be made, it must be done on the same scale.

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<sup>10</sup> Robert, Jean-Claude "Asian Immigration," *Canada in the Making*. Accessed August 31, 2010. [http://www1.canadiana.org/citm/specifique/asian\\_e.html](http://www1.canadiana.org/citm/specifique/asian_e.html)

**Appendix I Table 4 Early Jewish Residents of Victoria, 1858-1873.**

<b>Name</b>	Morris Moss	Humphrey Abraham Belasco	Harris Lewin and David Sokoloski	Julius Silversmith
<b>Origin</b>	England	England	Holland; Russia	German
<b>Travelled Via</b>	San Francisco	San Francisco		San Francisco
<b>Year of Arrival</b>	1862	1858	1858	Arrived in 1858; Left in 1860
<b>Occupations along the Gold-trail and elsewhere</b>	Prospecting and trade, Bella Coola; Hebrew Mine, Alaska late 1860s; Justice of the Peace, government agent along Pacific Northwest, 1864-1867; Indian Agent, deputy collector of customs, Bella Coola; prospector until he died.	Tobacco and fur trade, prospecting, Cariboo; Fruit store, Royal Theatre Company, Victoria	Merchandise and gold packers, Cariboo	Organized a non-sectarian Select Day-School; music teacher, Victoria
<b>Jewish Org.</b>	President of Congregation Emanu' El and B'nai Brith Lodge			Secretary of Chevra Kadisha, Established Victoria's first Jewish Directory
<b>Worth noting</b>	Married Hattie Bornstein of San Francisco, from a prominent merchant family. Together they had one son, Alexnder (b.1885). Moss left them in Victoria, while he went prospecting. In 1892 he left for Washington State and no news was heard of him until he died in Colorado four years later.	Son David Belasco became prominent theatrical personality, author of Madame Butterfly.	In 1862 the men were murdered along the gold trail; robbed of \$12,000. Event known as the Massacre of the Jews. The killers were later hanged in Montana, for other murders.	

Table 4 Early Jewish Residents of Victoria, 1858-1873.

<b>Name</b>	Simon Leiser	Sutro Family	John Malowansky	Henry Nathan
<b>Origin</b>	Kerpen, Germany	Prussia	Russia	England
<b>Travelled Via</b>	Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Shasta, California			
<b>Year of Arrival</b>	1873		1858	1862, returned to England in 1880
<b>Occupations along the Gold-trail and elsewhere</b>	The Leisers settled in Victoria at the time of the Cassiar gold rush. Simon helped to construct 100km of trail; Simon Leiser. Whole Grocer. Largest wholesale business in BC by 1890s	Tobacco and banking business	Russian news agent and tobacconist, Victoria; Fur trader from Bella Bella to Alaska.	1871 elected to the House of Commons, from Victoria. First Jew to sit as an MP in Canada; CPR director.
<b>Jewish Orgs.</b>	Synagogue building committee and board; High Holiday arrangements		Synagogue treasurer, president of the Chevra Kadisha, volunteer in the fire brigade;Cantor; Hebrew Scholar	
<b>Member of Fraternal Society, Involvement in general community</b>	Served 15 yrs. on Victoria Board of Trade, president for two terms; executive member of the Vancouver Island Publicity Bureau.	G. Sutro was a founding Mason	Founding Mason	Mason
<b>Worth noting</b>	Simon married his American born cousin, Caroline Lenz in 1871. Once he found work on the Cassiar trail, he began bringing over family members. Two brothers arrived from Germany, as well as a brother-in-law and his in-laws. All settled in Victoria and helped to replenish Victoria's dwindling Jewish community. During WWI, when anti-German sentiment was high, a mob raided Leiser's store, after a German U-Boat torpedoed the Lusitania, a passenger ship carrying 14 passengers from Victoria.		Fur trading business was very lucrative.	

Table 4 Early Jewish Residents of Victoria, 1858-1873.

<b>Name</b>	Selim and Lumley Franklin	Alexander Aaron Phillips	Henry Emanuel Levy	Godfrey, Charles, David and Isaac Oppenheimer
<b>Origin</b>	England	England	New Zealand, British family	Saar, Germany
<b>Travelled Via</b>	San Francisco	Sydney, Australia and San Francisco	Sydney, Australia, England, and San Francisco	New Orleans, San Francisco
<b>Year of Arrival</b>	1858	1858	c.1860-1861	1858-59
<b>Occupations along the Gold-trail and elsewhere</b>	Selim: first appointed Colonial auctioneer; Elected to the colonial legislature, 1860; Lumley: mayor, Victoria, 1865	Pioneer syrup, Soda & Cider Works, family run business, Victoria; first baker of Passover Matza, supplied the Pacific North West.	Early Victoria police officer, at age 19; various enterprises in Victoria and Seattle including: real-estate, a soda-water factory, a fish plant, a salmon saltery, a bottle works, a hop yard, and even the Seattle Bazaar. Henry also founded the first gourmet restaurant in North America in 1865, Victoria's Arcade Oyster Saloon. The business lasted nearly fifty years.	Godfrey and Charles started a supply business, Victoria and Yale; later, when joined by brothers David and Isaac, the brothers began a chain of supply warehouses throughout the Cariboo; Charles was contracted to build a section of the Cariboo Wagon Road; David and Isaac opened a import wholesale business in 1882. In 1886 they moved to the newly incorporated city of New Westminster.
<b>Jewish Orgs.</b>		Second president of the synagogue		Wives involved in Victoria's Hebrew Ladies Society.
<b>Member of Fraternal Society</b>	Both active in theatre; helped found Victoria's Philharmonic society; Lumely was a Mason.	Founding Odd Fellow and Mason, St. George's Society, BC Benevolent Association.	Odd Fellow; Volunteer fire brigade	The Oppenheims were involved in establishing and supplying volunteer fire brigades in Yale and elsewhere. All the brothers were Masons.
<b>Worth noting</b>		Married his American cousin, Rebecca, in SF. They had 11 children.	Eventually brought his mother and multiple siblings from England to Victoria. Henry married Eva Rostein of Seattle in 1882. They settled permanently in Victoria in 1889 and Eva was a member of the Hebrew Ladies of Victoria	

Table 4 Early Jewish Residents of Victoria, 1858-1873.

<b>Name</b>	Lewis Lewis	Abraham Blackman	Lewis Davis	Joseph A. Brunn	Kady Gambitz
<b>Origin</b>	Polish	Polish			
<b>Travelled Via</b>	California	Stockton, California			Nevada City, California
<b>Year of Arrival</b>	1858				1858
<b>Occupations along the Gold-trail and elsewhere</b>	Yale, merchant; Dry goods store, Victoria	Ironmonger and hardware dealer, Victoria	Star and Garter Hotel, owner	Fashionable tailor and clothier	Gambitz Dry Goods and Drapery
<b>Jewish Orgs.</b>	Provided money for cemetery	Founder of Victoria Hebrew Benevolent Society, aka Chevra Kadisha; first treasurer of Congregation Emanu-el; Cantor for High Holidays	Provided temporary house of worship until 1863	Charter member and first trustee of the synagogue.	Charter member of Congregation Emanu-el and Hebrew Benevolent Society
<b>Member of Fraternal Society</b>	Odd Fellow, Mason	Mason			Founding Mason

### Appendix J BC's Jewish population in the early twentieth century

The Directors and Cohens were not the only Jewish residents in northern BC. By the turn of the twentieth century, Jews had been steadily migrating to and settling in British Columbia for just over four decades. In 1901, the census officially counted five hundred and fifty four Jews in the province.<sup>11</sup> They accounted for 0.31 percent of the province's entire population; this was in line with the national average for Jews, who in 1901 numbered 16,493 people and composed 0.30 percent of the total Canadian population. Between 1901 and 1911 Canada's total Jewish population grew by 22.1 percent and between 1911 and 1921 it increased by 59.59 percent.<sup>12</sup> In 1911 the 74,760 Jews that formed 1.0 percent of the entire population in Canada, gave the country the second largest Jewish population in the British Empire, after the United Kingdom.<sup>13</sup> By 1921, 125,445 Jews formed 1.4% of Canada's population, with the bulk of Canadian Jewry located in Québec, Ontario, and Manitoba.<sup>14</sup> BC's Jewish population grew by 40.0 percent and 83.67 percent in 1911 and 1921 respectively. These figures corresponded to the province's general population growth, which increased by 45.5 percent between 1901 and 1911 and an additional 74.81 percent between 1911 and 1921. In 1911, 1.85 percent of Canadian Jewry lived in BC, the province's Jewish population rose to 1184, and Jews formed 0.35 percent of the total population in the province.<sup>15</sup> By

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<sup>11</sup> Statistics Canada, *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1; Joseph Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language* (Montréal: Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1974), p.5.

<sup>15</sup> Statistics Canada. *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1.

1921 1.07 percent of Canadian Jewry lived in BC; BC's Jewish population reached 1654 and composed 0.31 percent of the total population (see Table 5, Table 6, and Table 7).

Table 5 Jewish population according to religion in Canada, by province 1871-1941.<sup>16</sup>

<b>Province/Year</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>1921</b>
<b>PEI</b>	17	36	18
<b>NS</b>	437	1170	1974
<b>NB</b>	376	998	1213
<b>QC</b>	7498	30,338	47,898
<b>ON</b>	5324	26,831	47,552
<b>MN</b>	1497	10 698	16 615
<b>SK</b>	296	2060	5328
<b>AB</b>	242	1207	3186
<b>BC</b>	554	1384	1654
<b>YK &amp; NWT</b>	252	38	7
<b>Canada Jews total pop.</b>	16,493	74,760	125,445
<b>Canadian total pop.</b>	5,371,315	7,206,643	8,787,949
<b>% of Jews among Canadian total pop.</b>	0.3	1.0	1.4

Table 6 Jewish populations according to religion in BC and Canada, 1901-1921.<sup>17</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>1901</b>	<b>1911</b>	<b>1921</b>
<b>Total Jewish population in BC</b>	554	1384	1654
<b>Total population in BC</b>	178,657	392,480	524,582
<b>Total Jewish population in Canada</b>	16,493	74,760	125,445
<b>Total population in Canada</b>	5,371,315	7,206,643	8,787,949
<b>Jewish % of total pop.</b>	0.3 %	1.0 %	1.4 %

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p.1. Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language*, p.5.

<sup>17</sup> Statistics Canada. *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1; Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language*, p.5.

Interestingly, in 1901 17.86 percent of BC Jews lived in rural areas,<sup>18</sup> while in the rest of Canada only 5.77 percent of Jews lived in rural areas.<sup>19</sup> A decade later, in 1911 BC's rural Jewish population was 5.99 percent; this nearly matched the national Jewish average of 5.97 percent. By 1911 thirty one Jews lived in Prince Rupert, and another eighteen lived in the surrounding Atlin Comox district. The Jews in Prince Rupert formed 0.70 percent of the population, a percentage which matched that of Vancouver and which was higher than the Jewish population percentage in Victoria during the same period. The provincial percentage for Jewish rural residence continued to decrease and by 1921 it had reached 4.48 percent.<sup>20</sup> By 1921 it became clear that the expected economic boom in the area would never develop beyond more than what it already had, and Prince Rupert's Jewish population declined significantly.<sup>21</sup> In 1921, there were fourteen Jews in the town and they accounted for 0.2 percent. Statistics for Prince George are not available prior to 1921 since the town was only incorporated in 1915. By 1921 twenty Jews resided in Prince George and composed 1.0 percent of the population.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> i.e. 78 Jews, Statistics Canada. *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1; Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language*, p.5. Table 11, 23.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Canada. *Religious Denominations of Canada 1871-1941*, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), p.1; Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language*, p.5. Table 11, 23.

<sup>20</sup> i.e. 176 Jews, Statistics Canada., p.1.; Yam, *Canada's Jewish Population, 1971: Composition by Sex, Age, Marital Status and Language*, 5. Table 11, 23.

<sup>21</sup> The general population continued to increase from 4,184 in 1911 to 6,393 in 1921.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Rosenberg, *Gazetteer of Jewish communities in Canada, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics: A showing the Jewish Population in each of the Cities, Towns and Villages in Canada in the Census Years, 1851-1951*. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1941), (Montréal: Canadian Jewish Congress, 1957), Table 1 and 2. The Directors left Prince George of July 1918 to return to Prince Rupert. "Local and Personal," *The Prince George Citizen*, Tuesday 17 September 1918, no.44, sec. Classified Wants, p.6.

Table 7 Number and proportion of Jews to total population in BC cities, 1901-1921.<sup>23</sup>

Year	1901		1911		1921	
Cities	Pop.	%	Pop.	%	Pop.	%
Nanaimo	14	0.2	10	0.1	14	0.2
Prince George	-	-	-	-	20	1.0
Prince Rupert	-	-	31	0.7	14	0.2
Vancouver	205	0.6	982	0.7	1370	0.7
Victoria	165	0.8	139	0.4	153	0.4

## Appendix K Adaskin ancestry

Adaskin's paternal great-great-great grandparents, Khanne and Laibe Adaskin, owned a flour mill in the shtetl (small town) of Mstislavl, in the Moghilef district of the modern day Belarus. The descendants of Khanne and Laibe Adaskin were plentiful and included tavern and inn keepers, farmers, and even cantonists.<sup>24</sup> Adaskin's father, Khayim Laib Adaskin, was born in the shtetl of Balabovshina, Moghilef district, where his father and grandfather, Mordkhe and Khayim, earned their living by working as estate managers for the local count. Mordkhe Adaskin later became a whiskey distiller.

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<sup>23</sup> Rosenberg, *Gazetteer of Jewish communities in Canada, Census of Canada, Dominion Bureau of Statistics: A showing the Jewish Population in each of the Cities, Towns and Villages in Canada in the Census Years, 1851-1951s.*, Table 1 and 2.

<sup>24</sup> In reference to Jews, the term cantonist recalls the systemic conscription of Jewish boys, age twelve, into the Tsar's army. Cantonist schools were established in 1721 for the purposes of training the sons of military men for later careers in the army. Young Jewish conscripts, aged 12 to 25, were sent to these schools beginning in 1827. Other groups were allowed to send conscripts to join the army beginning at age 18 through until age 35. Prior to 1827, Jews paid twice as many taxes as other residents in order not to serve in the army. Jewish communities were given the task of selecting the young conscripts. The Tsar required that four conscripts be sent for every 1000 members of a given population. The aim of the cantonist process was the Russification of its various ethnic groups, including Poles and Ukrainians. In the case of Jewish conscripts, undergoing Russification did not result in equality. As noted, each Jewish community was responsible for meeting its quota. The most susceptible members of the Jewish community, i.e. orphans, singles, paupers, and the like, were sent. The recruits were sent to cantonist schools, where they were instructed in everything from grammar to weaponry. The twenty-five year service began only once they joined the military at the age of 18. Jewish cantonists faced pressure to convert to Christianity. The cantonist policies were abolished in 1856, but not before tens of thousands of Jewish boys were enlisted. Larry Domnitch, *The Cantonists: The Jewish Children's Army of the Tsar* (Englewood, New Jersey: Devora Publishing, 2004); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002). pp. 26-38.

The shtetl was made up of stark wooden cottages with beaten earth floors. Families were typically large and lacking beds; it was not uncommon for children to sleep wherever it was they happened to doze off. The shtetl was nestled in the Balabovshina forest along the edge of a river. Khayim Laib Adaskin once told his son that it had never occurred to him that he was raised in such an enchanting place.<sup>25</sup>

Khayim Laib Adaskin left Balabovshina at the age of thirteen, and he went to work as an apprenticing wood-turner in the shtetl of Mstislavl.<sup>26</sup> There he met his future wife, Nishe-Bashe Perstnyova. Nishe-Bashe Perstnyova was the eldest child in a family of seventeen children. Her father, Shlaymeh Perstynov, was a melamed (teacher) in the cheder and devout; both he and his wife Faigeh Perstynov, like their in-laws the Adaskins, viewed literacy as a means of religious devotion, not to be squandered on secular pursuits.

## **Appendix L Nemetz Case Details**

### ***IWA and BC foresters***

Although private enterprise proponents argued that disputes could be resolved by the private sector, it was not long before the forestry industry felt more rumblings.<sup>27</sup> Still dealing with the same old problems, Nemetz was called in to negotiate a settlement between the IWA and BC foresters in August of 1970. He resolved the dispute in a similar manner to the IWA/FIR dispute of 1966. Nemetz recommended that employers could not use subcontractors to replace regular employees, a \$0.60 an hour wage

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<sup>25</sup> Adaskin, *A Fiddler's World: Memoirs to 1938*, pp.13-14.

<sup>26</sup> Khayim Laib Adaskin remained in Mstislavl for seven years, until he was called to serve in the Tsarist army. After six months of basic training, the recruits were told that they could apply to any branch of the military service, including engineering, medical services and the military band. *Ibid.*, pp.13-14.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, T4340:014 Side two 1.00-10.00.

increase over two years, as well as sharing the cost of health and welfare insurance.<sup>28</sup>

The forest sector continued to experience similar problems throughout the 1970s.

### *Pacific Presses case*

One of Nemetz's first prominent cases as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was the Pacific Presses case in 1977.<sup>29</sup> In the late autumn of 1976, the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission began investigating "certain matters relating to the operation of the fishing industry" in BC.<sup>30</sup> The union under investigation objected to a private inquiry and demanded a public hearing. The Commission then objected and staged a protest at the time of the public hearing. Reporters and photographers from the *Vancouver Sun* and the Vancouver Province, subsidiaries of Pacific Press Ltd., were on hand to record the unfolding of events. The Vancouver police then demanded that the notes and photographs be handed over in order to identify the obstructers of the inquiry. Pacific Press refused and subsequently a search warrant was issued in order to obtain the documents. When the materials were collected by the police, Pacific Press was also ordered to close their presses. This impeded the publication of the newspapers. Nemetz ruled that "the bringing of application for a search warrant in these circumstances was an abuse of the process of the Court. I, therefore, quash the warrants."<sup>31</sup> For many years the

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<sup>28</sup> "Strikes and settlement: coast forest firms in IWA reach pact," *The Globe and Mail*, Saturday 5 September 1970, sec. report on business, p.B2

<sup>29</sup> Re Pacific Press Ltd. And the Queen et al. British Columbia Supreme Court, Nemetz, C.J. June 28, 1977 37 Canadian Criminal Cases (2d)487-495

<sup>30</sup> Re Pacific Press Ltd. And the Queen et al. British Columbia Supreme Court, Nemetz, C.J. June 28, 1977 37 Canadian Criminal Cases (2d)487-495

<sup>31</sup> Re Pacific Press Ltd. And the Queen et al. British Columbia Supreme Court, Nemetz, C.J. June 28, 1977 37 Canadian Criminal Cases (2d)487-495

Nemetz's Pacific Press ruling set the precedent for similar types of cases and Nemetz was hailed as a champion of the free press.<sup>32</sup>

***“God is not a person” case***

In one high-profile case in 1980, the “God is not a person” case, Nemetz made a dissenting ruling by arguing that a statement made by the accused, Morris Davie, while being held in detention was not admissible to court. Davie had been accused of setting a forest fire near Prince George. A police officer testified in court that while in detention “he saw Davie drop to his knees, raise his hands and say, ‘Oh God, please let me get away with it, just this once.’”<sup>33</sup> Chief Nemetz ascertained that it was reasonable to assume that such communications were going to be heard by the one whom they were intended.<sup>34</sup>

***The Red Hot Video case***

The Red Hot Video case was another high-profile case which Nemetz sat on.<sup>35</sup> In 1985, Red Hot Video Limited was found guilty of distributing obscene material to the Canadian public. In its defence, Red Hot Video argued that the existing obscenity laws were so vague that it had been denied fundamental justice as guaranteed by the charter of rights and freedoms. The three-member Court of Appeal upheld the conviction. Chief Nemetz noted that the law was “precise and understandable.”<sup>36</sup> He further stated that:

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<sup>32</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:017 Side two.

<sup>33</sup> “Court Says God is not a person,” *The Gettysburg Times*, Monday 15 September 1980, p.16.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>35</sup> *Regina v. Red Hot Video Ltd.*, 18 C.C.C. (3d)1 1985 CLB 293, 13 W.C.B. 470, 15 C. R. R. 206, 45 C.R. (3d) 36ed.

<sup>36</sup> Bryan Gory, “Red hot video conviction upheld,” *The Globe and Mail*, Tuesday 19 March 1985, p.M4.

Judges are not [so] insulated from observing community standards that they have failed to notice the growing concern expressed by the Canadian community, [about] the undue sexual [exploitation] of women and children depicted in certain publications and films can, in certain circumstances, lead to abject and servile victimization.<sup>37</sup>

The three videotapes in question were filled with obscene sexual material including a woman in chains forced to urinate on a man, a woman beaten with a belt, and another one being raped.<sup>38</sup> Chief Nemetz went on to say that after reading the lower court's description of the tapes left him in no doubt that they portray "dehumanizing and degrading sexual behaviour accompanied with violence."<sup>39</sup> He concluded by calling the material "unacceptable by any reasonable Canadian community standard."<sup>40</sup> "Demonstrators and anti-pornography activists had singled out Red Hot Video outlets in British Columbia for the past several years, going so far as to firebomb two of its stores in 1982."<sup>41</sup> Chief Nemetz remarked that following his decision and publicized remarks, he received a lot of fan mail from feminists, in support of the decision.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Other high profile cases***

Other high profile cases included the recognition of the aboriginal right to fish on the Fraser River; allowing the wife and son of convicted murderer Clifford Olsen to keep the \$100,000 awarded to him in return for helping the RCMP locate the bodies of his victims;<sup>43</sup> and the 1981 case of the Canadian National Railway worker, Vincenzo Napoli, who was awarded access to his BC Workmen's Compensation Board files, a

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p.M4.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.M4.

<sup>39</sup> "CP bid for obscenity appeal denied," *The Globe and Mail*, Thursday 1 August 1985, p.5.

<sup>40</sup> Gory, *Red hot video conviction upheld*, p.M4.

<sup>41</sup> CP, *bid for obscenity appeal denied*, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> Waters, *Aural History Project for the Law Society of British Columbia: Interview with Chief Justice Nathan Theodore Nemetz*, T4340:017 Side two 12.00.

<sup>43</sup> Downey, *Obituary BC Chief Justice ruled on God*, p.E14.

practice which had been denied since 1917. The issue never went to the Supreme Court of Canada; instead Chief Nemetz's ruling started a precedent that was subsequently adopted by all provinces and territories.<sup>44</sup> In 1988, in one of his final cases as CJBC, Nemetz was a member of a panel that recognized that the foetus is not a person until it has completely left the body of the mother, alive. As *Globe and Mail* reporter Don Downey noted "this ruling overturned the conviction of two midwives who had been charged with criminal negligence causing death [of the foetus]."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Craig Paterson, "Letters to the editor 'Nathan Nemetz'," *The Globe and Mail*, 29 October 1997, p.A23.

<sup>45</sup> Downey, *Obituary BC Chief Justice ruled on God*, p.E14.

## Appendix M Vancouver's Synagogues

In 1891 Eastern European Jews established Vancouver's first temporary Orthodox shul (synagogue) known as the Agudat Akhim, (locally known as Agudace Achim, the Brotherly Congregation). That same year Agudat Akhim, with the help of the entire city's Jewish population, consecrated Vancouver's first Jewish burial ground at Mountain View Cemetery. The High Holiday services of 1891 were attended by over seventy people and that same year the city is recorded to being home to about two hundred Jews.<sup>46</sup> In 1894 about thirty upper-middle-class families organized themselves to establish Temple Emanu-el, a moderately Reform synagogue and home to the city's more influential and wealthier Jews.<sup>47</sup> In 1907 the congregation of Agudat Akhim reorganized itself under the new name of B'nai Yehudah (popularly translated as Sons of Israel).<sup>48</sup> In 1911, its first synagogue structure was built on an empty lot at 510 Heatley Street. By 1909 the Jewish men of Vancouver had also established the first secular Jewish organization, the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA).<sup>49</sup> This was followed by the establishment of Vancouver's B'nai B'rith Lodge in 1910 and the Hebrew Free Loan Association in 1915.<sup>50</sup>

Despite its wealth, the congregation of Temple Emanu-el was stagnant by 1917, while Shaar Tsedek's congregation continued to grow. This was due in part to the fact that new Jewish arrivals to Vancouver tended to affiliate with the Orthodox shul rather than the Reform congregation. In 1917 B'nai Yehudah was incorporated under the new

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<sup>46</sup>Agudat Akhim congregants worshiped at the *Knights of Pythias Hall* through until 1906. Ibid., p.60.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p.58, 79.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.84.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p.81.

name of Shaar Tsedek (locally known as Schara Tzedek, Gates of Righteousness) and the synagogue dedication ceremony occurred on September 6, 1920. In the summer of 1921 the old B'nai Yehudah synagogue building was converted into the Talmud Torah School (Vancouver Hebrew School). Kiva Katznelson was hired as the school's first principal. He was the first fully qualified Hebrew schoolteacher to serve in Vancouver, although he spent only three years at the school, he laid its foundation.<sup>51</sup>

By 1919-1921 Vancouver Jewry numbered some 1300 people or 600 families, and the community could not afford to sustain two separate synagogue buildings. Therefore, the Reform and Orthodox congregations joined forces under the auspices of Shaar Tsedek. Although Temple Emanu-el's Ladies Auxiliary continued its social and charitable activities in the west-end, a Reform congregation would not be seen in Vancouver again until 1965.<sup>52</sup>

Between 1918 and 1946, the Shaar Tsedek congregation was served by Rabbi Nathan Mayer Pastinsky (1918-1946), Rabbi Solomon P. Wohlgelernter (1926-1930) and Judah Leib Zlotnik (1930-1934). When Rabbi Pastinsky retired in 1946, Vancouver's Orthodox community lacked a successor. The community, particularly Shaar Tsedek's President Harry Toban, understood that if the congregation were to maintain its young membership, an English-speaking rabbi was needed. Therefore, the new Shaar Tsedek synagogue built on Oak Street in 1937 was modernized; its first rabbi was the young Nachum Burstyn, a Canadian born rabbi whose mother tongue was

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<sup>51</sup> During the WWI era, immigration tapered down and was limited to mainly internal migrants. In the 1920s migration to the coast picked up, with Jewish migrants arriving from the Prairies, Eastern Canada, and Eastern Europe. *Ibid.*, p.142.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

English, and who had a sound knowledge of hockey as well as Torah.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, historian Cyril Leonoff explains that:

With the demise of the semi-Reform congregation in 1917, there was still a great desire in the Jewish community, especially among the Canadian born and educated generation, to bridge the gap between tradition and reform with a congregation that retained the essence of traditional religious and ethical Judaism, and that would be compatible with the modern North American lifestyle.<sup>54</sup>

In 1931 *The Jewish Western Bulletin* published an editorial commenting on the need for a more modern type shul. It read as follows:

There can be no doubt in the minds of anyone that there is a distinct need for a conservative or semi-Reform congregation in Vancouver. There are hundreds of Jews and Jewesses and their children, who are so far removed by environment and training from the strictly Orthodox service, that they have no inclination or desire to attend the synagogue now in existence here. The absence of [such a] synagogue carrying the services at least partly in English, has created a void in the religious life of many of our Jewish people... The consensus of opinion in the community is... that a new congregation will be welcomed.<sup>55</sup>

It was this desire on the part of Vancouver Jewry that sparked both the modernization of the Orthodox shul as well as the establishment of the Conservative congregation of Beth Israel (House of Israel), which was founded in 1932 and attracted many members from the ranks of Vancouver's rapidly evolving Jewish middle-class.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> In the light of Shaar Tzedek's modernization eleven traditionally Orthodox men formed *Beth Hamidrash B'nai Ya'acov* (The House of Study of the Sons of Jacob) in a storefront at 3231 Heather Street. Originally Ashkenazi, *Beth Hamidrash*, would become a Sephardic *shul* in 1966. *Ibid.*, p.125.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.157-158.

<sup>55</sup> In Albert O. Koch, "Editorial," *Jewish Western Bulletin*, 9 October 1931, from Leonoff, *The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1941*, pp.157-159. *The Jewish Western Bulletin* was inaugurated in 1930.

<sup>56</sup> In Koch, *Editorial*, from Leonoff, *The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1941*, p.160.

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