

Jewish Immigration To Western Canada In The 1880's*

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Résumé

Trois sont les facteurs qui ont influencé l'immigration juive vers le Canada entre 1880 et 1910: la persécution et les privations qui avaient décimé le nombre des juifs dans l'Empire russe, en Roumanie et en Hongrie, le mirage de liberté dans le nouveau monde et, dernier élément, la réaction du pays où les immigrants cherchaient asile.

"Le Gouvernement Canadien n'a jamais fait aucun effort pour attirer les juifs et leur arrivée est entièrement volontaire" avait écrit W. D. Scott. Dans son article, Abraham J. Arnold décrit d'une façon détaillée le développement de l'immigration juive dans les Provinces de l'Ouest en soulignant en particulier le rôle joué par le Comité Mansion House, la politique du gouvernement, les injustices dans la répartition des terrains et les résultats de l'affaire Moosomin. Il attache surtout beaucoup d'importance à l'affaire Moosomin et il prouve que si d'un côté les immigrants juifs avaient échoué dans la colonisation de cette région, de l'autre ils avaient rencontré un fort manque d'intérêt et de soutien de la part de certains membres du gouvernement.

Three major factors affected the course of Jewish immigration to Canada between 1880 and 1910. There were the compelling reasons of deprivation, persecution and pogroms which constricted the lives and often decimated the numbers of Jews in the Russian Empire, in Roumania, and in Austro-Hungary. There was the call to freedom in a new world which attracted all who sought to escape anti-Semitism, including the Orthodox and the growing adherents of new political ideologies, as well as those who dreamed of streets paved with gold. Finally, there was the attitude and the reaction of the country where the immigrants were seeking new homes as represented by government authorities on the one hand and by the community of co-religionists or "landsleit" on the other.

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The attitude of the Canadian government during these three crucial decades was summed up by W. D. Scott when he wrote: "No effort is or ever has been made by the government of Canada to induce Jewish immigrants to come to the Dominion, and the influx has been entirely unsolicited." Scott also noted that Jewish immigrants were "aided largely by their own philanthropic societies" which did "useful work amongst their own people by looking after those unable to support themselves."¹ Jewish immigration during the late 1890's and early 1900's was not, in fact, assisted or encouraged by the government. As an immigration agent during much of this period, Scott surely wrote with authority.

As for the small established Jewish community of those decades, its attitude towards the newcomers was occasionally ambivalent, being tinged with a degree of antipathy from time to time. The Jewish tradition of "Tzedaka" — charity and justice — invariably won out however, and was reinforced by the strong drive to self-help brought to bear by the immigrants themselves.

RESPONSE TO POGROMS

The flow of Jewish immigrants from Russia to Canada became a significant factor during the decade of the 70's. Between 1871 and 1881 the Jewish population increased from 1,333 to 2,443. In the year of the pogroms in Russia in 1881, following the assassination of Tzar Alexander II, Montreal and Toronto had 811 and 500 Jews respectively; there were more Jews however, living throughout Ontario (1,245), than there were in Quebec (989). Manitoba had a Jewish population of 31, including 23 in Winnipeg.

The Montreal Hebrew Philanthropic Society, originally established in 1847, was reconstituted in 1863 as the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society with immigrant aid as the *raison d'être*. In 1875, the Toronto Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded and the Jewish community of that city also began to play its part in immigrant aid. The cost of helping newcomers began to grow and immigrant aid work became a serious and permanent activity.

In the 1870's, the Board of Delegates of American Israelites in the U.S. began to complain to the emigrant aid bodies in Europe about the influx of destitute Jews to American shores. The Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society in Montreal soon did likewise, with a resolution protesting the activity of the Ladies Emigration Aid Society of London, England in "sending to this country a large number of immigrant families

in a state of destitution.” Nevertheless, the Y.M.H.B.S. (later the Baron de Hirsch Institute) became the main institution through which immigrant aid programs were initiated. In 1877, the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society was founded in Montreal to help the men’s group and similar ladies’ groups were founded in Toronto and Hamilton in 1878.

The major Jewish emigration aid body in London was the Anglo-Jewish Association, and in 1881 branches of the Association were organized in Montreal and Toronto. This helped to bring about the provision of funds by the parent body in London to assist settlement of immigrants in Canada.²

In June, 1881, the Montreal branch of the Anglo-Jewish Association deplored “the sad intelligence of the recent outburst of bigotry and fanaticism in southern Russia which has culminated in the plunder, expatriation and massacre of so large a number of our unoffending and defenseless brethren.” Confidence was expressed that the parent organization would “make representations to the Russian Tzar for the permanent vindication of the inalienable right of his Jewish subjects to the peaceful occupation of their native land and of their homes.” Not being very optimistic about the outcome of such representations, the Montreal group declared its “most complete willingness to unite in any movement for material aid” for the soon-to-be refugees.³

Early in 1882, protest meetings against the Russian atrocities were held in the main centres of Western Europe and in the United States. One of these meetings was convened on February 1 at the Mansion House* in London under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor, and with Sir Alexander T. Galt, one of the “Fathers of Confederation” in attendance. Galt was then the first Canadian High Commissioner in London and he accepted the invitation to serve on the Mansion House committee, or the Russo-Jewish Committee as it became known. He played an instrumental role in arranging for the first large group of Jews to immigrate to Canada and particularly to Western Canada.

The High Commissioner’s association with the Mansion House Committee was the first formal involvement of any Canadian government representative with Jewish immigration. Galt himself soon became personally committed as the agent of the Russo-Jewish Committee in Canada but his efforts to obtain government backing did not get any real support.

*The Lord Mayor’s residence.

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND ATTITUDES

Canada at this time was trying to attract immigrants to settle on the land in Manitoba and the northwest, but so far there had been little success apart from some Mennonite and Icelandic settlement. Some of the Russian Jews were reported to have agricultural experience. This was partially true and some of the early Jewish refugees were inspired by "Am Olam", the Jewish "back to the land" movement*.

On January 25, 1882, Galt advised Macdonald that he had written to Rothschild about "the feasibility of removing the agricultural Jews to Canada . . . It seems not a bad opportunity of interesting the Hebrews in our northwest." In a second letter on February 3, Galt reported to the Prime Minister on his appointment to the Mansion House Committee and wrote that the Russian Jews were "a superior class of people, partly farmers, but generally trade people." Most of them were well-off, he said, though many had been ruined, but he was confident that many would be found "with sufficient means to establish themselves . . ." Moreover, since American Jews were actively promoting immigration to the United States "what was good for them could not be bad for us . . ." And in view of the growing Jewish influence in Europe, he added "there can be no harm in cultivating them."⁴

At about the same time, John Taylor, who was acting as the Icelandic agent at St. Andrews, Manitoba, wrote to the Governor General, the Marquis of Lorne, asking for the same kind of consideration for the Jews in Russia and Poland as had been granted to the Icelanders. He suggested that "a suitable block of land might be obtained for this purpose from the Dominion government and placed in the hands of trustees to carry out the benevolent design of providing new homes far removed from the cruelties and atrocities so shamefully perpetrated on this people in the name of religion."⁵

John Taylor's letter was forwarded to Prime Minister Macdonald by the Governor General's secretary, Colonel I. DeWinton, with a covering note which contrasted sharply with Taylor's sympathetic tone. DeWinton stated that a "large and influential committee of Jews in England . . . have taken up the cause of their fellow countrymen — and it has occurred to His Excellency that if the committee were approached by the Department of Agriculture they would have no difficulty in raising 5

*"Am Olam" was established by Russian Jewish youth after the 1881 pogroms, and founded farm colonies in South Dakota (1882) and Oregon (1883).

or 10,000 pounds and sending out say a 1,000 Jews. They are — the Russian Jews — a very dirty lot but if the English Jew will subscribe liberally and settle his Russian brother why shouldn't the Canadian government get the benefit of the transaction.”⁶

JOHN A. MACDONALD'S COMMENTS

On February 20, Macdonald advised Lord Lorne that Galt would be instructed to act for the government and said: “we are quite ready to assign the Jews lands.” On February 27, Macdonald responded to Galt with his own famous note in which he referred to the prospective Jewish immigrants as “the Old Clo’ move.” He predicted that they would “at once go in for peddling and politics” and would be as much use as “cheap Jacks and Chapmen.”⁸

Macdonald's attitude to the Jews is even more revealing in another letter to Galt in which he wrote:

“After years of ill-concealed hostility of the Rothschilds against Canada, you have made a great strike by taking up the old clo’ cry, and going in for a Jew immigration into the Northwest. By following up this subject, and establishing a Jew colony here, whether ultimately successful or not, a link — a missing link — will be established between Canada and Sidonia.”⁹

Macdonald's comment about the Rothschilds may be in reference to some unsuccessful efforts to obtain financial support from them for the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Sidon was an ancient Phoenician seaport whose traders were repeatedly denounced by the Old Testament prophets. It appears therefore that whether he placed them in the contemporary role of “cheap jacks” or in the Biblical setting of “Sidonia”, Macdonald really took a deprecating view of the prospective Jewish immigrants.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CONCERN

While government representatives were exchanging views about the Jews behind the scenes, the Jewish communities of Montreal and Toronto were becoming agitated about the impending arrival of several hundred immigrants, even though it was Winnipeg which was to bear the brunt of this first large influx.

On Saturday evening, May 13, 1882, the officers of the Anglo-Jewish Association, Montreal branch, met together with representatives of the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society to plan a cooperative effort to cope with the “hourly expected arrival” of 260 Russian Jewish refugees, at least

40 being destined for Montreal. The executives of the three societies formed a joint committee to attend to the immigrants and decided to call a community conference for the next day, where a resolution was passed for the establishment of "The Jewish Immigration Aid Society."¹⁰

The new society immediately launched a fund raising campaign, and three warehouses were rented for temporary shelter. This first Immigration Aid Society, however, disbanded in the fall of 1882 and turned over its remaining assets of \$300 to the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, who carried on with the work.

In Toronto, a new organization was not established and far fewer of the newcomers remained here. On May 18, it was reported that a carload of Jewish refugees arrived the previous day and about 12 of them remained in the city, the rest being sent on to Winnipeg. A fund raising campaign was also started. On June 3, when another group of 70 refugees arrived from the east, they were housed overnight and sent on to the northwest the next day.¹¹

WINNIPEG'S PROBLEM

With 340 virtually destitute Jewish refugees from Russia arriving in Winnipeg during May and June, it is obvious that the brunt of the burden of assisting the newcomers fell on that young community. The total population of Winnipeg at the time was 8,000, including 23 Jews. There is no doubt why this large group was sent to the west. They had been promised land, but when they arrived no land was available in spite of the best efforts put forward by Sir Alexander Galt up to that point. The newcomers were housed in immigration sheds. The Winnipeg city council took up the problem and called for community-wide subscriptions to aid the immigrants. Church leaders voiced their support and contributed from their personal funds, and the established Jewish residents immediately raised \$360 among themselves. Some temporary employment was obtained for the men at hauling lumber and railway construction and for the women in domestic service.

By the following winter, however, the problem became aggravated. A general relief committee was organized with Jewish and non-Jewish representatives. Philip Brown announced that the local Jews had raised over \$1,200 among themselves. The subject was widely discussed in the press and the Dominion government was severely criticized for neglecting these people who had been sent to the west with government approval.

LAND RESERVES

On July 7, 1882, Alexander Galt had again asked for land on behalf of the "Jewish Committee". He stressed the great importance "especially in view of my return to London, and future influence with leading Jews there and in Paris, that you should find the means of giving a district for settlement to these people. It cannot fail to have a good effect."

He asked for some of "the spare Mennonite townships" or some of the land which had been assigned to colonization companies about whom he spoke very bluntly: "It seems absurd to have the whole district covered with bogus application (in many cases) to the exclusion of *bona fide* settlers."¹²

When Galt spoke about spare Mennonite townships he knew what he was talking about. Since March, 1873, the government had passed several orders-in-council setting aside vast tracts of land for Mennonites. According to one report more than 26 townships had been allocated (a township comprising 36 sections at 640 acres per section).

The Mennonites were to have occupied all their land reserves by 1881, but in fact they had only taken up seven of the townships, and immigration had virtually ceased. By the time the deadline for Mennonite settlement passed, squatters were already occupying some of the land and the government was under pressure to open these reserves for general settlement. It was not just Galt's request in behalf of the Jews that was ignored; the government kept changing its mind for years in regard to the Mennonite reserves.¹³

There were similar land reserves for Scottish, French and Icelandic settlement but this policy did not prove successful. Early in the 1880's the government began providing large land tracts to private colonization companies who undertook to bring in immigrants.¹⁴

Thus when the Jews arrived in 1882, land was being held in reserve on all sides, by the Hudson's Bay Company, by the Canadian Pacific Railway, and by the colonization companies, in addition to the unfilled Mennonite townships. No one, however, was ready to make some of this land available for the Jews. One reason was obvious: at the beginning of 1882, Manitoba was at the crest of a land boom and the Jews could not pay the prices asked by speculators. If the government was not prepared to assist them by making land available quickly under the free homestead policy, it was bound to lead to difficulties and create hardships for the newcomers.



Some of the victims of the pogroms in Russia in 1881 took refuge in the arsenal at Kiev, where they were visited by Russian friends. (Photograph courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada and the Manitoba Archives.)

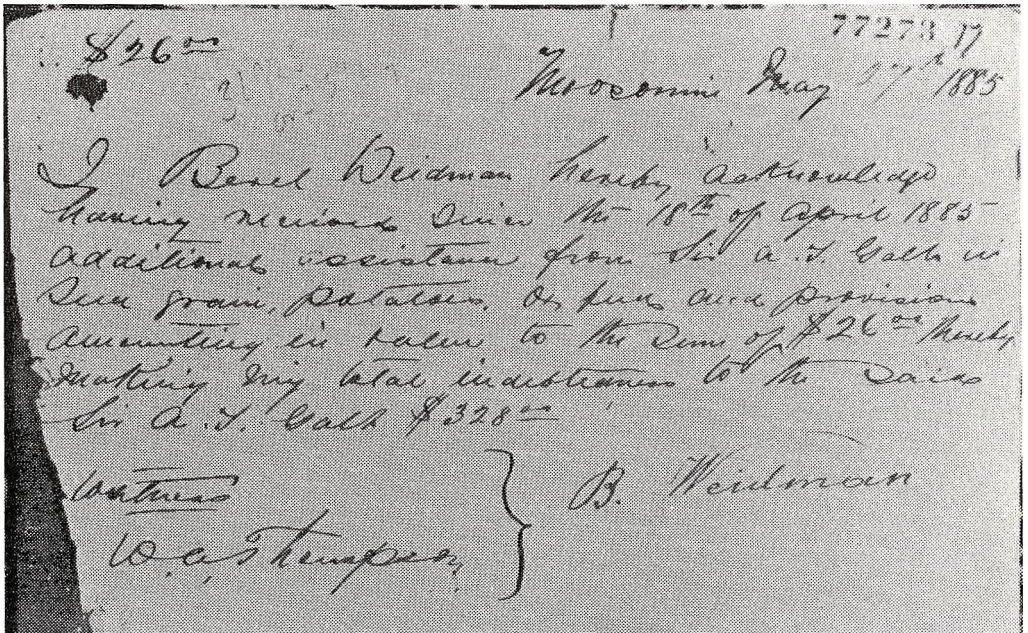


Sir Alexander T. Galt, a Father of Confederation, was Canadian High Commissioner to London from 1880 to 1883. His association with the Russian Jewish refugees began with the meeting at the Mansion House in London in early 1882 and continued for the rest of that decade. This sketch of Galt was actually done by Robert Harris, one of Canada's most distinguished painters of the late 19th and early 20th century, who was commissioned by the Government to do the famous painting of the Fathers of Confederation. (Photograph courtesy of the Confederation Centre Art Gallery and Museum, Charlottetown, P.E.I.)

Sir John A. Macdonald,
Canada's first Prime
Minister. (Photograph
courtesy of Jewish
Historical Society of
Western Canada and the
Manitoba Archives.)



John Taylor, the Icelandic agent at St. Andrews, Manitoba,
wrote to the Governor General asking consideration for the
Russian Jews. (Photograph courtesy of the Manitoba
Archives and the Jewish Historical Society of Western
Canada.)



Receipt given by Berel Weidman, one of the pioneer Jewish settlers at Moosomin, for loans
from Sir Alexander Galt in 1885. (Photograph courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of
Western Canada and the Manitoba Archives.)



Simon Lechtzier (left) and his sons Abraham and Philip, were among the Jewish pioneers who tried homesteading at Moosomin between 1884-88. Simon is seen here with his son Philip and family in Winnipeg around 1900. (Photograph courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada and the Manitoba Archives.)



Hiram (Chaim Leib) Weidman, seen here in Winnipeg with his family around 1899, together with his father Berel and his brother Mordecai, were also among the Jews who tried homesteading at Moosomin. (Photograph courtesy of the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada and the Manitoba Archives.)

Macdonald's reply to Galt's letter of July 7 is apparently unavailable, but the attitude of the government is clear from certain correspondence which preceded Galt's appeal to the Prime Minister.

In a special effort to resolve the problem, the Anglo-Jewish Association in Toronto engaged a solicitor, L.M.O. Gontlee, to investigate in Ottawa the possibility of obtaining land in Manitoba for the Jewish immigrants. At the end of June, Gontlee reported from Ottawa to E. Samuel, honorary secretary of the Anglo-Jewish Association in Toronto, that "unless very great influence is brought promptly to bear we shall be able to obtain nothing suitable to our project." Four specific townships had been requested for the Jews, but these had just been assigned by order-in-council to other parties who had applied months earlier. Gontlee actually saw the plans of the Department of the Interior which showed vast tracts of land granted to the colonization companies from the 102 meridian to the vicinity of Edmonton "in a line varying from 100 to 400 miles in breadth." He also met with Senator McPherson who was in charge of the Interior Department land branch. Gontlee explained to the Senator that unless the government used their discretionary power it seemed impossible "to obtain any available tract where we could place our people before the season closed." This could only be done if the government cancelled some existing grants. This also appeared impossible, however, because Gontlee found Prime Minister Macdonald "rather opposed to granting us any special terms."

Nevertheless, Gontlee decided to petition the government asking for "a special rule" to make some land available. He described this as "one last chance" which might succeed if Galt would use his influence with Macdonald. He stressed the need to follow this course "at once" because otherwise the Winnipeg refugees would be at a great disadvantage and "compelled to go very far west for homesteads, or possibly leave the country," and this would deter others from coming to the west. He warned that there was little chance of making proper provision for the people waiting for land unless a tract was obtained within 300 miles of Winnipeg.¹⁵

Samuel wasted no time in writing to Galt, who was then in Montreal, and the latter responded immediately with his letter of July 7, to the Prime Minister.¹⁶ But it was all to no avail.

As early as June 5, a press dispatch from Ottawa reported: "The government has made no arrangements for bringing the Jews to this country other than are made for bringing out other immigrants. The work of settling and providing for them will be carried out principally by the

Jewish residents in Canada.”¹⁷

The preceding January there had been a different kind of press report. A Jewish delegation from Montreal met John Henry Pope, the Minister of Agriculture, in Ottawa. On its return, the press interviewed “Mr. Cohen, president of the Canadian colonization scheme for the immigration of persecuted Jews from Russia to the Northwest,” who reported the Minister had given assurances “he would assist with all his aid.”¹⁸

After the arrival of the Russian Jewish immigrants in May and June, the *Manitoba Free Press* called into serious question the attitude of the government towards the refugees. A *Free Press* editorial charged that “misrepresentation” had been made to the newcomers regarding provision of land and the wherewithal to work the land. It predicted that the experience of the Russian refugees would be “frequently repeated” when “thousands of immigrants will be landing here who will have only their strength and the will to work as their capital.” It would be against “the interest of the country that any of these should be turned away.” Most of them would come expecting to acquire lands of their own immediately and not to work for several years “as common laborers” to earn the money to obtain their own farms. “What they will need,” the *Manitoba Free Press* urged, “is that which the Jewish refugees say was promised them. . . namely, an advance of the necessary means.” A satisfactory answer to this question was needed not only for “the present destitute immigrants . . . (but for) thousands of others.” Failure in this instance would mean a great loss to the country, the paper warned.¹⁹

A second editorial a few days later blamed “mismanagement of immigrant matters” for the measures which were then being taken “to prevent any further immigration of these people to Manitoba . . .”

“The few families who have been here for a length of time . . . but find the burden . . . more than they can bear . . . They find it impossible to do now what the Dominion government ought to have done before sending these people here . . .”

The paper suggested that in view of their language difficulties and their arrival late in the season, the immigrants should have been given special consideration. “A little assistance from the government, along with the means possessed by a minority of the people themselves would have laid the foundations for a large and flourishing colony.” Because of the absence of such help, however, “immigration will at once be checked.”

The editorial predicted that the 350 people who had come would “no doubt acquire the English language” and gradually save enough money to

live comfortably in homes of their own. For them the difficulties would soon be overcome "but the country will be a loser for all time" because of the lack "of any system for locating this class of immigrants on farm lands." A little statesmanship "would have resulted in . . . thousands of industrious and valuable settlers instead of the small number . . . now found to be inconveniently large."²⁰

The editorial writer seemed to have the gift of prophecy but the immigration agents who reported about the Jewish newcomers presented a rather prejudiced view.

Writing to Ottawa about the Russian Jewish refugees on June 20, C. R. H. Warnock, acting immigration agent, noted first that "a dozen or more are utterly useless for this country." This group included some blind people, and a few too old to work while "others are actually too lazy." Warnock acknowledged that about 100 of the men were already "earning good wages" working for the C.P.R., but he considered their lack of English a "great drawback towards employing these people." Another drawback was they would not work on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and therefore only worked five days a week. For these reasons Warnock considered "the immigration of these people" was not a success and he called for it to be stopped.²¹

A few weeks later, in July, at about the time that Galt appealed to Macdonald "Do not forget my Jews,"²² immigration agent William Hespeler wrote to Ottawa condemning the Jewish immigration as "a mistaken move." He had already concluded that "those people are not nor ever will become agriculturists." He also claimed they were not mechanics, made "very inferior ordinary laborers" and were simply "a *trading class*" in which capacity they could not make a living "having no means, nor knowledge of the English language." Hespeler was worried that even the majority who had gone west to work on the railway would come back in the fall and be "on the hands of the government." He suggested that some of them should be removed "to some more congenial part of the Dominion" before winter arrived.²³

Hespeler conceded that the same difficulty would arise with "a certain class of English immigrants . . . without any experience of any kind" who were enticed by the idea of 160 acres of free land. He warned that the government might even have to provide winter help for another "practical and desirable class of immigrants" who came with what should have been sufficient means but were affected by inflation 1882-style.²⁴

During this period many of the immigrants did find other occupations

and left the immigration sheds to find their own housing. The Jewish committee contributed to the support of those who needed help, while the officials continued to write negative reports, particularly about those few who could not or would not move out of the immigration sheds and who were coming to be regarded as a public nuisance.²⁵

The Jews who reached Winnipeg in the spring of 1882 had actually expected to proceed without delay to assigned lands. Nothing had been done, however, except for the appointment of Victor Victorson as liaison between the Jewish community, the refugees and the Dominion immigration agent. Apart from Mr. Gontlee's efforts in Ottawa, Victorson and several of the newcomers set out for the Qu'Appelle Valley in search of a homesteading site, but they were unsuccessful.²⁶

In spite of the original indications of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Agriculture that land would be assigned and aid provided, the first Jewish immigrants to Western Canada remained without land during all of 1882 and all of 1883. Two years later, Galt was still trying to get land for the Jews. On April 1, 1884, he wrote the Minister of the Interior, for the Mansion House Committee, that it was still intended "to place on homesteads from 40 to 50 families of those sent to Winnipeg two years ago." He explained that the objective was to test "the suitability of these people for agriculture." He claimed to have at his disposal "adequate funds" and urged the desirability of placing these people in one locality "as was done with the Mennonites and Scotlanders."²⁷

After this incredible two-year delay, Galt's plea was at last heeded. In May, 1884 some 28 families started out for the assigned location near Moosomin. The total of about 340 immigrants who had arrived in 1882 included 150 or more adult men, all of whom had expected to take up homesteads. It is hardly to be wondered, however, that during the two year interval, as predicted by the *Manitoba Free Press*, many of them had found other occupations and were no longer interested in becoming homesteaders.

THE MOOSOMIN EXPERIENCE

The Jewish settlement at Moosomin became known as "New Jerusalem", but its name was hardly a harbinger of success. The settlers encountered many difficulties for which they were totally unprepared. At about the same time and in the same district the experienced Scottish crofters had similar problems. Neither the crofters, the Jews nor another settlement group of east-end Londoners were prepared for three years of

bad crops in addition to poor market conditions which affected them all equally in the years 1884, 1885 and 1886. Nevertheless, only of the Jews at Moosomin does immigration historian Norman Macdonald say "they failed not because of poor location but because they had no aptitude for agricultural purposes."²⁸ For the other homesteaders who failed he advances every valid reason. Even for the colonization companies, with whom he has little sympathy, he presents all the reasons they gave for being unable to fulfill their obligations, particularly "external circumstances beyond their control." By July, 1885 the companies were memorializing the Privy Council that they had "met with unexpected and insuperable difficulties."²⁹

At Moosomin, however, the New Jerusalemites were still hoping for their first harvest. They had surely never heard of the Privy Council, but they were learning first hand about the insuperable difficulties of settlement in the west. The reaction of the Jews to the failure of their initial efforts was different from would-be homesteaders of other origins. When the immigrants were Mennonite farmers. Scottish crofters or Ukrainian peasants, Ottawa was confident that they would stay on the land, as farming was their tradition and they knew of no other calling. The Jews were prepared to give homesteading a serious try but if they encountered nothing but failure they could not and would not stay on the land. The Jews may have been imbued with the "back to the land" ideal but they were not peasants. They came with a more varied cultural background than other immigrants, and they were, by tradition, more mobile and more versatile at earning a living.

GALT DISILLUSIONED

When Alexander Galt agreed to assist the resettlement of refugee Jews in Western Canada, it is natural to assume that he felt some sympathy for them in the knowledge of the persecution which had caused them to flee from Russia. It is understandable, however, that he did not undertake to assist the Mansion House project for purely altruistic motives. He felt that the encouragement of homestead settlement by poor Russian Jews would help to bring financial investments in the west by some of the wealthy European Jews. He certainly had far more in common with the Montagues and the Rothschilds who were leaders of the Mansion House Committee in London than he did with the Weidmans, the Lechtziers and the other Russian Jews who tried to become homesteaders at Moosomin.

Probably this is why in May, 1886, Galt expressed concern not for the

crop failures encountered by the "New Jerusalem" settlers but for the fact that "they have united in a general refusal" to sign for cash advances received. He conveyed his concern to the Minister of the Interior as follows: "The conduct of these people is the worse because the committee have been most kind to them, having forgotten all the arrears of interest till May 1, instant and only requiring the principle in ten years with 5 per cent interest." He warned that failure to settle this matter satisfactorily "will close the door upon all further effort on the part of the friends of the Jews in Europe."³⁰

Interior Minister Thomas White advised Galt that his information about the refusal to acknowledge advances was not entirely correct. White explained that all the settlers had acknowledged the first advances. The refusal to sign had been "only for the later ones, for clothing, provisions and seed grain, given since January 1." The government could not compel any further acknowledgement he explained, as under the law . . . acknowledgement must be voluntary to justify the granting of a lien.³¹

The 27 men who took homesteads at Moosomin in 1884 had in fact acknowledged advances to a total of \$10,521 and the Mansion House Committee had been granted liens to this amount.³² If they refused to acknowledge the new advances, it could be interpreted as a reaction to repeated crop failures and as a measure of self defence. Were they really doing anything more serious than the colonization companies who petitioned the Privy Council for relief?

By the beginning of 1888 the situation of the Jews at Moosomin had deteriorated even further and Sir Alexander Galt declared: "The Jewish colony at Moosomin is a failure. The Jews have sold their crops, the cattle I gave them and turned to their natural (!) avocation for peddling." His concern now was for the Mansion House Committee "who have expended about 5,000 pounds on these vagabonds" and he now inquired whether the acknowledgements registered in Ottawa would give the London committee "any claim on the land." In writing to A. M. Burgess, secretary of the Commission on Dominion Lands, Galt brought into question his own motives towards the Jews when he confessed: "... from the outset I protested against the experiment as I never thought they would make farmers."³³

Galt's Jewish "vagabonds" undoubtedly did turn to peddling when they found that their farming efforts failed. A number of them felt, however, that in spite of their lack of success, the effort which they had put forth en-

titled them to some claim on the land. Mordecai Weidman was the first to make formal application for a patent on his homestead and others followed. The controversy over who would obtain title to the Moosomin lands lasted for many years. The position of the settlers was complicated by two factors. First, they had to establish that they had fulfilled the minimum requirements of settlement and land development. Secondly, there was the issue of naturalization. On the other hand, the Mansion House Committee and their trustees in Canada tried to obtain title to the lands on the basis of the liens which they held. This situation was not helped by government representatives trying to enforce regulations which were subject to reinterpretation and amendment over a period of several decades. The long drawn out procedures that resulted surely caused mutual feelings of disillusionment among those involved and must have colored the attitude of government officials towards future Jewish immigrants.

FOOTNOTES

1. W. D. Scott, *Immigration by Races*, Vol. VII of *Canada and its Provinces*, pp. 571-572, eds. Adam Shortt and Arthur Doughty, (Toronto, Glasgow, Brook & Co., 1913).
2. Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, (Montreal, Canadian Jewish Congress and Jewish Colonization Association, 1966) pp.25-27.
3. *The American Israelite*, June 3, 1831, p.383.
4. Letters of Alexander Galt to John A. Macdonald, January 25 and February 3, 1882, in Macdonald papers (Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ont.) Cited hereafter as Macdonald Papers.
5. Letter of John Taylor, Icelandic agent, St. Andrews, Manitoba, to the Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada, February 13, 1882, Macdonald Papers.
6. Letter of I. DeWinton to John A. Macdonald, February 18, 1882, Macdonald Papers, pp.31996-31997.
7. *Ibid.*, Macdonald to Lorne, February 20, 1882.
8. *Ibid.*, Macdonald to Galt, February 27, 1882.
9. J. Pope, Selections from correspondence at Sir John A. Macdonald by his literary executor Sir Joseph Pope (Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1929) p. 286. Macdonald to Galt, February 26, 1882, Macdonald Papers.
10. *Montreal Gazette*, Monday, May 15, 1882, reported this conference as "A general meeting of Israelites in this city . . . for the purpose of forming a society for the protection of their oppressed foreign co-religionists."
11. *The Globe*, Toronto, May 18, May 27 and June 3, 1882.
12. Macdonald Papers, 26A, Vol. 219, pp. 93533-41.
13. Norman Macdonald, *Canada: Immigration and Colonization*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966) pp. 199-204.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 237.
15. L. M. O. Gontlee to E. Samuels, June 29, 1882, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 26A, pp. 93539-41.
16. *Ibid.*, Samuels to Galt, July 3, 1882.

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18. *Montreal Gazette*, Monday, January 23, 1882, p. 3.
19. *Manitoba Free Press*, June 5, 1882.
20. *Ibid.*, June 10, 1882.
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22. Galt to Macdonald, July 8, 1882, Macdonald Papers, Vol. 219, p.93543.
23. W. Hespeler to J. Lowe, July 10, 1882, Canada, Department of Agriculture, Public Archives of Canada, RG 1711, Vol. 345, No. 36-718.
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25. *Ibid.*, Hespeler, Sept. 11, 1882, Vo. 349 No. 37252, and W. C. B. Grahame, Oct. 23, 1882, Vol. 352 No. 37650 and No. 10, 1882, Vol. 353 No. 37882 and 37823.
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27. Settlement of Russian Refugee Jews under Mansion House Committee, Public Archives of Canada, Dept. of Interior, Dominion Lands Bureau 73568 (1), RG 15, 1A, Vol. 87.
28. Norman Macdonald, *Canada; Immigration and Colonization*, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1966) p. 222.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 240, and footnote 20 on p. 329.
30. Galt to Thomas White, Minister of the Interior, May 31, 1886, Canada Department of Interior Dominion Lands Bureau #73568 (1), Public Archives of Canada.
31. *Ibid.*, White to Galt, June 1, 1886.
32. Privy Council Order #622, April 4, 1887, Belkin appendix #2, p. 212. Belkin, *op.cit.*, appendix 2, p. 212.
33. Galt to A. M. Burgess, secretary of the commission of Dominion Lands, January 30, 1888, Public Archives of Canada, Canada Department of Interior, Dominion Lands Bureau #73568 (1).