

The Jewish Farm Settlements of Saskatchewan: From 'New Jerusalem' to Edenbridge*

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Résumé

Au cours des deux dernières décennies du XIXe siècle et au cours de la première décennie du XXe siècle, il y eut six tentatives de grande portée afin de créer des établissements fermiers colonisés par des Juifs dans un territoire appelé à devenir en 1905 la province de Saskatchewan.

Des six établissements, un seul, Moosonim fut un échec. Les cinq autres donnèrent lieu à des communautés de fermiers Juifs jusqu'au milieu du vingtième siècle.

Ces établissements fermiers représentèrent l'effort essentiel visant à établir des Juifs au Canada comme fermiers et de ce fait, ils méritent que l'on se penche plus sérieusement que cela ne l'a été fait précédemment sur leur nature et leur rôle.

L'idéal du retour à la terre fut longtemps ancré parmi les Juifs d'Europe Centrale. Ceci explique pourquoi en dépit de lois leur interdisant de cultiver la terre en 1865 ils continuèrent de la labourer jusqu'en 1899.

Cependant, l'échec connu par l'établissement de colonisateurs Juifs fit penser aux dirigeants de Montréal que les Juifs n'étaient pas faits pour cultiver la terre. Il fallut longtemps combattre ce préjugé qui fut même retranscrit dans des manuels d'histoire. Il fallut attendre que les colonies de fermiers Juifs de Hirsch, Wapella, Qu'Appelle (Lipton) et d'Oxbow aient fait leurs preuves pour qu'en 1905, l'historien MacDonald ait pu écrire que: "Ces colonies de fermiers Juifs étaient comparables à n'importe quelle autre colonie de n'importe quelle race".

Herman Landau, financier de Grande Bretagne, et le Canadian Pacific Railways (C.P.R.) avaient ratifié une "concession extraordinaire" octroyant aux fermiers Juifs une ferme avec dépendances.

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Lorsque les protégés de Landau vinrent s'établir sur ces terres en 1887 pour les cultiver le moins qu'on puisse dire est qu'ils ont été accueillis comme des "indésirables". Le Membre du Parlement local adressa une résolution à Ottawa à la suite de quoi un inspecteur fut immédiatement dépêché sur les lieux. Une controverse s'ensuivit.

Le rapport de l'inspecteur à Ottawa était favorable à l'endroit des Juifs. Ceci fut quelque peu paradoxal si l'on considère la plainte logée par le député. De 25 à 30 familles vinrent peupler, au cours des années qui suivirent 1887, la colonie juive à Wapella.

Deux noms sont également à retenir: celui d'Abraham Klenman et celui de Barish Solomon. Klenman remporte l'appui à Montréal d'un bon nombre d'immigrants Juifs pour son projet d'établissement de colonies juives.

Au printemps 1892, avec quelques économies, S. Barish se rendit à Winnipeg puis à Wapella. Les Barish et les Klenman sont considérés comme les fondateurs de la colonie juive de Wapella car ils ont été suivis dans leur sillage par de nombreuses familles illustres et bien connues telles: les Brotman, les Isman, les Hyman, les Kaplum, les Jacobson, les Waserman et les Bronfman.

Toute cette étude de l'auteur porte, comme on peut en avoir un aperçu, sur l'étude de l'établissement de colonies juives dans la partie Ouest du Canada.

L'auteur se penche sur les mobiles, les motifs et les raisons qui ont poussé les Juifs à venir s'installer en tant que fermiers Juifs; et, bien que chaque tentative ait été différente (il y en eut six dont une Moosomin fut un échec), il n'en demeure pas moins que les cinq colonies qui restent, méritent d'être le pôle d'attention de tout historien ou de toute personne éprise d'histoire, de savoir, ou de son histoire du Canada car les faits qui se sont déroulés à l'époque de la Colonisation Juive sont intimement liés à la politique du Canada de l'époque et ne s'expliquent qu'en fonction l'une de l'autre.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century, there were six significant attempts to establish Jewish farm settlements in the territory that was to become the province of Saskatchewan in 1905. Only the first of these settlement attempts, the one at Moosomin, which became known, somewhat derisively, as "New

Jerusalem", can be considered a complete failure, since it was abandoned within a few years.¹ All the others, Wapella, Hirsch, Lipton, Edenbridge and Sonenfeld-Hoffer established Jewish farm communities which carried on at least until the mid-twentieth century, and some even longer. These farm settlements represent the major effort to establish Jews as farmers in Canada and as such deserve more serious study than they have been given heretofore.

It is first necessary to recall that there was a "back to the land" movement among the Jews living under Russian rule during the 19th century, and for about 60 years from 1805 to 1865, some Jews in the Russian Empire were permitted to take up farming. At that point land settlement privileges were cancelled as anti-Jewish regulations and anti-Semitic repression began to grow. Nevertheless about 100,000 Russian Jews were still farming as late as 1899.²

The idealistic desire to return to the land was long present among elements of the East European Jewish population. After the 1881 massacres in Russia, some Russian Jewish youth founded the "Am Olam" movement, in which the goal of returning to the land was linked with the desire to emigrate. A number of farm colonies were started in various parts of the U.S. in the 1880s by followers of the Am Olam movement, but they all failed rather quickly.³

Jewish leaders in Montreal, however, who had heard of the Am Olam philosophy, used this as an argument for establishing a Jewish farm colony in western Canada and as one way of coping with the Russian immigrants who came to this country from 1882. It is doubtful, however, that there was any real Am Olam influence among the first group of Jews who took up homesteads at Moosomin in 1884 since the Am Olam view of land settlement included the rejection of peddling as an occupation.⁴ The Jews at Moosomin fell into disrepute exactly because they turned too quickly from the land back to peddling and this is considered one of the main reasons for their failure as farmers. Perhaps the only point of similarity between the New Jerusalemites at Moosomin and the Am Olam settlers in the U.S. is that all their efforts failed in half a dozen or less.

Beginning with Wapella in 1886, however, the ideal of returning to the land as a means of becoming regenerated as a people is evident among some of the Jewish settlers. Certain Jewish leaders in Europe and in Canada who were encouraging land settlement at that time also saw this as a national goal for the Jewish people. In Montreal, however, Jewish leaders had far more pragmatic reasons for trying to place the newcomers

on the land, and their approach reflected the accepted Canadian immigration policy of the time and the derivative colonialist attitude towards immigrants.

Nevertheless the Montreal leadership of the 1880s had to combat the prevalent attitude that Jews were totally unsuited to farming each time they sought to establish a Jewish farm settlement. With rare exceptions Canadian authorities were never convinced that Jews could be good farmers and the early experience with the Moosomin group only tended to confirm this view. In fact, Sir Alexander Galt, through whose efforts the Moosomin land had been assigned after the Jews were kept waiting in Winnipeg for two years, later turned against the people he had helped. He warned that their conduct "will close the door upon all further effort on the part of the friends of the Jews in Europe."⁵

The Jews at Moosomin were widely held to be entirely responsible for their own failure at homesteading and this view is reflected in some Canadian history books. Immigration historian Norman MacDonald, for example, has chided the Jewish refugees who arrived in Winnipeg in 1882 for not going on the land immediately and monopolizing the immigration sheds for a whole year. MacDonald ignores the fact that they were kept waiting for two years because no land could be found for them in Manitoba or elsewhere even while tracts were being held for private land companies and for other groups like the Mennonites. He also claims, without apparent verification, that when they were sent to Moosomin they were given land with "five acres . . . put under crop on each homestead."⁶

MacDonald writes that Scottish crofters and inexperienced east end Londoners who tried homesteading in the same part of the country during those years failed in their efforts because of the bad climate conditions which brought three successive poor harvests. But of the Jews he said they failed only "because they had no aptitude for agricultural purposes".⁷ Ultimately MacDonald concedes that successful Jewish farm colonies were formed at Hirsch, Wapella, Qu'Appelle (Lipton) and Oxbow and he writes that by 1905: "The degree of prosperity [of the Jewish settlements] was said to compare very favorably with that of other races."⁸

In the fall of 1886, a group of young Russian Jews were sent from London to take up land in western Canada under the patronage of Herman Landau, a London Jewish financier. Landau described his proteges as "an entirely different class" from the earlier settlers at Moosomin. He added that he didn't object to giving them land near the

Moosomin colony provided there was "no danger of contamination or injury" to his people from the earlier settlers.⁹

Landau had some connection with the Canadian Pacific Railway and made arrangements to get land for his people through the railway on the promise that if this group could be "comfortably settled" more settlers would be sent out, with 500 to 1000 pounds of capital per family. He advanced 400 pounds to the CPR to aid the settlement of the first group, which included eight men and three women and was headed by John Heppner. Because of the involvement of the CPR, it became possible to grant them the "exceptional concession" of settlement on adjoining homesteads about eight miles from the Wapella railway station. Moreover, a developed quarter section was purchased for John Heppner from an English settler who was returning home.¹⁰

When Herman Landau's proteges took up their land to begin the serious business of farming in the spring of 1887, their arrival was greeted less than favorably by some non-Jewish neighbours. And when it was learned that additional land had been reserved for more Jewish settlers, the Liberal-Conservative Association of Wapella adopted a resolution of protest charging that they were being injured by the government because of the reservation of land for the Jews—"a most undesirable class of settler." The resolution demanded that the reserved lands be thrown open so that more "desirable" settlers would not be kept out of the district. The local member of Parliament sent the resolution to Ottawa with the result that a homestead inspector was immediately sent out to check on the Jewish homesteaders and make a report.¹¹

A. M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior, ordered that no action be taken on the demand of the resolution before the homestead inspector made his report. The land commissioner at Winnipeg however, H. H. Smith, took it upon himself to cancel the land reservations for the Jews within a week of the adoption of the resolution and before receiving the directive of the deputy minister.¹²

By mid-July 1887 the inspection of the Jewish homesteaders had been completed and a report submitted by the inspector, stating that the Jews at Wapella were "very industrious and hardworking" and able "in every way" to fulfill the settlement conditions. He also reported that "the English settlers speak highly of these Jews and don't desire better neighbours". This seems surprising in view of the petition complaining against the Jews which had names on it like Blythe, Hudson, Elliott, Kir-

by, etc. But of course by this time the main demand of the petitioners had been met.¹³

The Jewish settlement at Wapella was strengthened by the arrival of some 25 or 30 additional Jewish families over the next period of years. The reinforcements came, not through the fulfillment of the promise of Herman Landau, but through the efforts of two immigrants in particular. Abraham Klenman and his son-in-law, Solomon Barish, arrived in Montreal in the spring of 1888 with the express goal of becoming homesteaders and starting a Jewish farm settlement in the west. Klenman was 57 years old and had been the overseer of an agricultural estate in Bessarabia. Barish had farmed in the Russian-Jewish colony of Dombroveni. This was the first clear example of Jews with some farming experience in the old country and the desire to succeed as farmers in this country through their own individual efforts.

In Montreal, Klenman won the support of a number of other immigrant families for his land settlement plan and that fall he travelled west with one of the other immigrants to find a suitable site. While inspecting a number of locations in Manitoba and Assiniboia (Saskatchewan), they heard about John Heppner and went to see him. They were impressed with the land at Wapella because of its fertile black soil and wooded area as well as the fact that the Heppner group had been able to exchange odd and even numbered sections to settle on adjacent homesteads.

Klenman decided to take a homestead immediately and get a house ready while his companion, Jacob Silver, returned to Montreal to report to the other farmers-in-waiting. Winter set in too quickly for Klenman to finish his house, after he had dug a cellar by hand; so he passed his first prairie winter below ground. Undeterred, he finished his house, with straw roof in the spring and his wife and family came out to join him.

Solomon Barish remained in Montreal to earn some additional money as a stake for his farming efforts. First he tried peddling on foot with a pack of goods on his back in a French district. He could speak neither English or French and after trying it for one day he dropped the pack and hitch-hiked back to town, determined more than ever to become a farmer. Still without sufficient funds, Barish went to work in a cigar factory for a time. His health became a problem and a doctor advised country air. He now sent his family on to join the Klenmans while he went to Chicago to train as a *shochet* for fowl. In the spring of 1892, with \$100 in savings, Barish arrived in Winnipeg, where he bought a team of oxen, a wagon and

a plough before proceeding to Wapella. On reaching the homestead the began his duties slaughtering wild prairie chickens which had to be trapped live.¹⁴

Although the Heppner groups had been there first, the Klenmans and Barishes are considered the founders of the Wapella because, except for the Heppner family, all the other members of Herman Landau's "superior class" seem to have disappeared from view within a short time. On the other hand, Klenman and Barish were followed to Wapella by a whole number of families like the Brotmans, the Ismans, the Hymans, Kapluns, Jacobsons, Wassermans and Bronfmans. Many of these families, and others who came at that time, did succeed as farmers, while others moved on to establish themselves in other areas of endeavor.¹⁵ Their descendants are still known in Saskatchewan and other parts of Canada.

Incidentally, when the Klenman, Brotman, Jacobson and Isman families were beginning their farming efforts in the spring of 1889 the concerns of non-Jewish settlers were again manifest in a resolution by the Liberal-Conservative Association. While the earlier land reservations for the Jews had been cancelled in 1887, the CPR land commissioner, L.A. Hamilton, opened new reserves for them in 1889. The Liberal-Conservative Association again complained that the reservation of land for Jews was "detrimental to the interests and welfare of the district."¹⁶ Mr. Hamilton responded that the newly arriving Jews should be able "to settle in the neighborhood of their compatriots."¹⁷ Considering the success of the Jewish farmers at Wapella the protests of their neighbours must nevertheless have had some effect because only some 25 Jewish families were able to settle there by the end of the century.

The settlers at Wapella began their individual endeavors that led to the establishment of the first successful Jewish farm settlement, even when the community-aided Moosomin effort 50 miles away was being tagged with failure. Because it had communal backing, the fall of "New Jerusalem" had a greater influence on the future course of Jewish settlement efforts than what was happening at Wapella. In fact, when the Hirsch settlement was being planned in 1892 by the Jewish leadership of Montreal, they had to counteract the effects of what had happened at Moosomin in order to win support from the newly formed Jewish Colonization Association in Europe. Moreover, the team that was sent to investigate possible sites for the Hirsch settlement checked out the Moosomin situation, reported on Jews living "in and about Regina" and then went on to the Prince Albert district without reporting a word about the people at Wapella.¹⁸

Pressure to establish a new farm settlement with community support began in 1891 when there was a new upsurge of immigration following the expulsion of Jews from major Russian cities, including 20,000 who were driven from Moscow alone. Out of 1,188 Russian refugees who arrived in Canada that summer 700 swelled the population of Montreal and 125 went directly to Winnipeg.¹⁹ At least 50 families in Montreal began to ask for help to go west and take up land. The people in Winnipeg also wanted help to take homesteads.²⁰

The leaders of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society in Montreal (soon to become the Baron de Hirsch Institute), wrote to John Lowe, Deputy Minister of the Interior in Ottawa, to ask for land for a new farm settlement, and received a favorable reply. A request for help to the Jewish leaders in England was received negatively, because of the failure at Moosomin. They also wrote to Baron de Hirsch, in Paris, who had just established the Jewish Colonization Association, and received some encouragement that help would be forthcoming.²¹

Before considering the actual establishment of the Hirsch colony it is necessary to examine the exchange of correspondence between the government and the society which followed a favorable meeting between a delegation from Montreal and Prime Minister John Abbott and the Minister of Agriculture, Sir John Carling. The society asked for enough land for a colony of 2,000 families (10,000 persons) in "contiguous" sections to form "a whole and undivided colony." The government did not object to the proposed number of settlers and suggested areas in Manitoba and the Northwest where land might be found but they rejected the idea of placing the settlers on contiguous land in a "separate and isolated colony."²² (The suggestion of a 2,000 family settlement on contiguous territory was to haunt discussions and plans for future Jewish settlements).

In the winter of 1892, immigrant groups in Montreal and Winnipeg who wanted to go on the land met to appoint their own delegates to represent them in discussions with Baron de Hirsch. The Montreal representatives actually went to Paris to see the Baron.²³ The Winnipegger nominated, W.G. Fonseca, a Christian, was said to be descended from a Portuguese Jewish family.²⁴

At the end of January, Dr. Sigismund Sonnenfeld, director of the Jewish Colonization Association in Paris, advised that 150,000 francs (\$30,000) would be granted to help establish 60 families on the land. A month later this was reduced to 100,000 francs and by the time the

Colonization Committee of the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Montreal was ready to appoint a manager to get the project rolling they were advised that only 20,000 francs (\$4,000) would be available immediately, with the balance to follow after the first progress report.²⁵

Early in March the Montreal committee sent Ignatius Roth and Charles McDiarmid to seek a suitable settlement site. They were armed with a letter of introduction from the Department of the Interior, asking Dominion land agents in the west to do all in their power to assist the object of the Jewish settlement.²⁶ At the same time, however, there was also an effort underway to attract new immigrants from the German agricultural population of Russia.

A government handbill circulated among Manitoba farmers stated, among other things, "no Jews will be brought out under this scheme."²⁷ On the other hand D.W. Riedle, a German notary public and justice of the peace in Winnipeg, who had helped establish six Mennonite colonies, wrote to the Jewish society in Montreal with advice on the establishment of the Jewish settlement. He even offered to serve as colony manager.²⁸

The position of first manager for the Hirsch colony however was given to Charles McDiarmid after he and Roth completed their inspection tour and recommended a site 20 miles from Oxbow where a number of Jewish families had settled independently. For a salary of \$100 a month McDiarmid was to devote all his time to the colony, provide himself with a horse and rig, and give approved security of \$3,000.²⁹

On May 2, 1892, 49 men from Montreal, Winnipeg and Regina arrived at Oxbow and proceeded further west to the site, 12 miles east of Estevan, which had been reserved for the Hirsch colony by McDiarmid. All the colonists were married men with an average of five per family; most of the dependents stayed in Montreal and Winnipeg while some were still in Russia.³⁰

Organizing the new settlement proved to be a most difficult task, with dissatisfaction developing quickly among the colonists and a lack of understanding between the colony manager and the Montreal committee becoming evident. McDiarmid appears to have demonstrated considerable patience and optimism in spite of the difficulties of his task as colony manager, but he did not get any encouragement from anyone except for Asher Pierce, on whose advice the settlement site had been chosen.³¹

The Pierce's were one of the Jewish families who settled at Oxbow after the CPR branch line to Estevan was opened in 1888. They were already

farming successfully and were also operating general stores at Oxbow and Melita.

Asher Pierce made several visits to Hirsch where he advised and assisted the settlers. He wrote to Montreal in the frankest terms about the problems they were encountering, in response to a request from D.S. Friedman, treasurer of the Montreal organization. He was critical of the settlers because each one wanted to build for himself, which made it difficult to get them to work together. But they did build some sod houses together and showed they could "work as hard and as well as any men."³²

Pierce was much more critical of the quality of aid being provided from Montreal. He recommended sod-finished frame houses as being cheaper than all-sod houses and warned that one team of horses for each group of ten people was insufficient because of the system of allocating alternate homesteads. He urged at least a team of oxen for each family "before they can commence to live," and declared that the Moosomin effort had failed "just on this account." He also warned that because of the late plowing start "you will have to feed these people next year."³³

McDiarmid's concerns about the difficulty of keeping track of records and transactions while directing the men at every stage were supported by Pierce who said of the manager "very often he knows not what to do first."³⁴ Pierce also said of the settlers there would be "no fears once they are rightly and fairly started." In the fall, after many of the families arrived to join the men at Hirsch he felt moved to write again about the unsatisfactory conditions at the colony.³⁵

W.H. Baker, the clerk of the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Montreal, replied to Pierce that his pleadings in behalf of the colonists were not appreciated. Baker's letter was a clear example of the colonialist attitude of some of the Montreal leaders. The settlers would be given just enough cash "to keep body and soul together." It would not be enough to keep them if they couldn't find work in the winter months. They must not try to return to Montreal but should find work "no further east than Winnipeg." He also claimed that they could not ask the J.C.A. in Paris for more help.

There were 70 homesteaders with a total population of 300 living at Hirsch by the end of the year.³⁷ Before the end of January 1893 McDairmid resigned as manager and Baker, the clerk, soon took over personal management of the colony. Baker was directing most of the Baron de Hirsch Institute work at this time and appears as a rather ubiquitous character, whose background is not fully known. He spent some time at Hirsch in the spring of 1893 and, predictably, complained to the former

manager about the accounts being mixed up.³⁸ McDiarmid admitted neglecting the accounts and said that some thought it "better to have left the Jews to freeze or starve than to get behind in the accounts."³⁹

Before returning to Montreal Baker was interviewed by the *Free Press* in Winnipeg about the reported troubles at Hirsch. He stated that the main problem was the refusal of most settlers to sign mortgage liens for advances made to them, as a means of ensuring further help from the society. Claiming the settlers were "too well treated" he demonstrated the traditional authoritarian welfare attitude that there would be more help only for "proven individual cases" and emphasised that "the settlers as a whole would not be fed for any lengthened period."⁴⁰

The situation at Hirsch aroused the concern of some non-Jewish neighbours and one of them, Wm. Lougheed, a justice of the peace from Bienfait sent sworn affidavits of complaint from the "poor Jews" to the Minister of the Interior.⁴¹ When the Montreal society was informed about this they rejected the complaints and charged outside interference.⁴² The Winnipeg Dominion Lands office however ordered a homestead inspector to make "a searching inquiry" into conditions at the colony.⁴³

By mid-September the inspector, W.H. Allison, reported crop failure for the second year and generally bad conditions. He urged a more thorough investigation by a commission of two including "a good man of their own faith and language." Allison also said the majority of the colonists were "industrious and well disposed people, capable of making good settlers." He warned however that the colony could not be successfully managed from Montreal, and pointed out that some basic amenities were lacking with "almost the entire colony . . . in a bad way for want of water."⁴⁴ There were now 45 families, averaging five per family, living at Hirsch and they had broken about ten acres per homestead with buildings at an average value of \$100. Another 20 families were now living outside the colony and apparently trying to make it on their own.⁴⁵

At the end of October, J. Grutchfield, who had been left in charge of Hirsch by Baker, reported that supplies had run out and "many of the people are in want of food and fuel".⁴⁶ After receiving the Allison and Grutchfield reports, David Ansell, the new president of the society in Montreal, announced that Lazarus Cohen, the treasurer and new chairman of the colonization committee would be sent to Hirsch to investigate.⁴⁷ Cohen certainly filled the bill of Allison's urging for "a good man of their own faith and language."⁴⁸ Lazarus Cohen was one of the first East Europeans to rise to leadership in the Montreal Jewish com-

munity. He was a unique personality who combined learning and piety with success in business and he was one of the founders of the Zionist movement in Canada.

As he arrived in the west, accompanied by Baker, Cohen learned that a special messenger had been sent on ahead to serve legal notice on the Hirsch settlers who had so far refused to sign mortgage liens. Cohen insisted that this be stopped and Homestead Inspector Allison went on ahead to intercept the notice server.⁴⁹

Lazarus Cohen was a man of Mosaic mien, flowing beard and all, and in the west he made a deep impression on officials and settlers alike. The Homestead Inspector found him to be “an excellent and judicious mediator” who worked “assiduously” for the benefit of the colonists whose esteem he quickly won. Cohen remained at the colony for more than a month advising the settlers to organize their own committee to govern the affairs of the settlement. He stated that the Baron de Hirsch in Europe, perhaps like some great white father, was dissatisfied with the way funds had been formerly doled out. But he, Cohen, had been asked to determine what further amount would be needed to help them in the coming year. The government would also be asked to help by providing seed grain.⁵¹

Before Lazarus Cohen returned to Montreal the settlers all signed a letter commending him for his diligent efforts in their behalf, as a result of which he would understand that “notwithstanding all reports . . . we are farmers in the fullest sense of the word . . . you know what we have — or to put it better — what we don’t have.” They pleaded not to be forgotten in Montreal.⁵²

By mid-January confirmation was received by Asher Pierce that more funds would be coming from the Jewish Colonization Association.⁵³ The settlers elected their colonists’ committee, as Cohen had recommended, and they began to work in a more organized manner. They developed a plan according to which they purchased needed supplies and assigned tasks to those best able to carry them out, e.g., the five most experienced men were assigned to do all the sowing of seed on the land ready for crops.⁵⁴

Lazarus Cohen’s visit certainly appeared to give some hope for the improvement of the situation at Hirsch, but after a while financial aid was again being distributed as a form of dole.⁵⁵ The progress of the colony was seriously hindered during its first ten years by bureaucratic direction resulting from the patronizing attitude of the leaders in Montreal and con-

sequently by bad management in the field.⁵⁶ Lazarus Cohen appears to have been the only Montreal leader to encourage the settlers to govern themselves.

Isaac Mendels, Cohen's successor as colonization committee chairman in 1897, moved out to the colony, assumed direct management and became the most hated man in the area.⁵⁷ As a result of all this, there was frequent movement of settlers out of the colony with new ones recruited in their place. Rabbi Marcus Berner was one of those who arrived at Hirsch in 1899, and remained there for 40 years.

Those who left did not always give up farming; sometimes they simply took another homestead nearby that was not under the control of the organization. Among those who remained in the colony, as well as those who took farms outside, it was soon demonstrated that only those with ability, who demonstrated personal initiative and perseverance could hope to succeed.⁵⁸

In 1899 there was a new exodus of Jews from Eastern Europe, this time from Romania, where persecution had become intensified. A number of prominent English Jews had now become involved with the Jewish Colonization Association including Alfred L. Cohen, Claude Montefiore and the Chief Rabbi, Hermann Adler.

When the United States began to bar "poor immigrants" who required assistance by an immigrant aid society, the Jewish Colonization Association began discussions with Canadian authorities about sending Romanian Jews to this country. Since Canadian policy was opposed to allowing immigrants to settle in the cities the discussions turned on the possibility of establishing a new Jewish farm settlement in the west.

The London Jewish leaders were under the impression that the Canadian government was favorably disposed to settling more Jews on the land. This belief came about as a result of a statement to this effect, allegedly made by Sir Wilfred Laurier in an interview with Herman Landau during the Canadian Prime Minister's visit to London for the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1897.⁵⁹

Alfred Cohen began to discuss the idea of a new farm settlement with Lord Revelstoke, the Colonial Secretary and Lord Minto, the Canadian Governor General. Canada's High Commissioner to London, Lord Strathcona, was also drawn in. But the only one who appears to have been in favor of the project, personally, was W.T.R. Preston, the Canadian immigration agent.⁶

Preston suggested to the Jewish leaders that Canada might make a grant of townships to the Jewish Colonization Association, on the understanding that the association would cover the cost of transit and provide 40 pounds per family for settlement expenses. But he said that he was not absolutely pledging himself to this. In explaining the situation to Lord Strathcona, Preston stated that long negotiations were only started with the J.C.A. when it was learned that a large number of Romanian Jews without means were already being sent to Canada and to prevent "that line of policy being adopted". Ottawa had already advised Preston of its objection to Romanian Jews as immigrants.⁶¹

In these discussions, which began in the summer of 1900, the Jewish leaders were concerned that "alien immigration" should not add to the congestion of the London East End. And, in one of his letters, Alfred Cohen suggested that if "unsuitable emigrants" were infiltrating Canadian cities it was due to the "rather profuse propaganda" of Canadian immigration agents.⁶²

Cohen quickly became aware of the negative attitude of the Canadian authorities, but Preston encouraged him to believe that Ottawa might still go along with the plan for a Romanian Jewish farm settlement. Cohen tried to persuade Ottawa to approve the project by promising that the would-be homesteaders would be given "a rigid supervision and selection as to their physique, morality and condition."⁶³

The J.C.A. was prepared to grant a settlement allowance of 80 to 100 pounds for each settler and also offered to pay the salary of a government-appointed supervisor for the new settlement.⁶⁴ W.T.R. Preston, the immigration agent, actually visited Romania to check on the prospective settlers. He found that "only a very small proportion" of the Jews there knew anything about farm life. Nevertheless he suggested that with "proper selection and medical examination . . . it might be well to try the experiment."⁶⁵ It seems likely that Preston, who had been meeting with the Montefiores and Rothchilds as well as Alfred Cohen, on this project, was more impressed with the wealth of the Jewish philanthropists and the possibility that they might be prepared to invest large sums of money in western Canada.

This possibility did not influence officials in the Department of the Interior in Ottawa however. James Smart, the Deputy Minister, advised Clifford Sifton, the minister, that Preston's plan was "entirely unworkable" and recommended that the Jewish settlement project be rejected. Sifton received this advice in December 1900 but it took him until

mid-April before he passed Smart's memorandum on to Prime Minister Laurier with a covering note of his own stating "experience shows . . . Jewish people do not become agriculturists. However strong the attempts . . . to induce them to remain upon land . . . such efforts have . . . proved an undoubted failure."⁶⁶

The government's decision to reject the project was sent to Alfred Cohen in London via Lord Minto, the Governor General, but by the time it reached its destination 65 immigrants were already on the high seas and a smaller group was preparing to leave.⁶⁷ At this point the government relented and allowed the new settlement to proceed. That was the way in which the Lipton-Cupar settlement in the Qu'Appelle Valley began in 1901. It was operated under the direction of a supervisor appointed by the Department of the Interior for the first two years.⁶⁸

Since they were now responsible for two settlements in Western Canada, the leaders of the Jewish Colonization Association in Europe began to take a more direct interest in the progress of the Canadian colonies. Soon after the Lipton colony was started, Claude Montefiore sought the advice of W.T.R. Preston, the immigration agent, on what to do about the Hirsch settlement.⁶⁹ The latter arranged for a special study to be made of conditions at the Hirsch colony. The resulting report commended most of the settlers who had stuck it out at the colony and laid most of the blame for the settlement's problems on the bad management given the colony by the representatives of the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Montreal.⁷⁰ At the same time, however, it turned out that the Lipton colony, which was being managed by government appointed people, was experiencing similar problems in its early years, due to the paternalistic attitude of the people placed in charge.⁷¹

In 1903, the management of both colonies was turned over to the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society in New York, an affiliate of the Jewish Colonization Association. This relationship only lasted for some four years, however, and in 1907 the J.C.A. established its own Canadian Committee with headquarters in Montreal.⁷²

In 1901, when the J.C.A. began to enlarge its efforts in Western Canada, the settlers at Wapella also began to get some help. At the same time, a Jewish agricultural school was established at Slobodka Lesna in Austrian Galicia. One of the first students at this school was Israel Hoffer, age 14. Four years later, Hoffer and several other agricultural school graduates set out for Canada and arrived in the new province of Saskatchewan. For a while they worked for some of the established

Jewish farmers at Wapella and Hirsch. In 1907, Israel Hoffer led a group of these young men, including Philip Berger, Myer Feldman and Max Feuer, to establish their own colony about 50 miles west of Estevan. It was named Sonnenfeld, after the first director of the J.C.A. The Sonnenfeld colony represented the first successful combination of individual effort and organizational backing.⁷³

Also at this time a more highly individualistic effort at Jewish land settlement was being started several hundred miles to the north, along the banks of the Carrot River. This area was densely wooded, in contrast to the bare prairie land of southern Saskatchewan. It was here that two groups of Jews, many of them originally from Lithuania, sought to achieve their ambition to become farmers.

Each group had lived somewhere else first before deciding to come to Canada to claim some of the "free" homestead land. One group had settled first in South Africa, where they became small traders. The other group lived for a time in the east end of London and worked in its sweatshops, where they acquired radical ideas. It is significant that some people with the trader mentality and others with an idealized socialist view both saw land settlement as the solution to their problems.

The Edenbridge settlement, which never had more than 50 or 60 families, came to represent in microcosm the social differences that developed among the Jewish population as a whole in Canada during the first half of this century. This is the one settlement that had a community centre as well as a synagogue. Some members of both social groups succeeded as farmers, and some members of both groups also failed.⁷⁴

FOOTNOTES

1. Arthur A. Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, University of Toronto Press, 1961, p. 46.
2. Simon Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*; Canadian Jewish Congress and Jewish Colonization Association, Montreal, 1966; p. 14 and fn. p. 22.
3. *Ibid*, p. 53; also Mark Wischnitzer, *To Dwell in Safety*, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1948, pp. 60-63.
4. Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1966, p. 328; also Joseph Brandes, *Immigrants to Freedom*, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1971, p. 21.
5. A.J. Arnold, Jewish Immigration to Western Canada in the 1880s, *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal* October 1977, p. 94 and fn. 30 p., 96.
6. Norman Macdonald, Canada: *Immigration and Colonization*, MacMillan of Canada, Toronto, 1966; p. 220.
7. A.J. Arnold, *Canadian Jewish Historical Society Journal*, October 1977, p. 93 and fn. 28, p. 96.
8. N. Macdonald, fn. 6, above, p. 224.

9. Copy of letter, dated at London, 2nd September 1886 from Alexander Begg, C.P.R. emigration agent in England to the C.P.R. Lands Commissioner in Winnipeg, Department of the Interior Dominion Lands Branch files for 1886 (#128731) in the Public Archives of Canada (PAC), Ottawa.
10. Copy of letter, March 24 1887, from J.H. McTavish, C.P.R. land commissioner at Winnipeg to H. Landau in London with supporting correspondence and memos, dated March 24 to April 29 from McTavish to H.H. Smith, Dominion Lands Commissioner at Winnipeg, Department of Interior files #146609, PAC.
11. Copy of resolution, dated April 18, 1887, protesting reservation of land for Jews in Department of Interior files with PAC.
12. Letter #146414, April 26, 1887, from A.A. Ruttan, asst. Secretary Dominion Lands Commission office, Winnipeg, to Department of Interior Secretary, Ottawa. Also letters #73586, of May 3, 1887 from A.M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior, Ottawa to W.D. Perley MP and H.H. Smith, Dominion Lands Commissioner, Winnipeg.
13. July 19, 1887, Report of Homestead Inspector R.S. Park to H.H. Smith, Dominion Lands Commissioner, Winnipeg: #153854 PAC.
14. Cyril E. Leonoff, *Wapella Farm Settlement, a pictorial history*; Manitoba Historical Society and Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, Winnipeg, 1972, pp. 3-5.
15. *Ibid.* list of settlers at Wapella, 1887-1900, p. 36.
16. Petitions to Edgar Dewdney, Minister of the Interior, Ottawa, May 29 and June 29, 1889, reference #21284 in Department of Interior files, PAC.
17. Letter, August 2, 1889, from John R. Hall, secretary Interior Department, Ottawa to J.R. Neff, Moosomin, citing Mr. Hamilton's opinion, ref. #212834 (PAC).
18. Letter, March 8, 1892, from Ignatius Roth and Chas. McDiarmid to the President, the Baron de Hirsch Institute in Baron de Hirsch files, Montreal.
19. Immigration reports, Sessional Papers 1892 (No. 7) pp. 3, 14, 105.
20. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, p. 60.
21. *Ibid.* p. 60-61.
22. Letter, February 17 and 10-page memorandum, February 15, 1892, from H.B. Small, Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Ottawa to W.H. Baker, Clerk of Baron de Hirsch Institute, Montreal, in Baron de Hirsch files.
23. Belkin, *Gates*, p. 70.
24. *Manitoba Free Press*, January 15, 1892, p. 5, col. 3.
25. Letter and cable from Jewish Colonization Association in Paris, recorded in minutes of Baron de Hirsch Institute, April 3 & 10, 1892, included in documents relating to Canadian Jewish History prepared for Canadian Jewish Congress by Sheldon Godfrey in 1963, Congress Archives, Montreal.
26. Letter, March 3, 1892, A.M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of Interior to Dominion Lands Agents, file # 269180 (PAC).
27. Notice to Farmers, March 7, 1892, in Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada archives, Winnipeg.
28. D.W. Reidle letter, January 25, 1892 to W.H. Baker, Montreal, Baron de Hirsch papers in Congress Archives, Montreal.
29. Baron de Hirsch Institute minutes, April 17, 1892, extracted in Godfrey papers, Congress archives, Montreal.
30. Belkin, *Gates*, p. 72 and Appendix #3 p. 213; Thomas Bennett (immigration agent) letter to Harris Vineberg, Montreal, in Congress Archives, Montreal.
31. Belkin, *Gates*, p. 71.
32. Ascher (Oscar) Pierce letter to D.S. Friedman, June 16, 1892, Baron de Hirsch Institute papers, Congress Archives, Montreal.

33. *Ibid.*
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. Letter October 20, 1892, Baker to Pierce in Jewish Colonization file, Department of Interior, Dominion Lands Branch file #269180 PAC.
37. Report of C.E. Phipps, Dominion Land Agent at Estevan, November 15, 1892 in Department of Interior report for 1892 Sessional papers, Vol. 26, 1893, p. 91.
38. April 22, 1893, Baker recorded as Agent of Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society (Baron de Hirsch Institute) at Hirsch, in Dept. of Interior, Dominion Lands Branch File #269180, PAC.
39. March 14, 1893, McDiarmid letter to Baker from Covey Hills in Baron de Hirsch Institute files.
40. Undated copy of *Free Press* report: Baron Hirsch Colony, Manager Baker Explains the Causes of Discontent Among Settlers—The Advances Made.
41. June 27, 1892 and July 1, 1893 Letters from William Lougheed, Bienfait in file #269180 PAC.
42. July 13, 1893 Letter from Julius Scherman, Vice-president Young Men's Hebrew Benefit Society, Montreal to Minister of the Interior, Ottawa; file #269180, PAC.
43. August 23, 1893, letter from Burpee, Secretary, Dominion Lands Commission, Winnipeg to W.H. Allison, homestead inspector at Estevan, file #269180, PAC.
44. Letter September 18, 1893, W.H. Allison at Oxbow to Dominion Lands Commission, Winnipeg, file #269180, PAC.
45. Telegram, November 22, 1893, W.J. Grutchfield, Hirsch to Dominion Lands Commission, Winnipeg, file #269180 PAC.
46. Letter, October 30, 1893, W.J. Grutchfield, Hirsch to Dominion Lands Commission, Winnipeg, file #269180 PAC.
47. November 3, 1893, David Ansell, President Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society to Minister of Interior, file #269180 PAC.
48. Allison to H.H. Smith, telegram September 13, 1893.
49. November 23, 1893, Allison to Dominion Lands Commissioner, Winnipeg.
50. *Ibid.*, and Allison letter, December 19, 1893.
51. January 15, 1894, Allison letter to Dominion Lands office, Winnipeg.
52. Translation of Yiddish letter, dated Tuesday 19th of Tavis 5654 (1894) in Second Annual publication of Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, April, 1972, pp. 62, 63.
53. Allison letter, January 15, 1894 (see FN 51).
54. Letter February 11, 1894 from Colonists Committee at Hirsch to Colonization Committee, Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society, Montreal.
55. Copy of letter (8 pp.), London, December 18, 1901, from W.T.R. Preston Canadian immigration agent to Claude Montefiore from Jewish Colonization Association files.
56. *Ibid.*
57. Report on conditions at Hirsch colony, March 6, 1902, prepared for Jewish Colonization Association by representative appointed by Preston (signature on report illegible); copy from Jewish Colonization Association files.
58. *Ibid.*
59. *Jewish Times*, Montreal, February 9, 1906, pp. 94-96, reprinted from London Jewish Chronicle.
60. Correspondence, July 13, 1900 and August 22, 1900, A.L. Cohen to Lord Revelstoke, Revelstoke to Lord Minto and Cohen to Minto in Governor General's External Affairs papers, RG 7 G18, Vol. 100 (4) (PAC).

61. W.T.R. Preston to Lord Strathcona, London, and Israel Tarte, Canadian representative in Paris, July 27 & 28, 1900, Tarte Papers, Colonization 1900-1905; MG 27-11D16, Vol. 15 (PAC).
62. A.L. Cohen letters to Lord Revelstoke, July 13, 1900, see fn. 60.
63. *Ibid.*
64. Cohen to Lord Minto, November 10, 1900 GG's External Affairs papers, PAC (see fn. 60).
65. *Ibid.*
66. Clifford Sifton to Prime Minister Laurier, April 15, 1901, GG's External Affairs papers PAC (see fn. 60).
67. A.L. Cohen to Lord Minto, May 3, 1901, GG's External Affairs, see fn. 60.
68. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, page 76 and Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews*, p. 220. It should be noted that neither Rosenberg, nor Belkin had available to them the Governor General's External Affairs papers cited extensively in this essay.
69. W.T.R. Preston to Claude Montefiore, December 18, 1901 (see fn. 55) and Montefiore letter to Preston, December 19.
70. Report on conditions at Hirsch, March 6, 1902 (see fn. 57).
71. Belkin, *Through Narrow Gates*, p. 77.
72. *Ibid.*
73. Belkin, pp. 88-81.
74. Belkin, pp 79-80.