

might be a more penetrating study of Canadian bureaucratic attitudes and behaviour, focusing more critically on the “imperial” smugness of lacklustre (or inept) officials in their reluctant dealings with “foreigners;” after all, the Canadian diplomatic and bureaucratic establishment of the 1950s was the immediate successor of the one that brought us the “None-is-too-many” approach to Jewish wartime refugees.

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Land of Promise: The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta, 1889-1945. Calgary: The Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta, 1996. vii+270pp.

Land of Promise is an informative photographic history of the Jewish experience in Southern Alberta from 1889 to 1945, with detailed captions and written histories of several Jewish families. This “community album” is expanded from a travelling exhibit of more than four hundred photographs, documents, and family histories which opened at the Calgary Jewish Centre in November 1992. The exhibit subsequently traveled to Fort Calgary and later to Edmonton and Vancouver.

The photographs in this book are divided into sections, each with a brief introduction covering Pioneer Families, Homesteaders, Early Families, Weddings, Hebrew School, I.L. Peretz School, Chevra Kadisha, Synagogues, Military, Organizations, Celebrations, Business, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Small Towns. The photographs and captions offer a personal, visualized account of the experiences of Southern Alberta Jewry. They range from the arrival of the first permanent Jewish settlers in Southern Alberta in 1889, to the establishment of Jewish religious, communal, and educational organizations in Calgary and other Southern Alberta towns, to rural and urban life on the prairie frontier, to Jewish participation in both world wars. At the back is a written section on family histories, which provides an enlightening and often moving account of the

arrival, settlement, and establishment of many Southern Alberta Jewish families.

The book concludes with a “page reserved for your family history,” which is an inventive way of ensuring the continuation of Jewish family history in Alberta and Canada. By making history participatory and involving readers in the perpetuation of their own family histories, *Land of Promise* offers an important connection between the Jewish past and present.

In this way, *Land of Promise* is a valuable and necessary complement to more academic studies of Canadian Jewry. With its accessibility to a popular audience, this book re-emphasizes the purpose and importance of genealogy to history, and makes the personal histories of individuals and families speak to each of us. Whether they be the experiences of Southern Alberta’s earliest Jewish pioneers, the travails of Jewish farmers and storekeepers, or the hard-won achievements of successful Jews in Albertan society, their stories, as told through photographs and family histories, offer a sense of the past which is both intimate and immediate. Scholarly treatises of Canadian Jewry are an indispensable part of Canadian Jewish studies, but a community album such as this reminds us that the past was comprised of real individuals who lived, worked, and helped one another build a successful communal presence in this part of “God’s land.”

Land of Promise offers other insights. Behind the photographs and family histories is the knowledge that the Southern Alberta Jewish experience forms an integral part of both Canadian Jewish history and Alberta history. Too often the Canadian Jewish experience is defined by the activities of inhabitants in Montreal, Toronto, and Winnipeg, while the contributions of smaller communities go relatively unnoticed. Yet as Professor David J. Bercuson states in his prologue, this book “proves beyond doubt that our Jewish community played an important role in the cultural, commercial, artistic, and educational life of this part of Alberta almost from the very start.” Thus, *Land of Promise* is more than a pictorial history of

Southern Alberta's Jews; it is the visual portrayal of how these individuals contributed to and helped shape the larger Albertan and Canadian Jewish community in which they lived.

Land of Promise is an excellent addition to the small but growing number of popular histories on Canadian Jewry. The photographs are impressive and the accompanying captions are very well done. Although there are brief introductions to the photograph sections, the reader may wish they were more detailed. In addition, a cross-referencing between the family histories at the back and the photographs throughout would have made matching faces to family histories somewhat easier. Nonetheless, *Land of Promise* is a delightful book, and the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta should be commended for fulfilling its own promise of chronicling the story of a vibrant Jewish community in Southern Alberta.

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Levy, Daniel, *Two-Gun Cohen: A Biography*: New York: St. Martins Press, 1997. 379pp.

This is a fascinating and complex biography of a colourful and charismatic individual. The family originated in Rodzanes, fifty-five miles from Warsaw. The father of Morris Cohen left with his family in the late 1880s for London, England to escape the pogroms.

In East London, Morris was a baby who lived with his family in a world of poverty. At the age of nine, Morris started a 'boxing career,' and also became a thief, pickpocket, and juvenile delinquent. He ended up in the first Jewish reform school, where he remained for four years (1901-1905). He had f i v e siblings. Through the intervention of 'Bernardo's Homes' he was shipped to Western Canada in 1905, with 1300 other