

rivers and established the first "white" colony. The hardships these settlers had to endure, and the fortitude they exhibited, grips the heart and fires the imagination. Lord Selkirk himself, that "figure around whom swings the new era, a dreamer, whose dream is neither gain nor glory, but the phantom thing man calls—'Good'"—Lord Selkirk did not land here until five years later (1816), when he found his proteges "scattered and battered and miserable . . . wandering like children of Israel in the wilderness of woe," driven by the hirelings of the Hudson's Bay Company. "Rude little thatched-roofed cabins had been knocked together, with furniture extemporized of stumps. Around each cabin there swayed in the yellow July light, to the rippling prairie wind, tiny checker-board patches of wheat and barley and oats, first fruits of infinite sacrifice, of infinite despair—types for all time, sacrificial and sacred, of the pioneer." The small, forsaken colony managed to survive, despite the most harrowing, tormenting assaults, and lack of means or support. Little by little the colony grew and prospered. By 1835 enough people had settled here to want a government. "Year after year, for twenty-five years, crops have been bounteous, flocks have multiplied, granaries are bursting with fullness of stores. Though there is no market, there is plenty of land. Though there is little coin current of the realm, there is no want." No, nor peace either. Trouble between rival factions continues. In 1869 a rebellion breaks out, but is speedily checked by an expeditionary force of 1,200 men, which left Toronto in May (1870) and reached Fort Garry on the 24th of August. By that time Winnipeg had grown from a trading post into a town, ambitious to be incorporated, and with visions of becoming a great metropolis; although, as one eye-witness states, they had as yet "no bank, no insurance office, no lawyer, only one doctor, no city council, only one policeman, no taxes, nothing but freedom; and though lacking several other so-called advantages of civilization, we were, to say the least of it tolerably virtuous and unmistakably happy." The map of Winnipeg that year shows only one road, now Main Street, and a couple of dozen houses, with a population of about a hundred souls. There were neither stage line, express nor steamboat running to or from Winnipeg. A bootblack turned up in the summer of 1873, "but our mud was too much for him, and he soon gave up." The city was incorporated in 1874. (The census of 1875 gives a total population of 3,000 souls). On July 6th of the same year, the Manitoba Free Press came to the front with the first daily edition. In 1876, the first locomotive was brought into Winnipeg, and thereafter began the unprecedented influx of strangers. On Tuesday, Dec. 3, 1878, the last spike on the Pembina branch of the C.P.R. was driven, the spike that established communication between Winnipeg and the outside world, and with the entrance of the C.P.R. the real progress begins and Winnipeg becomes, in fact, what she had aspired to be, and what its founders had intended her to become—the gateway to the bounteous Great West.

The hunger for funds, and the need of disposing of their millions of acres of land, drove the C.P.R. to start a forceful publicity campaign throughout the United States and Great Britain. The bright pictures conjured by the magicians in charge of publicity could not fail to make an impression. Thousands of immigrants and speculators began to rush towards Winnipeg. Among these, also—as was inevitable, a number of Jews—mainly from the south. Max Goldstein is credited to have been the first Jewish settler in the Northwest, having opened a store in Qu'Appelle, Sask., as far back as 1877. — The late Mrs. G. Frankfurter assured me that one Symons had conducted a small wholesale and retail fur and notion business in Winnipeg before 1878; though I could not find her statement confirmed (f).

And here, perhaps, I may be permitted to unburden my feelings of disappointment that, despite a fairly diligent search, I could discover but little documentary evidence to establish definitely some of the facts recorded in this historical survey of the life and efforts of the earlier Jewish settlers. The only available records were the files of the local newspapers, and these, while they furnish a most striking picture of the arrival of the first group of Jewish settlers in Manitoba, in 1882, and give us a glimpse into the condition of the small group of Jews living here at the time, passes silently over any further manifestation of Jewish life. (\*) And so the only sources of information we have—aside from the newspapers, are the reminiscences of the survivors and their verbal

(f) In the Free Press of May 25th (1882) we also find this item: "A parcel was received (by post) for Mrs. Cohn." None of the records so far published mention a Mrs. Cohn living here at the time. In the list of school graduations, of June 30, 1882, we find the name of Annie Cohn, passing from grade III. to IV. Other names mentioned are: Sidney and Rhoda Wertheim, Sylvia and Belle Bieber and Alfred Frankfurter. (\*) That Jewish merchants or traveling salesmen must have come quite often here, is certain. We find, for instance, that "S. J. Cohn, Jeweller, of Halifax," was registered at the Queen's Hotel on June 5th.

description of events, the significance, of which is either magnified or minimized, according to the temperament and character of the story-teller.

True, there are available a few contributions to the history of the Jews of Winnipeg, written by men more or less gifted with historical insight and literary talent. The first and most intensive effort was made by Mr. A. Osovsky, who published a series of articles in The Israelite Press and in the Canadian Eagle, for which we must be truly grateful. It is to be regretted that means were not found to continue the record he originated and so ably started, in the Zionist "Golden Book"—for it is from this source that we have been able to gather much of the material for the following pages. But he, too, like J. J. Goodman, Moses Finkelstein, and perhaps others, have either related as faithfully as they were able to, the accounts given to them by some "old-timers", long after the events which they were describing had taken place, and the recollection of which would be dim and distorted—or if they have drawn upon their own recollections, these do not go further back than a few years. And when you, too, visit the old-timers and induce them to force their memory back and guide them over grounds which they would rather leave undisturbed, since there is little that is not bitter in it—you find that the early life of those pioneers was devoid of chivalry or heroism, unless it be the heroism of dauntless fortitude and endurance in the face of hardships, poverty, loneliness, longing and helplessness.

As we have seen, the census of 1881 indicates that there were 33 Jewish souls in Manitoba; 21 of these in Winnipeg, 7 in Emerson, 3 in Morris, and 2 more in the "extensions". Among these were the families Coblentz, Philip Brown, Wm. Harris, Louis Wortheim, Benjamin and Adolph Beaber, the Goldsteins, Isaak Berkman, Jack Hyman, Dave and Simon Ripstein, H. Rosenthal, I. Goldbloom, Geo. Frankfurter and V. Victorson. (\*\*)

Particular mention should be made here of Dr. Vineberg—the first Jewish physician to practice in Western Canada, and, in all likelihood the first Jew to hold an official position in Western Canada, that of Board of Health Officer, who was highly regarded. It is strange that none of those who wrote historical sketches of the period, or talked about those early days, mentioned Dr. Vineberg. Our discovery of him came about quite unexpectedly. In the columns of the Free Press of June 3, 1882, we read the report of an accident, in the course of which it was stated that "The party at once drove into Portage and the wounded man was placed in charge of Dr. Vineberg." Upon further inquiry we discovered that though he practiced in Portage la Prairie, he was fairly well known in Winnipeg; but he had left for New York so long ago, that he was forgotten. We learned, however, that he has been on the staff of the Mount Sinai Hospital ever since. Dr. Vineberg is one of the oldest graduates of McGill University. He received his diploma in 1878, at the age of 21 and upon leaving Canada in 1883, acquired a very high standing in the medical world. To our letter of inquiry Dr. Vineberg was good enough to reply as follows:

New York, January 13, 1932.

Mr. H. E. Wilder, Israelite Press Building, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Dear Sir,—In reply to your favor of the 2nd inst., I am the Dr. Hiram N. Vineberg who practised in Portage la Prairie in 1881, 1882 and 1883. Although I was the only Jew in the town, I soon acquired the leading practice. As well as I can remember, there were at least four other physicians practising in the town. I was appointed Board of Health Officer. Joseph Martin, who afterwards became prominent in politics, occupied the same building, and we became very close friends. I was on intimate terms with the ministers (four or five) in the place. I was especially intimate with the Reverend Mr. Fortin, the minister of the Episcopal church, and Mrs. Fortin, a most highly cultured and broad-minded woman, and her two charming daughters.

I did not encounter any prejudice whatever, and there was no doubt as to my religion from the very first.

On the eve of my departure a dinner was tendered to me, at which most of the leading citizens were present. Many complimentary and flattering speeches were delivered. All expressed the wish that I would return soon to resume practice there. I went abroad for a year, visiting the leading European clinics, then settled in this city (New York).

HIRAM N. VINEBERG.

Owing to their small number, and perhaps, their unsettled state, these few families could not afford a synagogue, but they did rent a hall, the Orangemen's lodge room on Graham Street, and here they conducted their High Holiday Services, in the fall of 1881, under the leadership of Mr. Benjamin, who was invited here for

(\*\*) A not inconspicuous figure in the city at the time was one Joseph Wolfe, who did a thriving real estate business, and was at one time alderman. Although he did not profess to be a Jew, and was believed to be converted, it is said that before his death he had asked to be buried in accordance with the Jewish ritual.

the purpose, and thus the first Jewish Community of Winnipeg was established. This community might have continued to live undisturbed for many a year, had it not been for the impetus that it received from the effects of that red-letter year in the annals of the Jewish History—the year 1881—which marks the beginning of a new chapter, to this day not yet closed, in the martyrology of the Jews in the Central and Eastern European countries.

Today we are accustomed to believe that the disturbance at any point of the terrestrial globe in the political or financial world affects simultaneously every other point of the globe. The seismographic sensitiveness of the politico-financial machinery is sure not only to record, but to reproduce immediately, the disturbance everywhere at once, with almost equal force and intensity. In 1881 such a disturbance travelled with a relatively moderate speed, and so we find that while Winnipeg and the Northwest Territories were living in a continuous glare of exalted hope—the Jews in Russia and Roumania woke up from their dreams of bright expectations only to find that, day by day, terrifying, black, fretting clouds were gathering over their heads, rushed there by that blackest of black devils, Pobyedonostzev, "the resuscitated Torquemada," who upon his appointment as procurator of the Holy Synod, made the solemn declaration that under his rule "one-third of the Jews in Russia would be forced to emigrate, another third compelled to accept baptism, and the remainder would be brought to the verge of starvation", and for this platform the dark-souled priest secured the approval and support of his Emperor, Alexander Third, who just then, in 1881, succeeded his father, Alexander Second; not, however, with the intention of continuing the favorable and progressive policy that his father, whom Disraeli had singled out as being "the most benevolent prince that ever ruled Russia", but to inaugurate a policy "not only of reaction, but of return to medieval methods". Pobyedonostzev, true to his word, immediately began his nefarious activity, and . . . the Jewish tragedy of the eighties began to be enacted, the details of which are too horrifying and too well known to be told here.

## CHAPTER VII.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE FIRST JEWISH GROUP IN WINNIPEG,  
AFTER THE POGROMS OF 1881

An informed and enlightened press. Liberal spirit. Community aroused. Refugees arrive. Hope and disappointment.

Despite their isolation from the rest of the world, the inhabitants of Winnipeg were not unfamiliar with the calamity that had befallen the Russian Jewry. The "Manitoba Free Press", then, as now, sensitive to all currents of oppression, had often recorded, not unprotestingly, the inhuman treatment to which the Jews of Russia had been subjected. Glancing through the files of the Free Press of those days, we find almost daily items such as these:

"Moscow—Seventy Jewish farmers have addressed a memorial to the Minister of Finance regarding the disastrous consequences of expelling Jews."

"Few things are stranger than the capricious manner in which laws affecting the Jews have been made in Russia . . ." (May 22, 1882).

On May 23 an article of more than half a column appeared under the heading: The Suffering of a Russian Jew describing the heart-rending experiences of one John Natika: "I cannot speak . . . my tongue was cut out in Russia."

Then again, we read, in a later number, a "Dispatch from Austria": "In the crush of Jewish refugees at Brody, yesterday, one man was killed . . ." (\*)

Even "The Times", the second newspaper of Winnipeg, though decidedly conservative in its tendency, and which was later to be rather outspoken in its unfriendly attitude towards the group of Jews who landed here—kept its readers informed as to the unhappy lot of Jews in Russia. Thus, in its issue of February 10th, 1882, there is reproduced an article from The London Times, under the following headline, prominently displayed in bold type: "Russian Horrors: A nine months' monstrous record of rapine, murder and every outrage." Below this is a sub-heading: "Trustworthy

(\*) No less significant of the spirit of the time is this short item, from the Free Press of May 16, 1882: "It is a gratifying proof of modern tolerance, that when the church of the incarnation of New York was burned, the Jewish Temple Emmanuel, in common with Christian churches, offered its hospitality to the homeless congregation, which was 'accepted.' Its significance, to us, lies not in the fact that the Temple Emmanuel should have offered its hospitality—but that an item such as this with its comment, should appear 50 years ago in a newspaper published so far away from New York."



•  
**Down  
through  
the  
ages**  
•

**Quality in Merchandise . . .  
Reliability . . . . . Integrity**

• . . . these things have  
dominated all successful private  
and business enterprise.

• • •

Co-incident with the growth of Western  
Canada, the name "NABOB"  
has come to mean . . . "Quality"  
in pure food products . . . an  
institution backed by sound business  
principles . . . a worthy pioneer  
Western Canadian Firm.

