

Enter The Jew

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Résumé

Dans cet article Evelyn Miller décrit l'apport économique et culturel apporté par les juifs qui ont habité la Province de Quebec. Elle nous donne d'abord des détails sur la situation politique et économique en Nouvelle France et elle fait remonter l'arrivée de plusieurs hommes d'affaires juifs au commencement de la colonie.

L'auteur commence ainsi à décrire la vie de Aaron Hart, qui avait choisi de vivre à Trois Rivières, et d'autres juifs qui n'avaient aucune difficulté à s'insérer dans la société canadienne et à devenir parfaitement bilingues. Des articles dans les journaux de l'époque attestent que ces juifs étaient acceptés sur le plan social et par les Anglais et par les Français.

L'écrivain décrit la variété des activités choisies par les juifs de cette période lointaine. Elle nous montre aussi comment ils vivaient et elle nous parle de leurs préoccupations et de leur façon d'élever les enfants. Tout le long de l'article nous retrouvons les descendants des familles qui étaient présentes dans la colonie dès son commencement. Nous suivons ainsi leurs activités, leurs intérêts et leur contribution à l'épanouissement de cette province. L'auteur souligne à tout moment que ces juifs ne perdaient pas de vue leurs principes religieux et qu'ils s'efforçaient de promouvoir l'établissement de synagogues et d'écoles juives.

Evelyn Miller conclut son article en attirant notre attention sur le fait que la société juive de nos jours peut être très fière du travail fait par ses prédécesseurs, hommes et femmes, qui ont su donner aux juifs des droits fondamentaux dans ce pays et qui ont su se faire respecter et s'affirmer.

For many years there had been war along the borders separating the colonies of the English and the French. From the Maritimes to the Mississippi Valley military expeditions and Indian raids had been the common experience, while English fur traders and settlers constantly encroached on the rich lands of the West, lands originally explored and claimed by New France.¹ Each new incursion was countered by the construction of

another fort, which soon, in many cases, was transformed into yet one more fur trading post.² Now this far-flung territory was placing an intolerable strain on the supplies of an economy faltering under the corruption of the Grand Societe and insufficient aid from France.³ The long years of jockeying for the dominant position in this vast new continent were almost over.

September 8, 1760—and Montreal, French Canada's last stronghold—surrendered. Now, for the first time since Cardinal Richelieu's ruling of 1627,⁴ French and English, Catholic and Protestant—and Jew—mingled in Canada. The French group was a self-contained, strongly cohesive society divided into the three classes of aristocrat and higher clergy, bourgeois townsman and *habitant*. The English consisted of army officers and government officials to administer the new territory, soldiers and merchants and traders from the English colonies below the border, come to explore the possibilities of this newly opened frontier. The latter were accustomed to a much greater freedom and fuller participation in the managing of their affairs; indeed the struggle to ensure even greater autonomy was less than a generation away. They were used to English civil and commercial law,⁵ which varied greatly from French jurisprudence with its basis in private rights granted under the seigneurial system and emphasizing family affairs.⁶ These newcomers were the men who would lay the foundations for a new and different Canada.

The earliest Protestant settlers were predominantly English, Scots and Irish, ex-soldiers, merchants and ambitious young men, many from overseas, who sought the opportunities offered in this newly-opened territory.⁷ Among them were several Jewish traders. Indeed, Chapman Abrahams and Aaron Hart arrived *with* the English armies, the former as a supplier to General Haldimand,⁸ the latter as Commissary Officer to General Amherst's army.⁹

Aaron Hart's rank, incidentally, has been long a subject of discussion, as it is known that at this period no Jew could hold a commission in the regular British army, though they could—and did—in the militia. But the Commissariat was a special case. Corresponding to today's Quartermasters Corps, it was not directly a part of the army establishment. Rather, the responsibility for providing sufficient food and forage for the army was given to a civilian, who would organise a group capable of providing the required provisions. The individual heading this group would be given a military title and permission to wear a uniform, enabling him to act as liason between the army and the civil authorities and allow-

ing him the necessary authority to commandeer civilian aid.¹⁰

This, then, was the reason behind rank and gorget granted to Aaron Hart. A miniature of the gentleman, in full military uniform, which was pointed about this time, may be seen in the McCord Museum. It shows a pleasant and surprisingly delicate-looking young man, considering his length of service and responsibility.

Between 1760 and 1763 these Jewish colonists and their families, numbering less than a score, settled in Montreal, Three Rivers and Quebec. A few later returned to New York or Philadelphia but the dozen or so who remained became, literally, the founders of to-day's Jewish community. Because their descendents became an integral part of the community, the Harts, Davids, Solomons, Franks and Hays, together with the later Judah and Joseph arrivals, are considered the fathers of Jewish settlement in Canada. They founded the first synagogue,¹¹ which followed the Sephardic form of service, as did all the North American synagogues.

There still remain many gaps in our knowledge but we do know that Hart was a former member of the German Legion, who came to America with Colonel Haldimand and Colonel Bouquet in the early 1750's.¹² He settled in Three Rivers, entered the fur, grain and lumber trades, established a general store and soon began to purchase property, first in Three Rivers and then in the surrounding districts.¹³

Levy Solomons and Ezkiel Solomons, who were probably cousins, were fur traders and Levy Solomons also had been a civilian purveyor to the army.¹⁴ Benjamin Lyons was another purveyor who entered the fur trade,¹⁵ as did the previously mentioned Chapman Abrahams.¹⁶ Lazarus David, originally from Swansea, Wales,¹⁷ opened a general store stocked with local items and goods imported from England. Samuel Jacobs, a merchant and army purveyor, settled in St. Denis, Quebec¹⁸ and, like Hyam Myers of Quebec City, maintained a close connection with the merchants in New York, Philadelphia and Rhode Island.¹⁹ Abraham Franks, Andrew Hays, Simon Levy, all came from families established below the border for two or three generations²⁰ and, through their familial and business ties, formed part of the loosely woven commercial network of the time.²¹

Several of the original settlers and their descendants, as well as a few of the later newcomers, would become large landowners, merchants and fur traders. As today, however, the majority were small shop-keepers, agents or salesmen or notaries, with the addition of the more unusual trades of

auctioneer and innkeeper.

An interesting fact is that all these new settlers, both English and Jewish, became bilingual in a very short time. All notices and advertisements in the *Quebec Gazette* were, of course, in both French and English, published in parallel columns, but correspondence in French was received by Aaron Hart from some of his customers²² and notarial deeds and other legal notices were always in French if that was the language of the other party.

Synagogues of that time, and their contributions to their new country shaped the destiny of these first, tiny Jewish communities and laid the foundations on which was built the Canadian Jewish community we know today.

Perhaps here it would be opportune to explain the reason for the Sephardic rite being the only one in use in North America. In 1654 the Dutch colonies in South America were recaptured by the Portuguese, and the Jews, many of whose families had fled from Portugal to Holland or had cast aside their Marrano covering, now had to move once more. Special arrangements were made with the Portuguese authorities to allow the Jews time to leave and then began the island-hopping up through the Caribbean, to Curacao, St. Thomas and the other islands. A small group eventually arrived in New Amsterdam where, to the dismay of the Governor, Peter Stuyvesant, the Jews were permitted to remain, mainly because of pressure brought to bear by the Dutch West Indies Company, many of whose large shareholders were Jews.

These first Jews to arrive in what later became New York City founded the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, according to the ritual with which they were familiar. The synagogues in Newport and later, in Philadelphia, Charleston, Savannah and Richmond, all used the Sephardic form of prayer,¹³ even though a number of their members were Ashkenazim. So it was natural that when the Jewish colonists founded the first synagogue in Lower Canada they should follow the same pattern, particularly as many had been and some still were members of "Shearith Israel" in New York. In fact, it was to their sister congregation in New York and the mother congregation in London that the Montreal synagogue turned whenever advice or aid was needed.

Little notice has been given so far to the presence of Jews in the fur trade but indications are it was far more important than their numbers suggest. Aaron Hart was connected with Nicholas Montour, a member of

the first North West Company,²⁴ Levy Solomons is mentioned as one of two traders who escaped being killed in an Indian attack en route to Detroit²⁵ while Ezekiel Solomons' escape from the Indians who held him prisoner after their attack on Michilimackinac is chronicled in Irving Katz's *Beth-El Story*.²⁶

Myer Michaels was a member of the Beaver Club,²⁷ which required each member to have spent at least one winter in the "upper country." A document relating to the Hudson Bay Company's debt to David David's estate²⁸ and the papers of Jacob Franks show their large interests in the fur trade.²⁹ Samuel Judah, a cousin and later brother-in-law of Aaron Hart, was also a large fur trader. Unfortunately, nearly all the documents for his part in the fur trade were burned with other Hart family papers by his great grandnephew, Lewis Hart.³⁰

Regarding the previously mentioned Ezekiel Solomons perhaps a few additional facts may be of some interest. In a well researched book *The Fur Trade*³¹ it is stated that Ezekiel Solomons was a partner in a loose federation of fur traders referred to as "The Pedlars." This group ranged as far west as Saskatchewan, near the Hudson Bay Company's trading post of Cumberland House, and among the partners were such well known names as Alexander McKenzie, Simon McTavish and Charles Grant, all later to become partners in the legendary North West Company.³² Ezekiel Solomons remained in Michilimackinac after the Treaty of 1783, which placed Mackinac within the borders of the United States. As a result, in 1964 the Senate of the State of Michigan introduced a resolution proclaiming Ezekiel Solomons as the first Jewish settler in Michigan, and the Jewish Historical Society of Michigan presented the Mackinac Island State Commission with an historic marker to place on the site where Michigan's first Jewish settler had traded³³ - an honour indeed for one of the founding members of the Portuguese Congregation in Montreal.

A member of the Jacob Franks family, though not connected with the trade, lived an equally interesting, though less financially successful life. John Franks, believed to be a brother of Abraham Franks, our original settler, became a chimney overseer and inspector in Quebec. After several years he moved to Montreal and in 1781 bought two lots of land on the slope of St. Louis. Here he installed an open-air pleasure garden, modelled after the famous Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens in London, where one could sip refreshments in a garden setting while listening to musicians and viewing juggling or other acts of entertainment. Unfortunately, this was not a paying proposition and in 1788 the property was

seized, to be purchased a year later by Richard Dillon, later proprietor of Dillon's Hotel. After he too failed, the property was sold to Joseph Frobisher, one of the wealthiest of the North West Company's fur traders. Frobisher built his estate "Beaver Hall" on the site,³⁴ situated opposite and just below the location of the present Bell Telephone Company's head office. Meanwhile, Franks returned to Quebec where he became Fire Superintendent and organised a series of annual balls or assemblies³⁵ which became a feature of the winter social life of the city. As a footnote regarding Vauxhall Gardens, in the mid-nineteenth century two French gentlemen opened a similar type of establishment in the east end of the city, called Sohmer Park, modelled on John Franks venture. They were more successful and the park remained in existence and provided pleasure to two or three generations of Montrealers.

Jews were also involved in early Canadian banking. David David was one of the founding shareholders and a Director of the Bank of Montreal.³⁶ The Hart Bank in Three Rivers was founded in 1835 by Moses Hart to help overcome the shortage of specie which so constricted trade at that time. It was dissolved at his death in 1852, when all debts were settled and the depositors' accounts paid and closed.³⁷ In a later generation, Abraham Joseph of Quebec was a founding Director of La Banque Provinciale and later president of the Stadacona Bank;³⁸ in Montreal his brother, J.H. Joseph, was a founder of the Union Bank and an original stockholder in the Bank of British North America. In addition to his involvement in banking, Jacob H. Joseph was associated with several of the early railroad companies, with the first company to connect Canada and the United States by telegraph and with the company which laid the first trans-Atlantic cable, as well as being president of several other companies.³⁹

Another brother, Jesse Joseph, was also a prominent member of the Montreal business community. He was president of several companies, including the Montreal Gas Company and the Montreal Street Railroad Company forerunner of the present Metropolitan Transportation Company of Montreal.⁴⁰ As we have seen, the Jews integrated very well into the economic life of their new country. But what of the social and all important religious aspects of life for the Jew in Canada?

In the main, social relationships were cordial, as evidenced by various entries in contemporary diaries, in correspondence and by invitations to official functions found in several collections of private papers. Samuel David's diary frequently refers to dances, dinners and assemblies given by

either French or English hosts, at which he was a guest.⁴¹ From Aaron Hart on, many of the Hart family were Masons and M.J. Hays played an important role in the dedication ceremonies for the new Freemason's Hall in 1846.⁴² Eleazar David acted as steward for the Bachelors' Ball while A.P. Hart's mare was entered in the first King's Plate race held in Canada - and won.⁴³ Abraham Joseph's diary for January, 1842 contains several references to a smart new sleigh built to his order in which he several times takes the local belle for a drive⁴⁴ and at a later date, the Josephs and de Solas attended many official functions and were frequent guests at private affairs.⁴⁵

But despite the constant business and social mingling and though there was a degree of assimilation and intermarriage, the majority of the Jewish community maintained a strict adherence to their religion. In 1768, just eight years after the first arrival, the Portuguese Congregation "Shearith Israel" was formed. Ten years later, the minutes record the decision to erect a building,⁴⁶ signed by almost all the first Jewish settlers.

Though Aaron Hart's name was not included in the original synagogue deeds, the practices of Judaism were very important to him. A letter written to his son Moses in 1786 tells him if he can't come home for Pesach, to go to New York to keep the Holiday there.⁴⁷ At a somewhat later date Hart and his family supported a synagogue and made available a burying ground for all the Jewish residents of Three Rivers.⁴⁸ Aaron Hart's nephew, Henry Joseph, who lived in Berthier, learned the laws of *shechita* in order to ensure kosher meat for his family;⁴⁹ the funeral eulogy for his wife, Rachel Solomons Joseph, describes in some detail the orthodox observance which prevailed in her household.⁵⁰

Until 1838, religious education was the responsibility of the home, though the boys might be sent away for a few years to receive their education, religious and secular, from a Hebrew teacher, not always, alas, competent. There are several letters from Aaron Hart to his son Ezekiel, at that time working in New York, criticising the quality of the Hebrew teaching being received by Aaron's two youngest sons, Benjamin and Alexander. These young boys were sent to school first in Philadelphia and then in New York.⁵¹ However, when the congregation was able, after 1838, to support a minister, it was agreed a more formal Hebrew education would be preferable. In 1845 Reverend David Piza agreed to extend his engagement for one more year, provided he be allowed "to keep a school for education of Jewish children without charge" and that he attend them four days a week, at least three hours a day.⁵² As for the girls'

education, they learned their “3 R’s” at various small private schools, often with the addition of drawing, dancing and needlework lessons, the last learned at the convent.⁵³

As the second generation reached maturity, their place in the community broadened. David and Samuel David became important merchants, supplying goods for the fur trade,⁵⁴ as did their brother Moses, in Sandwich, Upper Canada. Levy Solomon Jr. and his brother Benjamin owned a tobacco and snuff factory and sold imported delicacies as well.⁵⁵ The Solomon’s factory was located on Notre Dame Street near Molson’s Brewery and in 1815 the following advertisement for the firm appeared in the *Montreal Herald*: “Fresh chocolate 5000 pounds Cardwell and Solomons best Albany Chocolate. Part just received, the remainder daily expected from LaPrairie. L. & B. Solomons & Co.” Before Victoria Bridge was built, LaPrairie was the entry point for all goods coming from the United States or from the South shore. Every piece of merchandise, every vegetable, every bale of hay had to be brought to Montreal across the St. Lawrence, by boat in summer or by carts travelling the “ice roads” in winter.

Henry Joseph had large shipping interests, and chartered ships to carry cargoes between Canada and England; he also provided cargo space on ships plying the Great Lakes, in which goods were carried to the fur trading stations.⁵⁶ In the cholera epidemic of 1832, both Henry Joseph and one of his sons were among the victims. Accounts written by Arthur Wellington Hart to his uncle, Moses, give some idea of the helplessness felt during such an outbreak. June 14, 1832:

“Cholera is frightful. 50-60 deaths since yesterday morning. Viger’s brother, Gravel and many others and Mr. Ross of the English Church is dying.”

and again on June 26:

“The cholera epidemic has taken 1270 up to Friday night. We are panic struck.”⁵⁷

The Harts, who were landowners and successful merchants, became the first Jews to enter politics.⁵⁸ The story of Ezekiel Hart’s election to the Legislative Assembly of Lower Canada is well known. When he was first elected as member for Three Rivers in 1807, objections were raised in the House because of the manner in which he took the Oath of Office. Re-elected for the session of 1808-09, objections again were raised, this time because of Hart’s religion, and these continued till the end of the session. In October, 1809, he sought election once more. This time, Hart was defea-

ted, marking his permanent withdrawal from politics.⁵⁹

A generation later, Ezekiel's son, Samuel Becancour, Samuel's uncle, Benjamin Hart, and Moses Judah Hays revived the question of Jewish civil rights. In June 1830, Samuel Becancour Hart's name was placed on the list for Commissioners of the Peace, District of Three Rivers. Later, however, it was withdrawn on the grounds that he was ineligible, as Jews could not take the Oath of Qualification. A petition was presented by the Jews to the Legislative Assembly on January 31, 1831, requesting they "be allowed to hold public office and be given the same privileges as other citizens."⁶⁰ This was followed by a petition by S.B. Hart requesting the same privileges, which outlined his family history in and contributions to Lower Canada.⁶¹

The petition by the Jewish community was sent to a grievance committee of the House and the resulting bill entitled "An Act to declare persons possessing the Jewish religion entitled to all the Rights and privileges of the other subjects of His Majesty in this Province" was passed on March 31, 1831. The bill was then sent to His Majesty for Royal Assent, was received on April 12, 1832 and in June was proclaimed in Quebec by the Governor, Lord Aylmer.⁶² Known officially as 1st William IV Chap 57, it is more often referred to as the Magna Carta of Canadian Jews.

In 1833 Samuel Becancour's name again appeared on the List for Commissioners and again he accepted. There still remained some official doubt as to whether he could qualify because of the wording of the Oath of Abjuration which contained the words "on true faith of a Christian." Finally, after much correspondence, S.B. Hart sent a notarised statement to the government which claimed he had complied with all the requirements for office and took up his duties as Justice of the Peace for the district.⁶³

However, Benjamin Hart and Moses J. Hays, whose names had been included in the List for the District of Montreal, were advised by their legal counsel, Aaron Philip Hart, that legally they could not accept the office so long as this phrase was contained in the oath. In February 1834 a special committee of the Legislative Assembly heard evidence on this point, with the result that an amendment was requested whereby the phrase could be omitted in specific cases. For several reasons no immediate action was taken, but on August 5, 1837 Queen Victoria signed the commissions appointing Benjamin Hart and Moses J. Hayes Justices of the Peace.⁶⁴ In 1841, an act was passed which included this amendment, with the additional proviso that the law applied to naturalised subjects as

well as to the native-born.⁶⁵ Surely this first charter of human rights was not an inconsiderable achievement by a Jewish population which numbered no more than 137 persons in the whole of Canada.⁶⁶

You have already heard of Moses Judah Hays in connection with the Masons and for his efforts to obtain civil rights for all Canadian Jews. A son of the pioneer settler Andrew Hays and his wife Abigail, or Branny, Hays, in many ways Moses Judah was a remarkable man. He was an active Mason from an early age, and, as treasurer of the Portuguese Congregation, was placed in charge of erecting the new synagogue on Chenneville Street.⁶⁷ A founding stockholder of the Bank of Montreal, Hays was the proprietor of the Montreal Waterworks Company, which he purchased from the original owners in 1832 and operated till it was purchased by the City in 1845.⁶⁸ M.J. Hays owned a building near Bonsecours Street on the top of which he built a reservoir, the lower floors housing municipal offices. During one of the Council meetings, this reservoir overflowed,⁶⁹ a situation which definitely placed a damper on the proceedings.

One of Montreal's better known hotels was Hays House, with the Hays Theatre built as an extension onto the back of the hotel. Erected in 1848 by M.J. Hays, it was situated on the north east corner of Dalhousie Square, the theatre extending from Champs de Mars Street to Notre Dame.⁷⁰

In 1849, when the Parliament buildings in Montreal were burned, Moses Judah Hays offered Parliament the use of Hays House. The offer was accepted and the end of the 1848-49 session was held in Hays' hotel, after which Parliament removed to Kingston.⁷¹

Like so many other landmarks, in 1852 Hays House and theatre fell victim to one of Montreal's periodic fires, but the drop curtain of the theatre, which depicted Windsor Castle from a ruin in the foreground, was saved and later graced the stage of the Theatre Royal on Cote Street. As a footnote, the McCord Museum has a watercolour by James Duncan, depicting the burning of Hays House and Theatre.⁷²

M.J. Hays became Chief of Police in 1845, and in his official capacity he was responsible for helping to care for the victims of the typhus or "ship fever" epidemic which was brought to Montreal by the Irish immigrants who had contracted it on shipboard, where it had spread with terrifying rapidity in the crowded quarters of the steerage.⁷³ Moses Judah later became Superintendent of Police - the equivalent of a Justice of the Peace - and, when that office was abolished in 1854, he became Police

Commissioner, an office he held until his death in 1861.

The third generation witnessed the entrance of the Jews into the legal and medical professions, as well as continuing the previous generations' activities in the militia forces of the country. Indeed, from 1760 on, through the American invasion of Canada in 1775-76,⁷⁴ the War of 1812,⁷⁵ the Rebellion of 1837-38⁷⁶ and the Fenian Raids of the 1860's and 1870,⁷⁷ Jews played an active role in defending the country of which they felt so much a part.

Jewish entrance into the legal profession began when Aaron Ezekiel, son of Ezekiel Hart, was granted a license to practice in 1824.⁷⁸ He was followed by several other Hart and David family members as well as by Gershom Joseph, who became the first Jewish Q.C.⁷⁹

In 1835 Frederick Weber Hart, son of Benjamin Hart, became the first Jewish doctor to graduate from McGill,⁸⁰ while his cousin and fellow student, Aaron Hart David, after taking his preliminary courses at McGill, finished his studies at Edinburgh. He then returned to Montreal where he had a distinguished career, climaxing his many activities by becoming a founder, and later dean, of Bishop's College Medical School. On March 9, 1871, Dr. David was appointed professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine and gave his opening lecture on October 4th in rented rooms, situated at the corner of McGill and Notre Dame Streets. At the Medical School's first convocation, in the spring of 1872, all faculty members, including Dr. David, received the degree of DCL, *honoris causa*. He continued to hold the chair of the Theory and Practice of Medicine until November 1, 1880 when, as Professor Emeritus, he delivered his last lecture.

In addition to his medical practice and teaching duties, Dr. David was a trustee of the Portuguese Congregation for many years and a member of the Natural History Society of Montreal. As well, he served as attending physician for the Montreal Hebrew Philanthropic Society and its successor, the Young Mens' Hebrew Benevolent Society.⁸¹

In the same year that Dr. David retired, the Governors' Minutes of McGill University record the appointment of Lewis Hart, great grandson of Aaron Hart, as lecturer on the Theory and Practice of Notarial Deeds and Proceedings. He was the first notary to be appointed to McGill's Law Faculty, in a position created for him.⁸² Despite its small size, the Jewish community played a distinguished part in the legal and medical circles of the day.

Indeed, the second the third quarters of the nineteenth century were

a burgeoning time for the Jewish community, despite the setback suffered by the Portuguese Congregation between the years 1825 to 1838. In 1824 the land on which the first synagogue stood had reverted to the estate of David David and the Sifrei Torahs and other synagogue furnishings had been given to Benjamin Hart and M.J. Hays for safekeeping.⁸³ During the time in which there was no synagogue, Benjamin Hart had held services in a small wooden building in the garden of his home on St. Helen and Recollet Streets.⁸⁴ Correspondence between Mr. Hart and other members of the community concerning the renewal of the synagogue show him to have been a stern believer in strict observance of the Sephardic ritual.⁸⁵

From 1832 to 1828 the community was engaged in raising funds for a new building and in September, 1838 the revived Portuguese Congregation dedicated the Chenneville Street synagogue.⁸⁶ The first Hazan was the Rev. David Piza, who returned to London in 1845. He was succeeded by the twenty-one year old Rev. Abraham de Sola who, within a year, became widely known in both the Jewish and non-Jewish communities for his sermons and public addresses.⁸⁷ In 1847 the Montreal Hebrew Philanthropic Society was formed, in large part due to his efforts⁸⁸ - the first Jewish charitable organisation founded in this city.

First appointed lecturer and then professor of Hebrew and Oriental Literature at McGill,⁸⁹ Hazan Abraham de Sola was also a member of the Natural History Society of Montreal⁹⁰ and a prolific speaker and author, whose subjects ranged from "The Sanatory Institutions of the Hebrews" to the "History of the Jews in Poland" to "The Study of Natural Science", an address given before the Natural History Society on the occasion of Prince Arthur's visit in 1870. In 1858, McGill conferred on Rev. Abraham de Sola the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws,⁹¹ "the first time a Jewish minister had received this title either in America or in England."⁹²

Nor was Jewish education neglected during this period. Rev. David Piza had given Hebrew lessons but, after Rev. Abraham de Sola's arrival, a Sunday school was instituted⁹³ and in 1853, the year following his marriage, a full time Jewish day school was opened in the Hazan's home. Among the subjects taught were "English and 6 other languages, Mathetics (sic), Bookkeeping (sic) and Geography." Boarding could be arranged and there was a special Hebrew class for girls. "Fees were \$24 to \$40 per annum plus an extra charge for dancing painting and other accomplishments."⁹⁴

During this same mid-century period, a second synagogue was founded, which followed the Ashkenazi form of service. In 1846, the Congregation

of the English, German and Polish Jews began meeting in rented rooms and in May 1860 the Congregation dedicated its first synagogue building.⁹⁵ This same era saw the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, which received its charter in 1870. The society's incorporation was undertaken by Lewish Hart and Gershom Joseph.⁹⁶ The first test for the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society came during the 1880's when refugees from Eastern Europe began to arrive in Montreal.⁹⁷ The efforts of a combined Jewish-Christian Committee⁹⁸ and a short-lived Jewish Immigrant Aid Society were unsuccessful in providing sufficient financial aid to support the newcomers. The magnitude of the task all but overwhelmed the society. Finally, in desperation, they turned to Baron Maurice de Hirsch, and in 1890 the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society received a generous grant.⁹⁹ In gratitude, they decided to change the society's name to the Baron de Hirsch Institute and to use the funds "for the purpose of educating the poor children and to establish a sheltering home for immigrants and orphans."¹⁰⁰ In association with the Jewish Colonisation Association, for several years the Baron de Hirsch Institute helped to implement plans for settling immigrants in farm colonies in Western Canada - many of which flourished until well into this century.¹⁰¹ Though its many activities changed with the years, the Baron de Hirsch Institute is still an important constituent society of today's Allied Jewish Community Services.

In 1882, Montreal Jewry suffered the double loss of Dr. Abraham de Sola and of Dr. Aaron Hart David.¹⁰² The death of these two community leaders marked the end of an era and the curtain was raised on a new scene. As the century drew to a close, an ever increasing stream of families fleeing the pogroms of Roumania and Russia sought refuge in Canada.

These men and women brought a new outlook and different traditions, and it was they and their children who shaped the Jewish community we know today. But the foundations on which they built were solidly laid, the rights won those still enjoyed today. We can be proud indeed of our Canadian Jewish heritage.

FOOTNOTES

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