

Pioneer Jewish Merchants of Vancouver Island and British Columbia

CYRIL EDEL LEONOFF

Résumé

Les négociants Juifs furent à l'avant-garde du développement commercial de l'île de Vancouver, la première colonie de blancs sur la côte Ouest du Pacifique. Cette colonie fit partie de la Colombie Britannique en 1866 et devint une province du Dominion du Canada en 1871.

L'auteur, Cyril Edel Leonoff, qui prononça un discours le 6 juin 1983 à l'université de Colombie Britannique dans le cadre du Congrès des Sociétés d'Erudits pour la Société d'Histoire des Juifs du Canada, fait dans ce texte une rétrospective propre à l'évolution de la grande Histoire en citant dates, lieux et faits historiques.

Par ailleurs, l'auteur se saisit de contextes historiques pour évoquer ceux qui contribuèrent à la prospérité commerciale essentiellement de Victoria, Colombie Britannique, où ils réussirent à se faire non seulement un nom, une réputation, mais s'impliquèrent aussi dans les activités de la communauté juive de Victoria Colombie Britannique.

Il faut aussi signaler que certains sujets Juifs Américains ou autres, demeurèrent fidèles à leur pays de naissance mais n'en furent pas moins pour autant des personnes qui jouèrent un rôle important tant au plan commercial, social, politique que socio-culturel et communautaire. Ceci étant dit l'auteur s'engage alors à donner un développement de chaque personnalité juive qui contribua à l'essor de la vie juive de Victoria Colombie Britannique.

Jewish merchants were at the forefront in the commercial development of Vancouver Island, the first white settlement on the British Pacific coast. The colony became a part of British Columbia in 1866, and a province of the Dominion of Canada in 1871.

The first commercial venture in the northwest parts of America "for the

A lecture delivered to the Canadian Jewish Historical Society at the Learned Societies Conference, The University of British Columbia, June 6, 1983.

finding of . . . furs, minerals, and other considerable commodities” was organized on May 2, 1670 when King Charles II of England granted an exclusive charter to 18 London merchants under the corporate title “The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England, trading into Hudson Bay,” popularly known as “The Hudson’s Bay Company.” This charter extended over a large part of North America. Later, in the nineteenth century, the company obtained leases beyond its original domain, on the Arctic and Pacific slopes, for exclusive trade throughout Indian territories.¹ While there is circumstantial evidence of some Jewish traders along the northwest coast, Jews made no measurable contribution in fur-trade days.²

By 1825 the Hudson’s Bay Company had established the Pacific outpost of its commercial empire at Fort Vancouver near the mouth of the Columbia River. In 1843, anticipating that the United States-Canada boundary would be set farther north, the company built an alternative post at Camosun (later the city of Victoria) on the southeast tip of Vancouver Island.³ In January 1849 the British government granted a charter of Vancouver Island to the Hudson’s Bay Company, with the intent that within five years a settlement of resident colonists — British subjects — would be established there.⁴ On March 11, 1850, the crown colony of Vancouver Island was proclaimed.⁵

When gold was discovered on the mainland, first on the bars of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers late in 1857, then in the central interior “Cariboo” in 1862, virtually overnight a multitude of humanity swarmed into the region. To cope with the needed civic services and to maintain political control over its Pacific territories, on November 19, 1858 the British government proclaimed the crown colony of British Columbia.⁶

As there was then no overland rail or road connections to these colonies, the chief port city of Victoria, Vancouver Island, having frequent steamship connection with San Francisco, became the principal supply and urban centre for the gold rush. When the *Pacific* from San Francisco, after a six-day voyage, disembarked at nearby Esquimalt harbor on July 17, 1858, on board were the first recorded Jewish arrivals, Frank Sylvester, a bachelor born in New York, who later headed for the gold fields,⁷ and Alexander Phillips, a baker and soda-water maker by trade, accompanied by his wife and infant son, who became the first baker of matzos in Victoria.⁸

By the fall of that year there was sufficient Jewish population to hold High Holy Day services in a house.⁹ A benevolent society was organized in June 1859,¹⁰ a cemetery was consecrated in February 1860,¹¹ a congregation was organized in the fall of 1862,¹² and a synagogue building was consecrated in September 1863.¹³

Whence came these Jews? Some came from England and Australia seeking opportunities in developing territories of the British Empire. But most came from California where they had been in trade and commerce during the earlier gold rush there.¹⁴ The latter were largely of Polish, Prussian, or Germanic origin, who had become fluent in English prior to their arrival in Victoria. In contrast to most other Jewish communities in North America, these Jews came not as refugees but as pioneers and builders along with many other nationalities at the very outset of the province.

Two contemporary accounts, biased though they were in opposite directions, give us firsthand accounts of the Fraser River gold seekers. In 1858 Alfred Waddington, a prominent businessman and politician, in the first book printed in the colony of Vancouver Island, expressed his viewpoint:

Victoria was assailed by an indescribable array of Polish Jews, Italian fishermen, French cooks, jobbers, speculators of every kind, land agents, auctioneers, hangers on at auctions, bummers, bankrupts, and brokers of every description . . . They took it for granted that gold would soon be coming down, and whether it did or not was not their object. They came to sell and to speculate, to sell goods, to sell lands, to sell cities, to buy them and sell them again to greenhorns, to make money and be gone.¹⁵

When the Rumanian-Jewish traveller I.J. Benjamin passed through Victoria in February 1861, he noted that “the city has . . . 2,500 white inhabitants and more than 5,000 Indians.” Commenting on the Jewish community he reported:

About a hundred Jews live here . . . The beginnings of the city of Victoria are really due to the Jews. For, no matter how many persons streamed to the island at the outbreak of the gold-fever, they scattered again, for the most part, to all corners of the world when their disillusion followed only too quickly. The Jews, however, held their ground, set up tents for residence and booths for shops; for they soon realized that this place had a great commercial future. This was to be deduced, easily enough, from the situation of the island, which lies between the Sandwich [Hawaiin] Islands, California and China.¹⁶

Reconciling Waddington’s harangue and Benjamin’s exaggeration, the truth is that the contribution of the Jews was far greater than could be expected from their small numbers. The few Jews represented a substantial proportion of the education, talent, initiative, and business enterprise in the colonies. They were a remarkable group of men and women, perhaps never equalled by any other immigration to Canada. They established not only the first Jewish community on the British Pacific coast, but helped to lay the foundations for the union of the two colonies under one government, and for union with Canada. Among these pioneers were advisors to governors, legislators, mayors of cities, founders of business and industry, philanthropists, and patrons of the arts.

Some Jews started out as miners in the gold fields. However the great majority were traders, merchants, and wholesalers, supplying first the gold rush towns, then the cities and industries that sprang up with the growth of

population. It was in this capacity that they made a significant contribution to the growth of British Columbia. In the *First Victoria Directory* published in March 1860¹⁷ over a dozen Jewish-owned firms were prominently advertised. Such advertisements continued in subsequent directories.¹⁸ And the local newspapers were replete with advertisements by Jewish businesses.

Why did the Jewish merchants as a class succeed? These first Jewish settlers of British Columbia displayed several qualities that contributed to their success. They had previous merchandising experience elsewhere. In California they had been involved in similar businesses, which supplied the mines and small towns.¹⁹ Thus the Jewish merchants had established sources of supply and credit. Moreover they had firsthand knowledge of the items needed to stock the mining camps and frontier towns. Their awareness of inventory, fashion, display, marketing, and sales was modern for the times, and indeed their skills in these fields were the forerunners of today's mass merchandising.

Relatives often played a key role. In fact several Victoria firms were branches of established family businesses in San Francisco or elsewhere, in which a brother, son, son-in-law, or cousin expanded the business into the new territory. Jewish businessmen felt it was a family duty to establish opportunities for their children and other relatives, who were people they could trust.

Jewish people were conditioned to struggle for a livelihood. They were used to hard work and long hours. And rarely, even on this wild frontier, were Jewish men drunkards, brawlers, or roustabouts. In business they were resourceful, innovative, and ambitious, with a strong motivation to succeed.

The Jewish settlers proved remarkably resilient and adaptable to the frontier. While building a home base in semi-civilized Victoria, they did not hesitate to travel great distances over torturous routes, endure appallingly primitive conditions and inhospitable climate, and even face physical dangers in pursuit of markets and profits. In a developing land of opportunity the tenacious Jewish merchants were often successful where others less knowledgeable and less motivated were quickly discouraged.

The following is a representative selection of early Jewish merchandising establishments in Vancouver Island and British Columbia, as seen through their advertisements and premises, along with biographical sketches of their proprietors.

FRANCIS JOSEPH (FRANK) SYLVESTER, born in New York, was the youngest child of Eula and Heinrich Silvanski (later anglicized to Henry Sylvester), a tailor, originally from Poland, who lived with their family in the ghetto of New York. When the boy was six years old the mother died. He had two attractive sisters Rebecca and Rachel. MARTIN PRAG, a Jew from San

Francisco, came east seeking a wife and married the elder Rebecca. Rachel also married a Californian, Henry Moses (Mike) Cohen. Both sisters resided in San Francisco.

In 1856, when Frank Sylvester was 19 years old, the sisters sent money for him and his father to come to San Francisco by way of the Isthmus of Panama. By this time Martin Prag had become wealthy in the hardware business, operating stores in San Francisco and Shasta City in the gold-mining country of California. Frank first worked in his brother-in-law's store in Shasta.

In 1858, after gold was discovered in British Columbia, Prag sent Sylvester to Victoria to open a hardware store and tinsmith shop.²⁰ His first night was spent in a tent on the site of Yates Street. H.M. Cohen, the other brother-in-law, followed him to Victoria later in the year. But the competition was stiff and Frank's business failed.

In July 1859, Frank Sylvester headed for the Fraser gold fields: his diaries record thrilling descriptions of his experiences:

At one time I had to cross a narrow saddle on a trail not less than a thousand feet above the river, a trail not over a foot wide, and the least misstep would have sent me into the boiling river, faintly seen below.²¹

Frank kept store at Lillooet, Quesnel, and perhaps Alexandria. He made a number of trips by stage coach to what is now Seattle, and told hair-raising tales of how he sat beside the driver with a pair of six-shooters to guard the bullion from the Cariboo diggings.²²

Returning to Victoria around 1863, Sylvester was prominent in the fashionable fire brigade, serving as secretary of the Tiger Engine Co., No. 2 for several terms. He became accountant for the prominent auctioneering firm of Judah P. Davies & Co.²³ In 1869 Frank Sylvester married Cecelia Davies, his employer's daughter. They lived long lives and are buried side by side in Victoria's Jewish cemetery.²⁴

Their eldest son WILLIAM BENJAMIN (BILL) SYLVESTER was born in Victoria in 1874. As a young man he began selling feed in a stall in the city market. Along with his two brothers CLARENCE B. (TOOTS), JESSE P. (TOM), and their father Frank, the firm's accountant in the early years, the Sylvester Feed Co. became a well-established feed and milling business, occupying a three-story brick building on Yates Street,²⁵ at one time being worth about \$200,000. The company operated until Bill, the principal of the firm, died in 1931 at the end of the horse and wagon era.²⁶

HENRY MOSES (MIKE) COHEN was a Texas Jew who had come to San Francisco before 1850. In business in Victoria by January 1859 he opened clothing stores at the corner of Waddington and Yates Streets, and on Johnson



William (Bill) Sylvester

Street, and was described as “the pioneer clothier.” In 1862 he operated the Red House Saloon and Lodging House on Yates Street. He also spent sometime in the Cariboo.

Cohen was interested in the affairs of the Jewish community, being a trustee of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society,²⁷ and he served on the subscription committee of the synagogue. In August 1869 he was elected vice-president of the congregation. He was a member of the Masonic lodge and was also active in the fire brigade, serving as assistant foreman of the Tiger Engine Co. and steward of the Union Hook and Ladder Brigade.²⁸

Mike Cohen later moved with his family to Reno, Nevada and died in Portland, Oregon.²⁹

JUDAH PHILIP DAVIES and JOSHUA DAVIES, father and son, came from Australia via California, reaching Victoria in 1863. Judah, born and educated in London, England, had come to Sydney, New South Wales about the age of 18. In Australia he married Maria Harris also from England.³⁰ Joshua was born in Sydney.

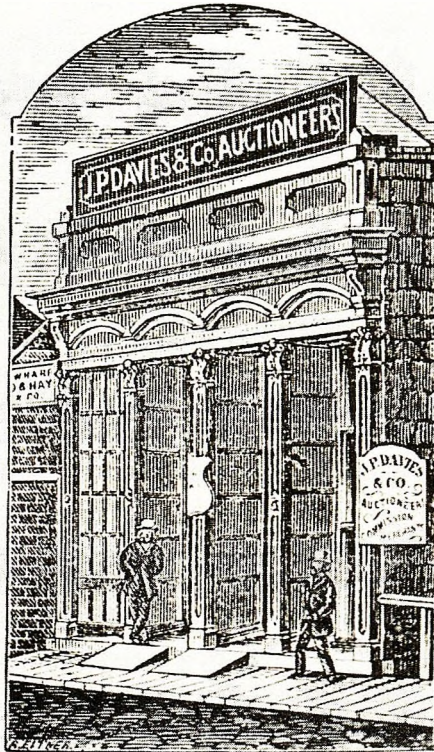
Their firm J.P. Davies & Co. of Victoria was prominent in the auction and real estate business for 40 years. The company was connected with many large real estate transactions throughout British Columbia and the State of Washington.³¹ In 1878, when the Hudson’s Bay Company farm of 2,000 acres near Langley, B.C. became redundant, it was auctioned by J.P. Davies & Co.

J. P. DAVIES.

JOSHUA DAVIES.

J. P. Davies & Co

Wholesale
and
Retail
Commission
Merchants



Auctioneers

AND

Commission Merchants

Salesrooms, Fire-Proof Stone Building, Wharf S
NEAR YATES, VICTORIA, B. C.

The Davies family was active in Jewish and general community affairs. Judah was involved in the synagogue and headed a committee to organize a choir for the dedication services.³² The first marriage in the new synagogue took place in October 1863 when their elder daughter Elizabeth married an 1858 pioneer HERMAN SCHULTZ, a shoemaker, who operated the Schultz

and Trickey shoe store on Government Street. Their son Samuel Davies Schultz, born in Victoria in 1865, was to become the first Jew to sit upon the judge's bench in Canada.³³

Elizabeth died in November 1866 at the age of 23 of an apparent heart attack and was the first woman buried in the Jewish cemetery.³⁴

Second daughter Cecelia (Mrs. Frank Sylvester) indefatigably collected money for the building of the synagogue and was active in the first hospitals on Vancouver Island, and in the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire.³⁵

Judah Davies ran for parliament in 1878 but was defeated by a few votes. He died in 1879. Joshua Davies became president of the Royal Jubilee Hospital, a grand master of the Odd Fellows (IOOF), and was a leading citizen of Victoria until his death in 1903.³⁶ Judah and Joshua are buried in Victoria's Jewish cemetery. Descendants of the pioneer Davies, Sylvester, and Schultz families reside in British Columbia to this day.

ALEXANDER AARON PHILLIPS was born in London, England in 1818. As a boy his family took him to Sydney, Australia. In 1849, hearing of the discovery of gold in California, he travelled in a schooner to the Pacific coast of North America where he spent some time mining in California. Settling in San Francisco, he entered the bakery business and the manufacture of soda water.³⁷

Coming to Victoria, late in 1858 Phillips established the Pioneer Soda Water Co. on Fort Street, also supplying Washington Territory. By 1882 the firm had become A. Phillips & Son with his son Samuel managing the factory in New Westminster.³⁸ He is credited as the first baker of *matzos* in the Pacific Northwest when this notice was published in the press on February 22, 1865:

Passover bread!! 12-1/2 cents per lb. will be baked under the superintendence of Mr. A. Phillips for the Israelites of Victoria, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Puget Sound, etc.³⁹

In community affairs Alex. Phillips was a trustee of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society when it was organized in 1859 and vice-president in 1877. He was a charter member and was elected second president of the congregation in August 1863 a few weeks before the synagogue was consecrated.⁴⁰ He was a charter member of the IOOF lodge in Victoria and was elected first treasurer of the order in March 1864.⁴¹

KADY GAMBITZ, who in 1857 had been president of the Jewish Benevolent Society at Nevada City in the gold country of northern California, in July 1858, opened Victoria's first dry goods and drapery store on Yates Street, then the main business street. He remained in the business until he left the colony in 1865, selling the store to William and Thomas Wilson who ran it for many years as the City House.

VICTORIA DRY GOODS STORE,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL.



K. GAMBITZ, YATES STREET,

Adjoining the Bank of British North America,

VICTORIA, V. I.

MR. GAMBITZ was the first to open a Dry Goods Store in Victoria, and while returning thanks for public patronage, takes the opportunity of stating, that having just returned from San Francisco, he can offer a large and new assortment of Spring Goods.

A COMPLETE ASSORTMENT OF **GENTLEMENS' FURNISHING GOODS**

Family Furnishing Goods,

BROADCLOTHS, CASSIMERES & TAILORS' TRIMMINGS,

ALEXANDRE'S KID GLOVES,

Boots, Shoes, Gaiters, and Boys' Clothing.

Silks, Shawls, Alpacas, Merinos, De Laines, Bonnets, Furs, Gloves,
Riding Hats, Gauntlets, Cloaks, Mantillas, Velvets, Embroider-
ies, Ribbons, Carpets, Rugs, Druggets, Oil Cloths,
Laces, Paper Hangings, Mattings, etc., etc.

And all other Goods pertaining to the business at the Lowest Prices.

Gambitz promoted Victoria as the main supply city for the Cariboo traffic.

He urged direct water transportation with San Francisco. He worked toward making Victoria a permanent city rather than a wayside station along the route to gold, and entreated the miners to bring their families to the island. Gambitz was director of the British Columbia Overland Transit Co., organized in April 1861 with a proposed capital of £500,000, to bring passengers from Canada to the Pacific coast in five weeks — a precursor of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Kady Gambitz was involved in the Jewish community of Victoria, becoming treasurer of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society at the time of its founding. He helped to organize the synagogue, serving on the building committee. He was a charter member of the Masonic lodge of Victoria, and belonged to the Agricultural and Horticultural Society.⁴²

NATHAN KOSHLAND in 1855 was secretary of the Hebrew Benefit Association in Sacramento, California.⁴³ He came north in January 1860, bought an existing firm and established Koshland & Brother clothing and dry goods on Yates Street, later becoming a clothier on Wharf Street.

In March 1860, he helped to organize the Deluge Company of the fire brigade and was elected first foreman. On October 1 he was a candidate in the first election for chief and assistant engineers of the Victoria Fire Department, “the first election held in Canada, and probably the first in the Empire, by ballot, replacing the old system of open voting previously in vogue.” Koshland won the position for assistant engineer in a close contest.

Nathan Koshland joined the congregation in November 1862 and was elected to the building committee. He sat on the executive of Germania Sing Verein. In March 1864 he was elected secretary in the first executive of the IOOF lodge in Victoria.⁴⁴

W.F. HERRE, who was a newspaper agent, opened a book and stationery store on Yates Street in 1858. He established the colonies’ first lending library of books and periodicals at his place of business.⁴⁵ The premises gained some notoriety:

The bookstore of W.F. Herre . . . long under surveillance by Sergeant Carey, was raided on Sunday, May 20, '60. He went to the rear of the house, peeped through the blind and saw some men playing cards. He demanded admittance, but was refused. The door was broken down . . . Herre was fined £20 for keeping a gambling house.⁴⁶

BENJAMIN LICHTENSTEIN, who came in 1862, operated the Occidental Cigar Store and Circulating Library on Williams Creek in the Cariboo — “the largest stock of novels ever imported on the Creek.”⁴⁷

VINEBERG & STAPLES was the first jewelry business in Vancouver Island. E.H. Vineberg officiated at the consecration of the Victoria Jewish

cemetery on February 5, 1860.⁴⁸ He also was active in the synagogue, and assisted in the cornerstone-laying ceremony.⁴⁹

FIRST JEWELLERY ESTABLISHMENT IN
VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

VINEBERG & STAPLES,

WHOLESALE AND RETAIL DEALERS IN

CLOCKS, WATCHES, JEWELLERY,

D I A M O N D S,

Spectacles, Fancy Articles, Breastpins, Etc.

N. B.—Particular attention paid to the repair of Chronometers,
Watches and Jewellery, at moderate prices.

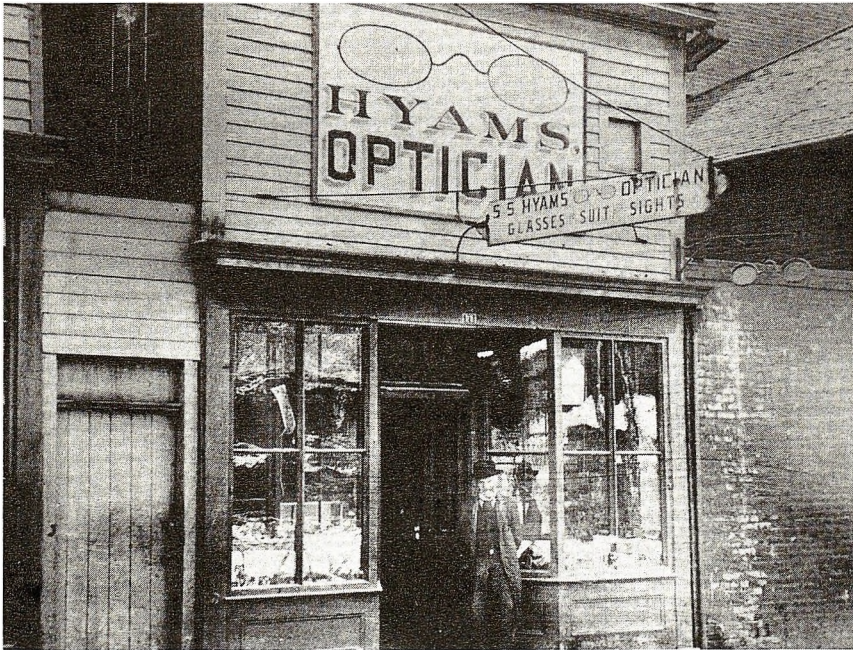
WILLIAM ZELNER in 1858 was one of Victoria's first druggists and apothecaries, located on Government Street.⁵⁰ In 1860 he acted as Agent for the lease or rental of 50 town lots for brothers Josephus Barnet Joseph and Lionel Barnet Joseph, of a prominent Anglo-Jewish family, who were large landowners in Victoria.⁵¹ By 1862 Zelner advertised as a "Surgeon and Mechanical Dentist."⁵² He was a colorful figure in early Victoria, interested in both civic and Jewish affairs.

SAMUEL SOLOMON HYAMS was a native of London, England, who at the age of 17 first came to British Columbia in late 1858 during the gold excitement. He was a nephew of Judah P. Davies.⁵³ After the rush subsided he returned to England.

Afterwards going to the United States, Samuel Hyams was in business in Boston, New York, San Francisco, and other cities. He was a very talented and capable man, and for a time was a lecturer with the anatomical museum at Harvard. While at Harvard a son Solomon (Sollie) was born. About 1884, his health failing, Hyams returned to Victoria with his family. He carried on business as an optician.⁵⁴

Samuel Hyams took a prominent part in organizing three Jewish communities in the Northwest. In Victoria, when the cemetery was being organized in May 1859, he was elected secretary *pro tem*. When the First Hebrew Benevolent Society was organized that June, he was elected secretary and later vice-president. In the fall of 1891, Hyams travelled to Seattle to give

a *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) address to the tiny but growing Jewish community in that city.⁵⁵ In the fall of 1892 he came to Vancouver to conduct the first public High Holy Day services, in the Knights of Pythias Hall on Cordova Street.⁵⁶ Sollie died of tuberculosis in 1890 at the age of 20.⁵⁷ Samuel died in October 1894 at the age of 53. Father and son are buried in Victoria's Jewish cemetery.



Samuel Solomon Hyams

ABRAHAM BLACKMAN from Stockton, California, a commercial centre for the mines, was an ironmonger and stove dealer. In Stockton he had been *gabai* and vice-president of the first Jewish congregation there.⁵⁸ In Victoria he established his hardware business on Yates Street near Wharf Street.

Blackman was a prime mover in organizing the Jewish community of Victoria. In May 1859, along with A.J. Brunn, he called a meeting “for the purpose of procuring a . . . Burying Ground,”⁵⁹ which resulted in the first Jewish cemetery in Western Canada. On June 5, 1859 he became founding president of the First Hebrew Benevolent Society, the first Jewish organization in Western Canada.⁶⁰ Later he was to become the first treasurer of the congregation, served on the building committee, and chanted the *Kol Nidrei* in the first services held in the new synagogue.

A founder of the Masonic lodge of the colony, Blackman arranged for the

first public ceremony of the Masons, the laying of the cornerstone of the synagogue. He also made arrangements for Rev. Dr. Morris R. Cohen of Sacramento to become the first rabbi of Congregation Emanuel of Victoria.⁶¹

By the 1870s Abraham Blackman had returned to San Francisco, where he became president of the Keshet Shel Barzel (Band of Iron) lodges of California, a fraternal order composed of Polish-born Jews.⁶² He died in 1888 and his headstone at Hills of Eternity cemetery, Colma, California shows his birthplace to have been "Plock, Poland."



LEWIS LEWIS was born in Poland in 1828, but educated in England. In 1845 he migrated to New York, working for two years with a wholesale jewelry firm. He then travelled to Brazil and Peru. With the discovery of gold in California, Lewis came to Sacramento in 1849. He engaged in mining for a time and then went into the dry goods business. There he married Rachel Nathan of a Liverpool, England family.⁶⁶

Lewis came north with his wife in June 1858, going to Yale in the heart of the Fraser gold diggings. He was later described as "one of the earliest gold seekers." In the following year Lewis opened a grocery business in Victoria. Throughout the remainder of his life he was very active in the business life of British Columbia. In 1861 he opened a dry goods store on Yates Street, continuing in business, with short interruptions, until 1890. During the Cariboo gold rush he advertised in the Cariboo papers and did considerable trade with

the miners. His operations extended up-island to Somenos, Cowichan and to Saltspring Island.

Lewis Lewis was one of the most important men in Jewish community affairs. When the First Hebrew Benevolent Society was formed in 1859 he was elected a trustee. It is said that he donated the site of the Jewish cemetery to the community in 1860. Lewis worked very hard to realize the building of the synagogue. At the organizing meeting on August 15, 1862 he became a charter member and was elected to the committee to solicit subscriptions for erection of the synagogue.

Rachel Lewis was a member of the Hebrew Ladies organization in 1864. Lewis Lewis was elected treasurer of Congregation Emanuel in August 1865, and in 1866 served on the committee seeking contributions to prevent foreclosure of the synagogue. Three years later he was elected president. He presided for a second term in 1881-82 during a reorganization when the synagogue was again in a financial crisis. In 1885 he opposed the installation of an organ as a deviation from Orthodox practice.

Lewis Lewis has been described as symbolic of those pioneers who became the first "solid citizens" of British Columbia. Becoming a Freemason in 1850, he helped to establish the Victoria lodge in 1860 and joined the Odd Fellows in 1868. He was on the subscription list of the Victoria hospital. Politically, he took a position against confederation. In 1868 he signed a petition for annexation of British Columbia to the United States, and in 1870 opposed the proceedings of the Yale Convention, which favored union with Canada.⁶⁷

The Lewises had two sons. One died in infancy and the other at age 26. In July 1904, Lewis Lewis was buried with Masonic ritual in the historic cemetery that he had helped to found.⁶⁸

From the beginning the Jews of the area were active in the Masonic Order. When Victoria lodge was organized in August 1860, of the 21 members, six were Jews⁶⁹ and two of them held office.⁷⁰

MORRIS PRICE, a Prussian Jew from Berlin, arrived in Victoria by October 1859 when his name appeared on the subscription list of the Hook and Ladder Brigade. He soon became established acquiring property in Victoria, New Westminster, and Cayoosh Flats on the Fraser River, now known as Lillooet, where he kept a store. He was described as a very quiet and inoffensive man with no known enemies.

Alone in his store on Friday evening February 1, 1861, Price was cruelly murdered, stabbed to death by two Indians, apparently bent on plunder. A committee of Victoria Masonic lodge was named to receive the body of Morris Price. It arrived in Victoria from Cayoosh on May 5 and was taken to the

Masonic Hall on Yates Street. Next day it was driven to the new Jewish cemetery on Cedar Hill Road by hearse in a "handsome coffin," and buried with Masonic ritual and Hebrew burial rites,⁷¹ being the "first interment in this cemetery."⁷²

The cornerstone-laying ceremony of the Hebrew synagogue took place on June 2, 1863. Two cornerstones were laid that day, one by the congregation and the other by the Freemasons.⁷³ The ceremony was re-enacted 119 years later on June 6, 1982 upon rededication of the restored Temple — the oldest extant synagogue in Canada.⁷⁴ The building was completed and consecrated on September 13, 1863, with the sermon on the occasion delivered in English by Dr. M.R. Cohen.⁷⁵ By this time the Jewish population of Victoria was an estimated 242. On June 26, 1983 Congregation Emanuel Synagogue was designated by the government of Canada as a site of "national historic and architectural significance."⁷⁶

ABRAHAM HOFFMAN was a dry goods merchant at the corner of Yates and Government Streets. Cohen and Hoffman were prominent merchants in Barkerville, Cariboo for a long period of time. After dissolution of the partnership, JOE COHEN remained in the Cariboo and was employed by Senator George Hearst of California to take care of his works in the gold fields. But in the end Cohen died in poverty.⁷⁷

Abraham Hoffman was the first secretary of Congregation Emanuel.⁷⁸ Vice-president SAMUEL HOFFMAN gave the address on the occasion of the cornerstone laying for the synagogue:

Who would have thought that, in the short space of five years, we should have a temple erected where then the aborigines were the lords of the domain? Who would have dreamt that in this isolated part of the globe . . . there should spring up a comparatively large city . . .? Who would not have ridiculed the idea that where, ere now, nought but the hunter's step and wild beasts' roar ever disturbed the wilderness, should, at this early day, be erected a synagogue by the scattered tribes of Israel? . . . I am proud to say, that since we first made our appearance, one by one, we have each and all striven manfully to uphold that religion which has been handed down to us by our forefathers.⁷⁹

S. Hoffman & Bros. contributed \$100 to the building fund.⁸⁰

DAVID SHIRPSER is an example of the great mobility of Jewish people in the pioneer period of Western America. Born in Thorn, Poland (then under Prussian control), he migrated to Placerville, California in the gold rush country. He came to Victoria from San Francisco in 1859.⁸¹ The next year he was associated with his brothers Herman and Leopold in the Cheap John Clothiers, and as auctioneers, on Johnson Street. Herman was less widely respected and was known as "Cheap John."⁸² By 1863 the Shirpsers had become general merchants on Yates Street.⁸³

David Shirpser took a very active interest in the Jewish community of Victoria. He was elected the first treasurer of the Hebrew Benefit Society in 1862. On August 15, 1862 he became the first president of the first synagogue in Western Canada.⁸⁴ Shirpser brothers contributed \$100 to the building fund. One of the early acts of Congregation Emanuel was to appoint Sir Moses Montefiore and Lionel Nathan Rothschild, two leaders of English Jewry, as honorary members.⁸⁵ In response, Shirpser received a letter, dated February 11, 1863, from Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, along with a pastoral “circulated among all the Hebrew congregations in the British colonies.”⁸⁶

In May 1867 David Shirpser left for Sitka, and later Kodiak, becoming one of the first Jewish residents of American Alaska at the time the transfer from Russia took place. Joined later by his brothers, they engaged successfully in the commercial life of the new territory for several years.

Returning to California in 1874, David Shirpser lived in San Francisco until 1882. In 1882 David and Leopold opened a men’s clothing store in Los Angeles. David died there in October 1895.⁸⁷ He is buried at Home of Peace cemetery, Los Angeles, as is his daughter Cecelia, whose headstone includes the information: “Born at Victoria, Vancouver Island, B.C., Aug. 24, 1859. Died at Los Angeles April 11, 1882.”

ADOLPH, GUSTAVE AND EMIL SUTRO were of a Prussian Jewish family, which became one of the most famous Jewish names in the history of the American west. They came to California after the family cloth manufacturing business in Europe was bankrupted during the revolution of 1848. Adolph Sutro, head of the family in the United States, was prominent in mining and real estate. Because of his munificence and espousal of public causes he was elected mayor of San Francisco on the People’s Party ticket in 1894.⁸⁸

Adolph Sutro & Co., located in the Yates Building, was among the first businesses to become established in Victoria, advertised in the newspapers as early as August 1858, and was the first tobacco business in the city “for smoking, chewing, or snuff.” A. Sutro & Co. was a partnership between cousins Adolph and Gustave. But there is no evidence that Adolph ever resided in or visited the British colony. Both Gustave and his brother Emil were in Victoria that year. After August 1860 the family enterprise became G. Sutro & Co., operated by the two brothers. Gustave Sutro also served as secretary of the British Columbia and Vancouver Island Mining Co.⁸⁹ A contemporary has described Gustave as “the leading wholesale tobacco merchant of Victoria.”⁹⁰ By 1863 the firm was assessed at £5,000.

Both Gustave and Emil Sutro were distinguished citizens of the new city, serving usefully in several capacities. Gustave joined the fire brigade in 1859 and was initiated into the Masonic craft in 1860. In 1861 the company was one of the convenors of the Victoria Chamber of Commerce. Both brothers joined. Gustave served as vice-president for three terms, and took an active part in the Chamber's efforts to establish Victoria as a free port. In April 1862 he signed a petition urging the establishment of an assay office in the colony. In August 1869 Emil was a charter member of the B.C. Investment and Loan Society, the first to be organized in the province.

The Sutros contributed generously to the many charitable and communal institutions in the colony — the orphanage at St. Anne's Convent, the Royal Hospital, the Female Dispensary, the Tiger Company, the Agricultural and Horticultural Society, the Victoria Philharmonic Society, etc. The Sutro brothers took an active part in Jewish community affairs and gave the generous sum of \$100 to the building fund.

The Sutros remained loyal American citizens, signing the petition to the United States Government in 1869 urging it to annex British Columbia, and Emil signed a protest against the Yale Convention, which had recommended confederation. In 1875, four years after British Columbia became a Canadian province, the Sutros left Victoria and returned to San Francisco.⁹¹

Lumley and SELIM FRANKLIN were the sons of Lewis Franklin, a Liverpool, England banker. Selim left in April, 1849 on the first ship to sail directly from London to San Francisco after the discovery of gold in California, arriving in October. He opened a large store, was very successful, and helped to found the Chamber of Commerce in San Francisco. After a fire ruined his business, he became an auctioneer and real estate dealer.

The new gold discoveries in British Columbia lured Selim Franklin to Victoria in 1858, being among the first San Franciscans to settle there. Soon afterwards he sent for his older brother Lumley. The brothers immediately established in Victoria as Franklin & Co., auctioneers and land agents, a business which was to operate for some 30 years.⁹²

SELIM FRANKLIN & CO.,
AUCTIONEERS AND LAND AGENTS,
YATES STREET, VICTORIA.

TOWN LOTS in Victoria and Esquimalt, and Farming Lands disposed of at Public and Private Sale.

Surveys, Plans, Deeds, Mortgages and Agreements, prepared by competent parties attached to the Office.

Merchandise, Household Furniture, &c., disposed of. Advances made on Consignments.

Gold Dust Purchased.

Being the only qualified auctioneer of British citizenship in the two colonies, in February 1859 Selim Franklin applied to Colonel Richard Moody, Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, for the position of government auctioneer, and he was so engaged. Selim became a favorite of Governor James Douglas. In his first public capacity he became a controversial figure and he remained so for all of his days in the colonies.

In June 1859 at Victoria Selim Franklin conducted an auction sale of lots at the site of New Westminster, selling a reported \$90,000 worth. At the time he gave the governor's assurance that the proceeds from the sale would be used for streets and other local improvements.⁹³ A further sale was announced for April 1860. But when Franklin arrived at New Westminster the local citizens raised such a tumult, apparently because of the governor's failure to live up to the earlier promises and the feeling that Franklin was an outsider from the island colony, that he was prevented from conducting the sale.⁹⁴

In January 1860, Selim Franklin was elected to the second Legislative Assembly of Vancouver Island. This precipitated the first "Jewish incident" in the colony when Franklin entered the legislature in March to take his seat as the only Jew to sit in a British colonial legislature in America.⁹⁵ Being British by birth he was not disqualified as an alien,⁹⁶ but he was challenged by other electees, among them Alfred Waddington who had earlier expressed his disdain for the Jewish newcomers, on the grounds that he had not taken the oath of office in the prescribed form "on the true faith of a Christian." However, after days of procedural debate and a legal ruling by Chief Justice David Cameron citing ample precedents in English law for oaths to be taken by Catholics, Jews and other non-Christians, Franklin was allowed to take his seat.⁹⁷

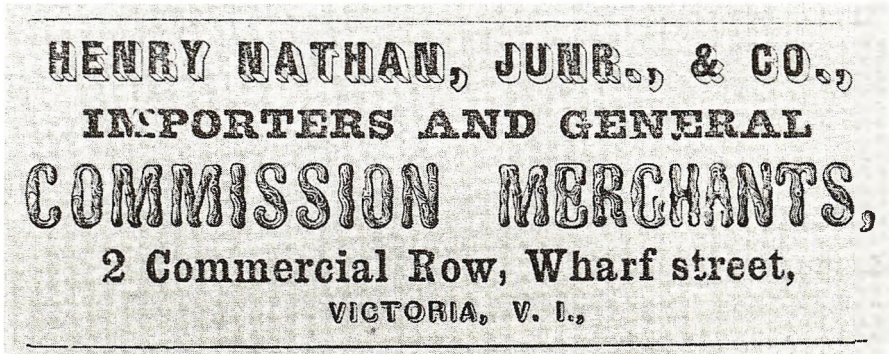
Selim Franklin was defeated in the general election of July 1863 for the third assembly, but in early 1864 was returned to the legislature in a by-election.⁹⁸ He was opposed to the union of Vancouver Island with the mainland colony of British Columbia as disadvantageous to the island colony. In 1866, the year that the union was consummated, Selim resigned his seat and returned to San Francisco where he died (1814-1883).⁹⁹

In 1866, the same year that his brother left the colony, LUMLEY FRANKLIN was elected the second mayor of Victoria, the first Jewish mayor of a city in British North America. He was congratulated on his election in a letter written in Hebrew by the Chief Rabbi of the British Empire.¹⁰⁰ During his term of office Lumley presided over the key public meeting at which the question of uniting the two colonies was debated, speaking in favor of the proposal. Unlike Selim, Lumley was a congenial, popular man. He received almost unanimous support to run for a second term but refused.

In 1867, Lumley Franklin moved a resolution to keep the capital of the united colonies in Victoria. Later he was to be one of the leaders of the confederation movement that brought British Columbia into union with Canada. On a business trip to California, Lumley Franklin (1812-1873) was stricken with a paralytic seizure and died at the age of 61.¹⁰¹

Selim Franklin was accepted into the Masonic lodge in 1860. In February 1861 he presided at the meeting of Victoria Jews to welcome I.J. Benjamin¹⁰² and contributed \$100 to the synagogue building fund. He was active in many business and community affairs. Both Franklin brothers were talented and involved in the cultural life of the young city. Selim was vice-president of the Amateur Dramatic Association. Selim and Lumley sang well and performed at concerts. Both were among the founders and on the executive of the Victoria Philharmonic Society.¹⁰³

HENRY NATHAN, SR. and HENRY L. NATHAN, JR., father and son, arrived at Victoria from England in 1862, and established a wholesale importing and merchandising firm on Wharf Street.



Henry Nathan, Jr., born in 1842 in London, and educated at University College there, participated in many activities, ranging from serving as master of the Victoria Masonic lodge to leadership of the Agricultural and Horticultural Society. In the fall of 1870, at the age of 29, he was elected member for Victoria of the last colonial Legislative Council of British Columbia.

A staunch supporter and intimate friend of Sir John A. Macdonald, first prime minister of Canada, Nathan was influential in bringing British Columbia into confederation with Canada on July 20, 1871. He served as one of the first two members of parliament from Victoria, and thus became the first Jew to sit in the Canadian House of Commons. In February 1871, he held a close-out sale of the business to devote his full time to the political and economic affairs of the

new province. At the 1872 session he was given the honor of moving the address in reply to the speech from the throne.

Henry Nathan, Jr. was also a director of the C.P.R., which built the transcontinental railway to the Pacific coast. Nathan retired from public office in 1874, and in 1880 returned to his native England.¹⁰⁴

The Boscowitz family played a remarkable role in the economic development of British Columbia. The leading member of the family was JOSEPH BOSCOWITZ, born in 1834 in northern Europe, who came to Victoria in 1858 from San Francisco. The Boscowitz fur store was one of the first businesses established in the city.

By 1886 the Boscowitz firm had become leaders in the sealing industry in which they invested \$50,000 and drew \$17,000 profits in one year. The firm owned three ships, the *Mary Taylor*, the *Rustler*, and the *Barbara Boscowitz*. They bought the vessels, financed the catch, and sold the skins in Victoria or San Francisco, and sometimes in New York or London. Boscowitz retained his American citizenship for many years and opposed the proceedings of the Yale Convention. The difficulties with the United States over the Bering hunting rights did not ruin Boscowitz as they had other Victorians.

In 1898 a trapper discovered a "mountain of copper" 35 miles north of Vancouver city. Boscowitz and his sons took a leading part in the early development of this property, which later became Britannia mine, selling out to a syndicate in 1903.¹⁰⁵ A giant in the development of British Columbia's mining industry, when the mine closed in 1974 it had yielded over one billion pounds of copper.¹⁰⁶

Boscowitz only took a mild interest in the synagogue and contributed modestly to the building fund. Mrs. J. Boscowitz was prominent in the Hebrew Ladies' Society. Another member of the family, Dr. M.H. Boscowitz arrived on the *Pacific* in February 1863 and offered his services as a "German Physician, Surgeon, and Obstetrician,"¹⁰⁷ becoming the first practicing Jewish doctor in British Columbia. He delivered an address at the cornerstone laying of the synagogue. Joseph Boscowitz, a respected pioneer, died at Victoria in 1923 at the age of 89.¹⁰⁸

SAMUEL PRICE was one of the wealthiest members of the small Victoria community. His business operations, in connection with San Francisco, were on a considerable scale. In December 1858, he contracted to supply the government with lumber for its buildings at Langley, projected to be the capital of British Columbia.¹⁰⁹

Samuel Price & Co. had a wharf of its own in Victoria. Price was a prominent member of the B.C. and Victoria Steam Navigation Co. The firm operated two

steamboats, the *Governor Douglas* and the *Colonel Moody*, up the Fraser and Harrison Rivers from New Westminster to Port Douglas and to Fort Hope.¹¹⁰ When liquor licenses were issued in May 1860, the Jewish-owned firms of Price & Co. and Reinhart Bros. secured wholesale licenses.¹¹¹

SIMON REINHART, who arrived at Victoria in 1858, was a close associate of Samuel Price. He also had business interests in San Francisco. Reinhart Bros. were in the wholesale business on Yates Street, engaged in the sale of liquors, groceries, and dry goods.

REINHART BROS.

Importers and Wholesale Dealers in

PROVISIONS,

GROCERIES,

WINES, LIQUORS AND SPIRITS,

In Cases or Packages to suit Purchasers.

— ALSO, —

DRY GOODS, CLOTHING,

BOOTS, SHOES,

Fancy and Staple Goods, etc. etc.

TERMS CASH, AT REDUCED PRICES.

YATES STREET,

(Opposite WELLS, FARGO & CO.)

VICTORIA, V. I.

And No. 7 Custom House Block, Sacramento Street,

SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

Simon Reinhart was one of the first Jews to take an active part in business on the lower mainland of British Columbia. In November 1858, he bought a lot at old Fort Langley (Derby), which was scheduled to become the capital of British Columbia, and paid \$725, the highest price at the sale.¹¹² However, when New Westminster was chosen instead, he was engaged in business there with MORRIS MEYER, A.S. ELASSER, and BENEDICT REINHART as Meyer, Reinhart & Co. in a store located on Scott's wharf. The firm also bought real estate in New Westminster and at an early sale paid a record \$3,925 for a lot.

Simon Reinhart was apparently an attorney-at-law. And in this capacity he was engaged in a series of business legal cases involving windups and complex lawsuits.

S. Reinhart bought a ticket for the first High Holy Day services held in the new synagogue. Gustave Reinhart, apparently a brother, subscribed \$100 to the building fund. Mrs. S. Reinhart in 1855, had been elected treasurer of the Ladies Benefit Society of San Francisco, which was formed by the "German-Jewish ladies to extend aid to German-speaking needy." In 1864 she was a member of the Hebrew Ladies of Victoria. Reinhart Bros. participated in and contributed to many charitable and communal organizations.

By September 1866, Simon Reinhart had wound up his business affairs in Victoria. A farewell dinner was tendered in his honor, attended by many of the leaders in the community, apparently on the eve of his departure to Europe. However, as late as 1872, he was at Elko in the East Kootenay region of the province.¹¹³

Bypassing the highly competitive Victoria, in 1861 ALEXANDER MAYER of Portland arrived at Nanaimo, a coal mining town 60 miles up-island, with two large trunks of goods to establish a clothing store. The monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company, which controlled all of the land of Nanaimo at that time, prevented him from doing so. Not to be thwarted, he opened the trunks on the nearest street corner and sold out in a short time. Returning with another selection of dry goods, he opened a shop in the lobby of the Miner's Hotel and sold out once again.

In 1863, when lots were being sold at public auction, Mayer purchased one with a log building on it for \$600. Thinking the structure drab, he mixed up a can of paint adding what he thought was a touch of red. It dried with a red hue. From then on it was known as "Mayer's Red House — the Pioneer Store." The general store was a success from the start. He was joined in business by two sons-in-law, SAM LEVI and MARCUS WOLFE. The business was sold in 1893 after Mayer retired.¹¹⁴

Marcus Wolfe was born in California. In 1861, at age 16, he arrived at Yale where he worked for the Oppenheims. Settling in Nanaimo a short time later, Wolfe became secretary of the Water Works and the Board of Trade. He married Bertha Mayer and became a partner in his father-in-law's firm, Alex. Mayer & Co. After sale of the firm, he entered the real estate and insurance business.¹¹⁵

Marcus Wolfe rose to the top of the Masonic order in 1891-92, becoming the thirteenth grand master of the British Columbia Grand Lodge. He has been the only Jew in the history of the province to hold this high office.¹¹⁶

The three Leiser brothers, Simon, Gustav, and Max, born in Germany, all gained prominence in Victoria's mercantile establishment. They are interred in the Jewish cemetery there.



SIMON LEISER came to Victoria in 1873, and opened a wholesale coffee and spice business on Johnson Street. After making a substantial profit as a contractor for the Cassiar Trail to the gold fields of northern British Columbia in 1874, he started a chain of grocery stores in the Cassiar mining district. Afterwards, establishing his headquarters on Yates Street, Leiser became the largest wholesale grocer in the province, employing over 100 people on Vancouver Island. The firm served the mining and lumbering towns up-island and was a major supplier to the Klondike gold rush at the end of the century.

Simon Leiser became an outstanding citizen of Victoria. For 15 years he served on the Board of Trade, being president for two terms. He was an executive member of the Vancouver Island Publicity Bureau. Leiser was

actively identified with the Victoria Opera House company. He took a leading part in the building of the Royal Victoria Theatre, making the inaugural address when the building was opened in December 1913. A bust was placed in the lobby of the theatre in memory of his services.¹¹⁷

MOSES LENZ and GUSTAV LEISER, who had received their training in the business in Germany, in 1891 were reported to be “the largest importers and manufacturers of dry goods in British Columbia.” Lenz & Leiser occupied a three-storey brick building on Yates Street at the corner of Commercial Alley. Lenz spent the greater portion of his time in England, Germany and France, purchasing goods for the business.¹¹⁸

Pither & Leiser, wholesale liquor dealers, were established in Victoria in 1858. MAX LEISER became a principal of the firm in 1893. In 1900 a Vancouver branch was established on Water Street.

By 1912, the company had grown “to be one of the most important in the Province, and their importations of wines, liquors, and cigars from the principal markets of the world . . . extremely comprehensive . . . their goods reaching all parts of British Columbia, Alberta, Yukon . . . and the western regions of the United States.”¹¹⁹

MOSES SPORBORG was established in Victoria before May 1859 when Mrs. Sporborg arrived aboard the *Forward* from San Francisco. Sporborg had a lucrative trade with the mines, and we read of \$1,000 in gold brought down the Fraser aboard the *Governor Douglas* in June 1859 destined for Sporborg & Co.

By 1861 Sporborg was associated with SAMUEL GOLDSTONE, and their Wharf Street firm was assessed at £5,000. In 1862 we read that they occupied a “fire-proof stone store” and advertised that they had “imported at considerable expense a Patent Packing Press” to pack “all goods intended for the Cariboo.”¹²⁰

In community affairs Moses Sporborg was a Mason, on the executive of the Odd Fellows lodge, a member of the fire department Hook and Ladder Brigade, and he contributed to the synagogue building fund. Samuel Goldstone was also a contributor and in September 1864 he became the third president of Congregation Emanuel.¹²¹

On August 21, 1862 a sailor named Billy Barker struck a thousand dollars worth of gold in one foot of ground in British Columbia’s Cariboo region — the richest pay dirt anybody had seen. Around this claim, a new town Barkerville, sprang up, which within a year had a floating population of 10,000 persons, and for a time was the largest community west of Chicago and north of San Francisco.¹²²

During the gold rush there were many Jews in the Cariboo. A number of Jewish men tried their luck in the gold fields. But again it was as merchants and community leaders that the Jewish people made their greatest contribution. It is of interest to note that we do not hear of an organized Jewish community life in Barkerville nor of any attempts to organize a Jewish society, cemetery, or synagogue. The Cariboo Jews apparently looked to Victoria as their headquarters to furnish these services.

The identity of the Cariboo Jews was well recognized, and from items in the press it is evident that their high standards were widely respected.¹²³ The most famous among the Cariboo merchants were the Oppenheims. But there were other Jewish merchants there who had major businesses, even rivalling the Oppenheimer operations in size and scope, and who also took a prominent part in the life of the district.

NATHAN and BENJAMIN GRUNBAUM, the "Vienna merchants," were said to be the first to open a store in Barkerville. When the wood-constructed Barkerville burned to the ground on September 16, 1868, their business lost \$25,000 in the blaze. They rebuilt and dug fireproof cellars. In 1870 they opened a branch at Van Winkle Creek, in charge of the younger brother Benjamin.

H. GRUNBAUM & BRO.
IMPORTERS OF
Vienna Merchandise,
PIPES AND STEMS,
CLOTHING, BOOTS & SHOES,
JOHNSON, STREET, VICTORIA, B. C
NOTIONS OF ALL KINDS.

GRUNBAUM, BROS..
DEALERS IN GROCERIES AND PROVISIONS,
— AND —
GENERAL MERCHANTS,
BARKERVILLE AND VAN WINKLE CREEK,
CARIBOO.

Nathan Grunbaum took an active part in the mining industry and in public life.¹²⁴ The Grunbaum brothers contributed \$100 to the synagogue building

fund. JULIUS GRUNBAUM was in Victoria, and in August 1863 was elected a trustee of the congregation and placed on the standing audit committee.¹²⁵

FELIX NEUFELDER, who arrived in the colonies in 1859, gained fame for his activities in the Cariboo mining towns of Barkerville, Parsonville, Richfield, Soda Creek, and Van Winkle Creek.

Not only did Neufelder accumulate a sizable fortune, but he devoted his tremendous energies to various public causes such as the fire brigade and the hospital. He served on practically every grand jury between 1867 and 1874. He was also active in arranging the popular Canadian and American birthday celebrations for July first and fourth, both observed with equal gusto by the multinational population.

Felix Neufelder left the Cariboo early in 1875 for Victoria where he established a wholesale grocery business on the corner of Yates and Wharf Streets.¹²⁶ He died in 1879 at the age of 59 and was given a Masonic funeral.

His son EDWARD COLLINS NEUFELDER was in business as Neufelder and Ross, wholesale grocers, on Government Street. A past master of Vancouver and Quadra lodge in Victoria, he was grand secretary of the Grand Lodge of British Columbia from 1884-87. Later he moved to Seattle.¹²⁷

CARL STROUSS loomed large on the Cariboo stage. His store in Barkerville, apparently as large and as well stocked as the Oppenheims, was the centre of his Cariboo business. And he had branches at Williams Creek and other Cariboo posts. However, Strouss spent most of the time wandering throughout the gold districts and going "outside" on business. He denied in the press the rumor that he was attempting to corner the coal-oil market.

Strouss lost \$100,000 in the 1868 fire. After the fire he rebuilt and expanded the Barkerville store and continued his large-scale business operations. Thereafter he took a prominent part in the fire brigade, provided a lot for the firehouse at a reasonable price, and obtained funds for its maintenance.

From 1871 to 1893 Carl Strouss established in Victoria as a general merchant on Wharf Street, was prominent in business circles, and was a regular contributor to Jewish funds. In 1871 he was elected grand treasurer of the new Grand lodge of the Masons. Immediately after the great fire of Vancouver in June 1886, the local newspaper reported that C. Strouss was already building there.¹²⁸ He retired to England.¹²⁹

The five OPPENHEIMER brothers, MEYER, CHARLES, GODFREY, DAVID, and ISAAC, earned their place in history as one of British Columbia's great families. Born in Bavaria, where their father was a vintner, they were educated at the collegiate school in Frankfurt *am* Main. With unrest and

revolution sweeping Europe in 1848, when the youngest brothers were in their teens, they came to America in the wave of German Jewish immigration.

WOODS' HARVESTING MACHINES.

Oppenheimer Brothers,

Having been appointed Sole Agents in British Columbia for the sale of

Woods' Harvesting Machines,

HAVE ON HAND

MOWERS, COMBINED MOWERS & REAPERS.
SELF-RAKING REAPERS.

These Machines have been awarded FIRST PREMIUMS at Fairs held in every part of the World. Strength and durability are combined with cheapness and utility.

Call and examine Premium List and procure circulars.

OPPENHEIMER BROS.,

Victoria and Yale, B. C.

The brothers first settled in New Orleans, then in Lafayette, before coming to Sacramento, California where Meyer was quite successful in business. The brothers lived for some years in Placer county in the heart of the California gold country. David and his wife kept a hotel in the mining town of Columbia.¹³⁰ Then the Oppenheims got caught up in the "gold fever" spreading through British Columbia in 1858.

Fresh from the California gold rush and experienced in the kind of supplies that would be needed by the miners, Charles, apparently the first to arrive and the founder of the family partnership Charles Oppenheimer & Co., established a trading business at Victoria and Point Roberts on the mainland. Joined by the other brothers, they set out for the wild British Columbia interior where gold was being mined from the bars of the Fraser River. They were shrewd enough to appreciate that sure gold lay not in the mines but in creating a mercantile empire to service them.

At Yale, the head of navigation on the Fraser, by 1859 the Oppenheims established their main store in a brick building located on the main street facing the river. The store became a gathering place for prospectors and miners during the long, hard winter. The brothers also began business operations that year at Fort Hope, and in 1860 established a branch at Lytton.¹³¹

In order to obtain suitable access to the mining country, the government was pressured by the miners and merchants to construct a wagon road into the interior of British Columbia. Walter Moberly, pioneer surveyor, had explored the possible routes and recommended to Governor James Douglas and Colonel Richard Moody of the Royal Engineers a route along the banks of the Fraser and Thompson Rivers. Seeking to provide the necessary communication among the units of their business, Charles Oppenheimer and his partner Thomas B. Lewis petitioned the governor to build the road. Tenders were called by the end of 1861.

Oppenheimer, Moberly, and Lewis obtained a charter to build the 146-mile section from Lytton to Lac La Hache. In order to devote his attention to building the road, in June 1862 Charles Oppenheimer withdrew from the family firm, which carried on business as Oppenheimer & Co.¹³² Later he returned to San Francisco. The Cariboo Wagon Road was successfully completed through to the gold fields by 1866. It ranked as one of the greatest road-building achievements of the nineteenth century.¹³³ Charles died in 1890.

When Barkerville arose as the centre of the Cariboo gold country the Oppenheims established a large store there, which became the commercial centre of the town. Some idea of the Oppenheims' holdings was apparent when their store burned down in the fire of September 1868 and they lost \$100,000. They rebuilt on a larger scale. David went to San Francisco to buy a fire engine and Isaac became captain of the fire brigade.

Godfrey died in 1881 at the age of 51 and is buried in Victoria's Jewish cemetery. In 1885 David and Isaac Oppenheimer moved to the nascent Vancouver and established the first wholesale grocery business there. Realizing its potential as Canada's major west-coast seaport and route to the Orient, they became large landholders,¹³⁴ and promoted Vancouver as the Pacific terminus of the CPR. Eventually, to achieve this objective, they deeded a third of their lands to the railway.

Vancouver was incorporated on April 6, 1886. Both David and Isaac, as finance chairmen, served on the 1887 city council. David Oppenheimer was the outstanding citizen in the city's formative period, served four terms (1888-91) as mayor, established many of the city's institutions, and became known as the "father of Vancouver." He died (1834-97) of heart failure and was buried in the Hebrew cemetery at Brooklyn, New York near to his wife who had predeceased him. Isaac left Vancouver in 1901 and died at Spokane, Washington in 1922 in his eighty-eighth year.¹³⁵

NOTES

1. George Bryce, *The Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 3rd. ed. (Toronto: Briggs, 1910), pp.14-15.
2. Cyril Edel Leonoff, *Pioneers, Pedlars, and Prayer Shawls: The Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1978), p. 11.
3. F.W. Howay and E.O.S. Scholefield, *British Columbia: From the Earliest Times to the Present*. Historical vols. I, II (Vancouver: Clarke, 1914), vol. I, pp. 467-72.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 500-502.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 510-11.
6. *Ibid.*, vol. II, pp. 53-54.
7. David Rome, *The First Two Years: A Record of the Jewish Pioneers on Canada's Pacific Coast 1858-1860*, (Montreal: Caiserman, 1942), p. 6.
8. *British Colonist*, Victoria, February 22, 1865.
9. *Victoria Gazette*, August 24, 1858; *The Weekly Gleaner*, San Francisco, September 8, 1858, p. 5.
10. *British Colonist*, June 6, 1859, p. 2; Norton B. Stern, ed., "A Western Canadian Report of 1859," *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly*, Santa Monica, October 1976, pp. 63-65, quoting *Weekly Gleaner*, November 4, 1859, p. 2.
11. *British Colonist*, February 7, 1860; Geoffrey Castle, "Victoria's Jewish Cemetery," *The Scribe*, Victoria, The Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia, June 1982, pp. 2-4.
12. Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Congregation Emanuel, Victoria, "Minute Books," meetings of August 15, 24, 31, 1862; "Trials and Tribulations of Victoria Synagogue Builders," *The Jewish Western Bulletin*, Vancouver, September 25, 1957, pp. 4, 6, 80, 82.
13. Rev. Dr. J.K. Unsworth, "Jews of Victoria Dedicated Temple Emanu-El in 1863," *Daily Colonist*, Victoria, February 7, 1932, reprinted in *Bulletin*, B.C. Centenary ed., June 30, 1958, p. 7.
14. Robert E. Levinson, *The Jews in the California Gold Rush* (New York: KTAV, 1978).
15. Alfred Waddington, *The Fraser Mines Vindicated* (Victoria: De Garro, 1858), reprinted (Vancouver: Reid, 1949), p. 30.
16. I.J. Benjamin, *Three Years in America 1859-1862* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956), vol. II, pp. 142-43.
17. Edward Mallandaine, *First Victoria Directory* (Victoria: March 1860).
18. Frederick P. Howard and George Barnett, *The British Columbian and Victoria Directory for 1863* (Victoria: 1863).
Mallandaine, 2nd issue, April 1868; 3rd issue, June 1869; 4th issue, 1871; 5th issue, 1874.
R.T. Williams, *The British Columbia Directory for the Year 1882-83* (Victoria: 1882); for 1884-85; for 1897-8.
T.N. Hibben, *Guide to the Province of British Columbia for 1877-8* (Victoria: 1877)
19. Levinson.
20. Elise Dorothy Menkus Reed, "Story of the Sylvester Family," n.p., August 1966, pp. 1-2, 5-6.
21. *First Two Years*, p. 6.
22. Reed, pp. 2, 6.
23. *First Two Years*, p. 7.
24. Reed, p. 6
25. A.J. Helmecken, "Main [Yates] Street Victoria 1908: The Fabulous 700 Block," *Daily Colonist*, April 23, 1967, p. 4.
26. Reed, p. 8.
27. *British Colonist*, June 6, 1859.

28. *First Two Years*, pp. 35-37.
29. Reed, p. 2.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Corporation of Victoria, *Victoria Illustrated* (Victoria: Ellis, 1891), p. 94.
32. "Pioneer Synagogue Builder," *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 57.
33. Arthur Daniel Hart, comp. and ed., *The Jew in Canada* (Montreal: Jewish Publications, 1926), p. 375; *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 32.
34. Rome, "Herman Schultz, Father of Judge Schultz," *Bulletin*, January 23, 1959, p. 7.
35. Leonoff, pp. 17-18.
36. *Victoria Illustrated*, p. 94.
37. J.B. Kerr, *Biographical Dictionary of Well-Known British Columbians* (Vancouver: Kerr & Begg, 1890), pp. 268-69.
38. *First Two Years*, pp. 43-44.
39. Rome, "The First Bakers of Matzos in Victoria," *Bulletin*, April 2, 1958, p. 14.
40. "Minute Books," August 16, 1863.
41. *First Two Years*, pp. 43-44.
42. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.
43. *Occident*, Philadelphia, August 1855, p. 247.
44. *First Two Years*, pp. 113-18.
45. Leonoff, p. 143.
46. *First Two years*, p. 114.
47. Rome, "Jews in the Cariboo," *Canadian Jewish Year Books* (Montreal: 1939-40), vol. 1, reprinted in *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 6.
48. *British Colonist*, February 7, 1860; "Victoria's Jewish Cemetery," p. 2.
49. *British Colonist*, July 3, 1863.
50. Rome, "Jewish Pioneers of British Columbia," *Bulletin*, August 16, 1957, p. 3.
51. *British Colonist*, March 31, 1860; Rome, "The Joseph Brothers," *Bulletin*, August 23, 1957, p. 3.
52. *British Colonist*, February 2, 1863, passim.
53. Reed, p. 3.
54. *Daily Colonist*, October 10, 1894, p. 5.
55. *First Two Years*, pp. 37-38.
56. *Daily World*, Vancouver, October 1, 1892.
57. *Daily Colonist*, November 12, 1890.
58. *Occident*, January 1856, pp. 561-62; Reva Clar, "Early Stockton Jewry," *WSJHQ*, January 1973, p. 69.
59. *British Colonist*, May 18, 20, 1859.
60. *Ibid.*, June 6, 1859, p. 2.
61. *First Two Years*, pp. 31-34.
62. *WSJHQ*, July 1977, p. 379.
63. *Ibid.*, October 1976, p. 65.
64. "Minute Books," August 31, 1862.
65. *Directory of San Francisco 1875*, p. 179.
66. Kerr, pp. 219-20.
67. *First Two Years*, pp. 17-18; Rome, "Lewis Lewis: Pioneer Synagogue Builder," *Bulletin*, October 18, 1957, p. 6.
68. Inscriptions on headstones, Victoria Jewish cemetery.
69. Allan Klenman, "Victoria Was First B.C. Jewish Centre," *Bulletin*, April 8, 1981, p. 56.
70. *British Colonist*, August 22, 1860.
71. Castle, "Murder at Cayoosh," *Scribe*, March 1983, pp. 7-8.

72. Inscription on Headstone, Victoria Jewish cemetery.
73. *British Colonist*, June 3, 1863; John T. Marshall, *History of Grand Lodge of British Columbia 1871-1970* (Victoria: Grand Lodge/Colonist, 1971), pp. 393-95.
74. Rebecca Wigod, "Temple Emanu-El is Back to Basics and Ready to Celebrate," *Times-Colonist*, Victoria, May 28, 1982, p. 25; "Victoria Rededicates Congregation Emanuel," *Bulletin*, June 17, 1982, pp. 1, 7.
75. Unsworth.
76. Sheina L. Lerman, "Victoria's Emanu-El Now Historic Site," *Bulletin*, July 26, 1983, p. 10.
77. "Jews in Cariboo."
78. "Minute Books," August 15, 31, 1862.
79. *British Colonist*, June 3, 1863.
80. The original subscription list is on display in the synagogue.
81. Sol Shirpser, "An Alaskan Memoir," introduction by Norton B. Stern, *WSJHQ*, October 1977, pp. 16-24.
82. *First Two Years*, pp. 118-19.
83. *British Columbian Directory*, 1863.
84. "Minute Books," August 15, 31, 1862.
85. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1862.
86. "Minute Books," letter of February 11, 1863; "Trials and Tribulations."
87. Sol Shirpser.
88. Robert E. Stewart and Mary Frances Stewart, *Adolph Sutro: A Biography* (Berkeley: 1962), pp. 202ff.
89. Rome, "The Sutros of Victoria: 1," *Bulletin*, December 19, 1957, p. 14.
90. D.W. Higgins, *The Mystic Spring: and Other Tales of Western Life* (Toronto: Briggs, 1904), p. 165.
91. *First Two years*, pp. 22-23; Rome, "The Sutros of Victoria: 2," *Bulletin*, February 7, 1958, p. 6.
92. *First Two Years*, pp. 52-54.
93. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-56.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-94.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-63.
96. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-51.
97. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-77, 95-97.
98. "The First Jew in Public Office," *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 5.
99. *First Two Years*, p. 104.
100. Hart, p. 57.
101. "Lumley Franklin — Mayor of Victoria," *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, pp. 5, 56.
102. *First Two Years*, p. 98.
103. *British Colonist*, May 20, 23, 1859.
104. Hart, p. 371; "First Jew in House of Commons," *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 56.
105. Bruce Ramsey, *Britannia: The Story of a Mine* (Britannia Beach: Community Club, 1967), pp. 20-23, 27-28, 39.
106. Stewart T. McNeill, "The Spirit of Britannia's Past," *Westworld*, Vancouver, September-October, 1976, p. 23.
107. *British Colonist*, February 18, 1863 to May 28, 1863, passim.
108. *First Two Years*, pp. 8-12.
109. *Victoria Gazette*, December 2, 1858; *British Colonist*, December 11, 25, 1858.
110. Norman R. Hacking, "Steamboats Round the Bend," *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, October 1944, p. 278; F.W. Howay, *The Early History of the Fraser River Mines* (Victoria: Archives of British Columbia, 1926), memoir no. VI, pp. 120-21.
111. *First Two Years*, pp. 18-21.

112. *Victoria Gazette*, November 27, 1858.
113. *First Two Years*, pp. 21-22; Rome, "The Reinhardts: Pioneers in New Westminster." *Bulletin*, November 15, 1957, p. 8.
114. Leonoff, p. 33.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
116. Marshall, pp. 159, 531, 635.
117. Hart, p. 119.
118. *Victoria Illustrated*, p. 87.
119. Henry J. Boam, comp. and Ashley G. Brown, ed., *British Columbia: Its History, People, Commerce, Industries and Resources* (London: Sells, 1912), pp. 98, 101-2.
120. *British Colonist*, February 13, 1862, passim.
121. *First Two Years*, p. 44.
122. Ramsey, *Barkerville: A Guide to the Fabulous Cariboo Gold Camp* (Vancouver: Mitchell, n.d.), pp. 6-8.
123. *Cariboo Sentinel*, Barkerville, Williams Creek, passim.
124. "Jews in Cariboo."
125. "Minute Books," August 16, 19, 1863.
126. "Jews in Cariboo."
127. Allan Klenman, "Pioneer Jews in Early B.C. 1858-1875," *Victoria*, March 1971, p. 11.
128. "Jews in Cariboo."
129. "Pioneer Jews," p. 14.
130. Higgins, *The Passing of a Race: and More Tales of Western Life* (Toronto: Briggs, 1905), pp. 224, 230.
131. Rome, "First Days of the Oppenheimers in B.C.," *Bulletin*, March 14, 1958, p. 6.
132. Rome, "Chas. Oppenheimer and the Cariboo Road," *Bulletin*, May 30, 1958, p. 6.
133. G.W. Taylor, *Builders of British Columbia: An Industrial History* (Victoria: Morriss, 1982), pp. 23-29.
134. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-36.
135. Kerr, pp. 266-67; Rome, "The Oppenheimers of British Columbia," *Year Books*, vol. 1, reprinted in *Bulletin*, June 30, 1958, p. 9.