The Rise of Jewish Life and Religion in British Columbia, 1858-1948

Cyril E. Leonoff

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1. Marriage of Rose Belasoff to John Mallin; first wedding at Sons of Israel Synagogue; Vancouver, B.C.; January 1, 1914
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I. PREFACE

The emphasis of this paper is a broad survey of the origins and development of Jewish religious congregations, educational and social institutions in British Columbia over its first nine decades, from the beginnings of white settlement in the province in the mid-1850s through to the end of the Second World War at the mid-1940s. As well, biographical sketches are given of rabbinical, pedagogical and pioneer community leaders who stand out in history as key developers of these institutions. This review is not intended to be a definitive history of any one institution nor is it possible to include all the presidents, rabbis, teachers and lay volunteers who have tirelessly and effectively served the community through this ninety-year period.

In its ancient history, the Jewish nation of Israel suffered two mass upheavals from its homeland. The first was the exile of the Israelites to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar’s siege of Jerusalem and destruction of the First (Solomon’s) Temple in 586 B.C.E. The second occurred when Judaea was a Roman province with the Great Revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Second (Herod’s) Temple in 70 C.E. The result of the latter was the dispersion of the Jewish people throughout the Roman Empire, which rimmed the Mediterranean basin. Subsequently, the Jews scattered to communities throughout Europe, and later to the Americas. As a minority group, the Jews sought to counter assimilation and to sustain their distinctive culture and faith.

Jewish communal development in the Diaspora has followed a universal pattern over time that derived from their forced peripatetic movements from nation to nation, their autonomous administration within a city
ghetto or *shitetl* (country village) and fulfillment of religious obligations that differed from their Christian or Moslem neighbours.

Consequently, the processes involved in the formation of a Jewish community have been: creation of a benevolent society to assist the aged, sick and needy; procural and consecration of a burial ground with formation of a *chevra kadisha* (burial society); rental, purchase or building of a house of worship equipped with religious accoutrements such as a *Sefer Torah* (Scroll of the Law), a *mikvah* (ritual bath) and facilities for koshering meat; the founding of a school to teach children the Jewish culture, religion, and languages; as well as in larger communities the formation of many other benevolent, social, cultural, educational, athletic and recreational institutions.

The first Jewish community in the Canadian North West originated in the second half of the nineteenth century in Victoria, Vancouver Island. Victoria was the seaport and entrepôt of a series of gold rushes that started in the lower Fraser River in 1858 and ended in the Klondike gold rush to the Yukon in 1898. There were also pockets of Jewish residents in the gold and mercantile towns and in the Pacific Coast fur trade. This year, 2008, marks the sesquicentennial anniversary of British Columbia as well as 150 years of Jewish life in the province.

Vancouver was officially founded on April 6, 1886, with the coming of the transcontinental railway. As the terminal city of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), by the beginning of the twentieth century Vancouver had replaced Victoria as the hub of provincial, national and international commerce. It was natural that the largest Jewish community in the province would eventually reside here.

In 2007, significant anniversaries of the two oldest Jewish religious congregations extant in Vancouver were celebrated – the Centenary, 1907-2007, of the Orthodox Schara Tzedeck and the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1932-2007, of the Conservative Beth Israel. During the city’s formative years, a Reform congregation, Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver, 1894-1919, was in operation for twenty-five years but then disbanded. After a hiatus of two generations, a new Reform
congregation, Temple Sholom, was constituted and in 2005 celebrated its fortieth anniversary, 1965-2005. These congregations have represented the main branches of Ashkenazic (German-Polish-Russian) Judaism in Vancouver.

Because of the curtailment of Jewish immigration to Canada during the years of the Great Depression and the Second World War in the 1930s and 1940s, other branches of Judaism did not arise in British Columbia until 1947-48 when the gates of Canada were re-opened, first to displaced persons and orphans from European refugee camps, and later to immigrants world-wide. Among this new immigration were Sephardic (Spanish-Mediterranean-Middle East) Orthodox Jews and Chabad Hasidim (pietist sects displaced from Europe), who have formed their own congregations. Beth Hamidrash, a Sephardic synagogue in Vancouver, is based on the foundations of an earlier Ashkenazic Orthodox synagogue. There are now a number of Chabad congregations in Metro Vancouver and one on Vancouver Island.

II. AT THE BEGINNING: VICTORIA AND VANCOUVER ISLAND

The Establishment of Victoria, 1843

Fort Victoria, on the southeast tip of Vancouver Island, was established
in 1843 as a trading post and supply farm of the British Hudson’s Bay Company to replace the company’s headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia River (which was destined to become American territory). In order to settle British colonists and confirm sovereignty over the land, in 1850 the British government sent out a colonial governor, who declared the Crown Colony of Vancouver Island. Nevertheless, the white population remained sparse, consisting of company officers, servants, farmhands, retirees and a few independent colonists.

Between 1858 and 1862, gold discoveries on the bars of the Fraser River and its tributaries, and later in the central interior “Cariboo” region of the mainland, brought in the first substantial white population, estimated at 35,000 people. In order to administer the area, on November 19, 1858, at Fort Langley on the south bank of the Fraser River, Governor James Douglas declared a second Crown Colony, named British Columbia. In 1866, the colonies united and in 1871 joined the Canadian Confederation.

The First Jewish Arrivals, 1858

Among the passengers on the first boatloads of gold-seekers alighting at Victoria from San Francisco in the spring and summer of 1858 were a handful of Jews. Some came from England and Australia seeking opportunities in the developing territories of the British Empire, and later became important legislators and civil servants in the new colonies. A few were adventurers with gold-rush fever who came solely to mine. Others were seafarers involved in the lucrative fur trade in the Pacific North West. However, most were small-scale merchants sensing an opportunity for making a good living from a pioneer settlement with a booming economy. Of Central European origins – Polish/Prussian/Germanic – they arrived from California where they had been in trade and commerce associated with the earlier gold rush and settlement there. They had become acculturated to American society before arriving in Victoria.

Thus the early Jewish settlers in Victoria at the very beginning of major settlement in the province came as pioneers and builders, with skilled
trades, business experience and some capital. In contrast, later waves of settlers who would predominate in the Vancouver community arrived as impoverished refugees from primitive villages and towns in Eastern Europe, with the elements of North American culture and language still to learn. By the end of 1858, Victoria’s Jewish population was an estimated thirty-two family units totalling forty-nine persons.

**The Jewish Community of Victoria Organizes Communal and Religious Life, 1858-62**

The nascent Jewish community of Victoria organized quickly. In the fall of 1858 they held High Holy Day services. In May 1859 they founded a Hebrew Benevolent Society, in 1860 they consecrated a cemetery, and on August 15, 1862 they formed a religious congregation.1

In September 1858, the first public Jewish services ever held in the Pacific North West, Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), were reported in Jewish newspapers as far away as San Francisco and New York, the Western and Eastern epicentres of Jewish life in America. The San Francisco *Gleaner* carried this Letter to the Editor from a Victoria committee member:

> Editor, *Gleaner,*

Items from such a remote part of the globe will be of interest to you. It affords us great pleasure to state that the Israelites of this city had a meeting last Sunday, the 29th ult. at the house of Mr. [Kady] Gambitz for the purpose of celebrating in a proper manner the ensuing holidays. A committee of three was appointed to procure a suitable place for worship . . . .

Charles Davis, Chairman pro tem
A[braham] Blackman, Secretary

The *New York Jewish Messenger* published this news item from a correspondent:

> Victoria, Vancouver Island -
The small number of Israelites at present residing here have formed themselves into a temporary congregation for holding divine services during the Yom Tovim [literally Good Days - Holidays].

Rosh Hashanah services were held on September 9 and 10. Four days before Yom Kippur, held on September 18, the following advertisement appeared in the Victoria Gazette:

NOTICE TO ISRAELITES

Tickets of admission to the synagogue on Broad St. can be procured of Mr. [J.] Goldsmith [Treasurer, protem] - No charge for ladies’ seats.²

One of the earliest duties of any Jewish community is to consecrate a burial ground. A 0.7-hectare site, in a peaceful oak-treed setting on Cedar Hill Road at the edge of town, was purchased from Roderick Finlayson, a Hudson’s Bay Company chief factor of Fort Victoria.

A gathering of the forty-member Hebrew Benevolent Society took place in downtown Victoria on Sunday, February 5, 1860. At 2 o’clock in the afternoon three large carriages, together with friends on horseback, left for the cemetery site. The dedicated ground was then only thirty metres square and enclosed from the larger area with pickets. A six-metre opening was left for the carriage gates with two smaller gates in Gothic style for pedestrians. The proceedings began with the vice-president calling in Hebrew: “Open the Gates of Heaven!” The president, Reverend E.H. Vaenberg, and officers of the society formed a two-by-two procession and went around the enclosure three times while reciting the Psalms. The daily newspaper observed that the proceedings “seemed to be characterized by the same feelings, which activated the patriarch Abraham to purchase the cave of Machpelah to bury his dead.”³ Thus was founded the first Jewish cemetery in Western Canada, which is still in use today.

Not all of the British establishment welcomed the Jews. Colonel
Richard Clement Moody arrived in Victoria in December 1858 to command the detachment of Royal Engineers sent out from England to defend and build public works for the new colony. Robert Burnaby, described as “a true Victorian English gentleman”, accompanied him on the long steamship voyage from England. Burnaby was hardly pleased with what he saw in Victoria, “a population,” he described, “with a Yankee cut and a Hebrew phiz [face].”

The Founding of New Westminster, the Mainland Capital, 1859

On Colonel Moody’s military advice, in 1859 the mainland capital was soon moved from Fort Langley to a more defensible position on a high bank on the north shore of the Fraser River, where he set up the Royal Engineers’ camp. The city was named New Westminster by Queen Victoria, and hence is known as the Royal City. This port city became a mainland supplier to the gold towns, and Jews were living and trading there from its first days. Prominent among them were Meyer, Reinhart & Co., Levi and Boas, “suppliers to the Cariboo gold fields,” and the Blackman brothers, Abraham and Morris, hardware merchants whose headquarters were in Victoria.

Burnaby, 1859-1992

In the early days of Lower Mainland settlement, a large block of undeveloped land lay between the river port of New Westminster and the future city of Vancouver. In February 1859, Robert Burnaby was engaged by the government as Colonel Moody’s private secretary. From the Engineers’ camp in New Westminster, Burnaby led an exploration party through this thickly wooded hinterland, becoming the first white men to “discover” Burnaby Lake, named in his honour. However, in August 1859, due to government restraint, Burnaby was laid off and later returned to Victoria where he was a not very successful businessman. Even so, he became a legislator and was prominent in the Masonic Order.

In 1860, following the Fraser River gold rush, fear of an American attack prompted the Royal Engineers to construct the False Creek Trail
(now Kingsway) between the Fraser River port and the ice-free saltwater harbour of English Bay (now in Vancouver). A military reserve was set apart at the highest point of the trail as a back-door defence post for New Westminster.

In 1891, a corporation presided over by David Oppenheimer constructed the 14-mile-long (23-km) Westminster and Vancouver Tramway, with its trackage and stations across this unsettled region. The resultant settlement acquired a provincial municipal charter in September 1892 and was named Burnaby after the lake. Oppenheimer also persuaded the government to designate Colonel Moody’s old military reserve, located midway along the line, as a municipal park, which he named Central Park – a namesake for the famous park in New York, his wife Julia’s hometown.5

In the twentieth century, Burnaby became the locale for Metro Vancouver’s two major Jewish cemeteries, Schara Tzedeck (1928) located at the border with New Westminster, and Beth Israel (1946) located in North Burnaby. With explosive population growth in the second half of the century, Burnaby officially became a city in September 1992. In modern times, Burnaby Mountain in this city is the site of Simon Fraser University (1965), which has had a number of distinguished Jewish chancellors, professors and benefactors.

The Building of Temple Emanu-El Synagogue, 1863

By 1863, the Jewish population of Victoria had reached a peak of 119 family units totalling 242 persons. It was time, within five years of their first arrival, to build a substantial synagogue, Temple Emanu-El, (God is with us). The congregation engaged Scottish-born architect and engineer John Wright, who had arrived in 1859 from San Francisco. Wright is noteworthy for the palatial Nob Hill residences he designed in that city. The first building-design professional to practice in Victoria, he designed two wooden churches in the Gothic style. However, for the brick synagogue, Wright chose the Romanesque-Revival style, more appropriate to synagogue architecture.
Laying of “the foundation stone of the Hebrew synagogue,” on June 2, 1863, was an unprecedented multicultural event for the young city of Victoria. The congregation solicited the goodwill of the general community by inviting all of the city’s ethnic groups to partake in the ceremony. The Masonic lodges, whose membership included a number of Jews, were delegated to lay the cornerstone.

President David Shirpser and Vice-President Samuel Hoffman of the congregation were met at their rented rooms by the band of Her Majesty’s ship Topaze and the Germania Sing Verein. Proceeding to the Star and Garter Hotel, they were joined by the Hebrew Benevolent, French Benevolent and St. Andrew’s societies. The procession then marched to the Masonic Hall, where they received the “Fraternity of Ancient and Honorable Freemasons” of Victoria and Vancouver [Island] lodges, led by Right Worshipful Master Robert Burnaby. The mayor, Thomas Harris, with city council and the chief justice, David Cameron, walked in the procession, followed by a host of citizens. Marching to the music of the band, the procession reached the synagogue site.

Following speeches and prayers, the principal architect, Wright, then addressed the gathering: “With the blessing of Almighty God we desire to erect a building here to the honor and glory of His Holy name.” The cement was applied with an inscribed silver trowel, the stone lowered, and Right Worshipful Master Burnaby declared it to be “plumb, level, and square,” and then exhorted: “May this Building be carried on successfully until the completion, according to the plans, in prayer, harmony, and brotherly love.”

The British Colonist newspaper, in a long report on the laying of the
Thus terminated an eventful day in the history of the Jews in Vancouver Island and it must be a source of infinite gratification to that body, that the ceremonies of this day, partaking as they did of an exclusively denominational character, were participated in by all classes of our community, with a hearty good will and brotherly feeling, evidencing in acts more powerful than words, the high estimation in which they are held by their fellow townsmen of the city of Victoria.  

In a letter home to his mother in England, Burnaby wrote of “a grand Ceremonial at which I presided as Grand Master of the Freemasons laying the foundation stone of a Synagogue.” Then he expressed his true sentiments: “I wish it had been a church: but we cannot pick and choose as Masons.” Nevertheless he conceded, “they gave me a very handsome silver trowel.”

The Victoria congregation engaged an Orthodox Rabbi, Dr. Morris R. Cohen, who had occupied a pulpit in Sacramento, California. He arrived in time for the consecration of Temple Emanu-El Synagogue on September 13, 1863, and for celebration of the ensuing High Holy Days. After completion of the building project, another Anglo-gentleman, who had been resident in Victoria for five years, made this comparison:

The Jews have erected a synagogue, and are presided over by an intelligent and respectable rabbi. It is not to the honour of Christians that this should be the most costly religious structure in the place, and the only one made of brick; the others being of wood . . . or of corrugated iron.

Because of a diverse population that came from many regions of the world, there was controversy as to the form of worship that the congregation would take. Because the majority derived from Polish Jewry, the wellspring of traditional Ashkenazic Judaism, the constitution specified the “Orthodox order,” rather than the Americanized German Reform that had taken hold in California. Nevertheless, through the
145 years of its existence the congregation has worshipped under Orthodox, Reform, Liberal and Conservative rabbis.

**Nanaimo, 1861 to the Second World War**

Originally a coal mining and port town 60 miles (97 km) up-island from Victoria, today Nanaimo is a major ferry terminal and university college city of 70,000. The city has always had some Jewish presence. Alexander Mayer, its first Jewish resident, arrived in 1861 from Portland, Oregon, to start a clothing store. However, the land control and trade monopoly of the Hudson’s Bay Company prevented him from opening a business. Not to be thwarted, he opened his trunks of goods on a street corner and quickly sold out. In 1863, when lots were auctioned on the market, Mayer purchased one with a log building on it for $600.

He painted the drab building red and it became known as Mayer’s Red House – the Pioneer Store. The general store was a success from the start and operated for thirty years. He was joined in business by sons-in-law Sam Levi and Marcus Wolfe. In 1891-92 Wolfe had the distinction of being the first Jew in British Columbia to hold the office of Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Masons.9

The predominant Nanaimo Jewish family at the turn of the century was John Mahrer with his wife Louise, the daughter of Rabbi Solomon Philo of Victoria and Vancouver. Mahrer, one of the city’s prominent citizens, was a brew master, city councillor and builder of the Nanaimo Opera House.10 Undoubtedly these early Jewish citizens held services in their homes, but because of the proximity of Temple Emanu-El in Victoria,
where they could participate in the High Holy Day services, they never formed their own congregation.

The Jack Farber family, who ran a furniture store, were the prominent Nanaimo Jewish citizens of the mid-twentieth century. During the Second World War, Nanaimo became a strategic military centre. Suddenly, a number of small towns in British Columbia, normally with few Jews, had blossoming communities as a result of the military troops stationed there. The Canadian Chaplain Service, along with the Canadian Jewish Congress, were anxious to provide ethnic services for the Jewish troops who were stationed far away from their homes. The services relied on the hospitality of the leading families, as evidenced by the following letter:

CANADIAN CHAPLAIN SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE ARMY
Vancouver, B.C.
14 Mar 45

Mr. J. Farber,
Nanaimo, B.C.

Dear Mr. Farber,
I understand that you are planning for the forthcoming Passover festival to grant your ever gracious hospitality to some of the boys in the Armed Services, and will be having them as your guests for the Seder nights.

Of course, it comes as no surprise to me, for I have had the pleasure of personally enjoying your graciousness and witnessing
for myself the evidence of your good Jewish practice of *hachnosas orchim* [hospitality to strangers] as well as to see and hear how much the boys and girls appreciate it. I know too that you will outdo yourself this coming *Pesach* [Passover].

. . . . If you require any foods, the Canadian Jewish Congress War Efforts Committee of Vancouver is ready to supply these provisions wherever a Servicemen’s Seder is held.

With sincerest regards to Mrs. Farber and the girls,

E.F. Mandelcorn H/Capt
Jewish Chaplain Pacific Command

**Vancouver Island Today**

Temple Emanu-El Synagogue continues to be a vital part of Jewish life in Victoria to this day. In 2003, an Educational and Cultural Centre wing was added to the building. Today it is the oldest extant synagogue in Canada and on the west coast of North America. The building has been designated by the Canadian government as a site of “national historic and architectural significance.”

In the nineteenth century, there were no more than three hundred Jews living on Vancouver Island; the Jewish population in the

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*From Generation to Generation*

6. Drawing of The Temple Emanu-El Jewish Educational and Cultural Centre; Victoria, B.C.; [2003]
2001 Canada census is 3,870. In modern times Temple Emanu-El Synagogue is affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. Thus, to fill a demand, since circa 1990 smaller congregations have arisen in Victoria practicing Orthodox, Reform and Chabad Judaism. In the mid-1980s, the Jewish Community Centre of Victoria was established. There is also a Jewish community in the Nanaimo/Parksville/Port Alberni region of central Vancouver Island and small, informal groups on several of the nearby Gulf Islands.

III. JEWISH LIFE IN RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN BRITISH COLUMBIA

Central Interior “Cariboo” Region, 1862-75

In the summer of 1862, an erstwhile impoverished English canal boatman turned prospector, William “Billy” Barker, made a big gold strike below the canyon on Williams Creek in the central interior plateau region of British Columbia, dubbed the Cariboo, a misspelling of the woodland Caribou that ranged there. Barkerville quickly grew into – for a time – the largest community in British Columbia, with a floating population that peaked at some 5,000, then settled down as the supply centre for the Cariboo mines.

Again, Jews were in this town from its first days. Most famous among them were the Oppenheimer family, one of the foremost names in British Columbia history. Four of five German-born Oppenheimer brothers, who had participated in trade during the earlier gold rush in northern California, moved north with the British Columbia gold strikes. The senior brother, Mayer, did not settle in British Columbia. The second brother, Charles, first to arrive in 1858, set up a store in Victoria, leaving a third brother, Godfrey, in charge of the Victoria business. As gold prospectors moved up the Fraser River into the Cariboo, Charles set up a supply warehouse in Yale below the canyon at the head of navigation on the Fraser River. Joined by younger brothers David and Isaac, they expanded the business, opening stores throughout the gold mining towns, which they supplied by their own pack train. Then
Charles took a contract to build a portion of the Cariboo Wagon Road to Barkerville, leaving his younger siblings in charge of the firm, Oppenheimer Brothers.

When Barkerville burned to the ground in September 1868 and was shortly rebuilt, David travelled to San Francisco to buy a fire engine and Isaac became captain of the brigade. The firm prospered through the peak mining period, then as suppliers to the Canadian Pacific Railway construction through the Fraser canyon. After fire destroyed their Yale warehouse in August 1881 (by
then mining and construction activity had waned in the region), David and Isaac moved to Victoria, where they established a large wholesale import-supply business.14

As well, there were many other Jewish people who loomed large in the business and social life of the Cariboo. The Grunbaum brothers, who advertised the sale of “Vienna Merchandise,” were said to be the first to open a store in Barkerville. The older brother, Nathan, took an active part in public life and the mining industry, while the younger, Benjamin, operated a branch in nearby Van Winkle. Later the Grunbaums became prominent merchants in Seattle.

Carl Strouss’s business rivalled the Oppenheimer’s’. His wealth can be measured by the $100,000 loss of his main store and merchandise in the Barkerville fire. Strouss rebuilt and expanded and also solicited funds for building a firehouse and for its maintenance. He kept well-stocked posts throughout the gold district, and denied in the press that he was attempting to corner the coal-oil market. In 1871, we find him prominent in Victoria business circles and in contributing to Jewish funds.
Felix Neufelder of Barkerville, Parsonville, Van Winkle, Richfield and Soda Creek, accumulated a sizable fortune in trade. But he also devoted his tremendous energies to various public causes, such as the fire brigade and the hospital, and was on practically every grand jury between 1867 and 1874. Neufelder was active in arranging the popular Canadian and American anniversary celebrations of July 1 and July 4, both observed with equal gusto by the international population. Neufelder left the Cariboo in 1875 and established a wholesale grocery business on Wharf Street in Victoria.

As well as several resident and itinerant Jewish merchants throughout the Cariboo, there were other Jewish-owned businesses in Barkerville, including a cigar store and circulating library, a barber, an auctioneer and express agents. There were also Jews directly engaged in the mining operations. A Jewish miner, Franklin, died at his workings. Bill Miller was the foreman of the Better Plume on Williams Creek. Cohen and Hoffman were long-time prominent merchants in Barkerville. A news event occurred when a wall of their warehouse, built of stone and clay on a hill, gave way in a thaw and came crashing down through their store below. Fortunately, although some lamps and clocks were demolished, no one inside the store was injured. After the dissolution of the partnership, Joe Cohen remained in the Cariboo, where he was employed by Senator Hearst of California to take care of the latter's machine workings in the mines; payments were irregular and in the end Cohen died in poverty.15

Skimming through the newspapers of the period, we frequently read respectful words about the contributions of the Cariboo Jews to the community. Nevertheless, history has not recorded any attempts at organizing a Jewish congregation, cemetery or other Jewish communal activities in Barkerville, except for one news item in September 1866: “The Day of Atonement, which fell on Wednesday last, was strictly observed by all citizens of the Jewish persuasion on the [Williams] creek, by shutting up their places of business from sundown on Tuesday till sundown on Wednesday.”16 Although not specifically mentioned in the report, there were certainly enough Jews in the region for a minyan, and it is easy to imagine that some kind of Jewish activities or services
were held at this and other times. On another occasion in 1868, the Catholics of the Cariboo thanked the Jews for their generosity in subscribing to a fund in honour of Bishop Rt. Rev. d’Herbomez.\textsuperscript{17}

**Murders on the Frontier, 1861-62**

Death was common on the frontier. Barkerville has a cemetery, but it is unknown whether the miner Franklin and Joe Cohen are buried there. The only Jewish burial ground in British Columbia in pioneer times was in Victoria, consecrated on February 5, 1860.

Morris Price, born in Prussia, had come to the colonies in 1859. By 1861 he was well established, with property in Victoria, New Westminster and in Cayoosh Flat (now Lillooet), a Native village and wayside town on a route to the gold fields. The Natives were known to be hostile to the intrusion of the white men.\textsuperscript{18} On February 3, 1861, a resident of Cayoosh wrote to the newspapers:

> A brutal and horrible murder was committed in our midst here on the night of the 1st inst., on the person of Mr. M. Price, a storekeeper of this place. The discovery of the deed has caused a great sensation among the inhabitants of Cayoosh Flat. Mr. Price being a very peaceable and inoffensive man, having no enemy has seemingly caused the crime to appear tenfold worse. He was found on the morning of the 2nd inst., lying on his back with his throat cut from ear to ear.\textsuperscript{19}

The Natives who had committed the murder were caught immediately, with marks of blood still upon one of them. They were executed after a trial before the notable early B.C. judge, Matthew Baillie Begbie.

The body of this Jewish pioneer was cared for by the Masonic lodge at Cayoosh. Three months elapsed before it was brought to eternal rest on May 6 in the Jewish cemetery in Victoria:

> The corpse, inclosed in a handsome coffin, was placed in a hearse and preceded by the Victoria lodge . . . of Free and Accepted Masons. A number of friends of the deceased followed
the hearse. On arriving at the cemetery, the usual Masonic ceremonies were held, after which the burial service of the Hebrew Church were performed. The remains were lowered to their last resting place. The whole ceremony was a very impressive one, and excited much apparent emotion in the breasts of many of the participants who had long known and respected their deceased brother. This is the first Jew interred in the Hebrew cemetery of this city.\textsuperscript{20}

Just over a year later, the general community was again shocked by murder on the gold trail. The pioneer historian and storyteller, W.W. Walkem, called it “The Massacre of the Jews,” and it has become part of the province’s lore. In the summer of 1862, Harris “Dutchy” Lewin, a pioneer of 1858, and Russian-born David Sokoloski were engaged in packing merchandise to the Cariboo. After they had sold their wares at the gold mines of Keithley Creek, the two Jews met on their way out to the Forks of the Quesnel River where they decided to travel together along with a French Canadian packer, Charles Rouchier. They had an estimated $10,000 to $12,000 in gold dust among them.
On the afternoon of July 26, the men reached the bridge over the North Fork of the Quesnel at the confluence with the Cariboo River, where they rested and partook of refreshments. Here, because the much-used lower trail was wet, they were advised to take the old disused mountain trail, which was longer but always dry. Soon out of sight, they were never seen alive again. Two days later, their shot and mutilated remains, with evidence of a violent struggle, were discovered three miles out from the bridge. Apparently, three strangers were also on the trail. One of them, a notorious thug, was an Irishman named Cross-Road Jack, who had been noticed hanging around the camp, and for whom a large reward was offered by the United States authorities.

A coroner’s jury was appointed and a public meeting held with all the inhabitants of the town, chaired by Rev. A. Brown, with Samuel Goldstone of the Jewish community as secretary. The meeting deplored “the most atrocious murders . . . committed upon three respectable traders and packers,” yet there was no officer of the law empowered with the authority to issue a warrant for the arrest of the suspected parties, rumoured to be on their way out of the country. Rewards for their arrest were posted but went unclaimed. At the time, the murders were a great sensation, but the guilty were not apprehended and interest faded.

Suspicion and myth centred around Boon Helm, a notorious American outlaw who was in the Cariboo at the time of the murders. He was briefly held under arrest by the Victoria police, then without evidence let go. He returned to British Columbia a year later, presumably to recover the rumoured loot of $8,000 in gold dust cached behind a log on the trail. The money still lies there, because, as far as is known, no one has ever found it. Arrested a second time, Helm was deported to the United States. He was hanged in Virginia City, Nevada Territory on January 14, 1864 for unrelated crimes. On going to the gallows, he supposedly confessed to the Cariboo murders, but this has never been verified.21

A mystery remains; where were the bodies interred? They were placed
in tin coffins for removal to Victoria. The press reported that Isidore Braverman of Victoria, a devout man, went to the interior to bring back the body of his partner, Lewin, for proper burial in Victoria. However, the remains never arrived at the Jewish cemetery. The tragic story of these young Jewish men has become legendary in British Columbia and has been written about in history and in prose. In recent times, Dave Falconer, a high school teacher from the nearby town of Likely, with his students, has undertaken a project to preserve as much of historic Quesnel Forks as possible, including decaying log buildings and the cemetery, which is threatened by erosion from the river. Explanatory signage and restored grave markers have been installed, including a vertical monument to Lewin and Sokoloski, in the cemetery where they are probably buried.22

The Pacific North West, 1867

There were many Jewish fur traders on the North Pacific Coast operating out of San Francisco and Victoria. One of these was David Shirps, the first president of Victoria’s Temple Emanu-El, who settled in Sitka, Alaska in June 1867, four months before the territory was transferred to the United States by Russia. From 1868, we have an eyewitness account of a seemingly spontaneous Jewish service held in Sitka, from Emil Teichman, a non-Jewish agent for one of the largest American Jewish fur firms, Oppenheim and Company:

On . . . Friday evening before going to bed I attended a curious ceremony. Our sleeping quarters, which were built only of planks, abutted on another hut which was used as a warehouse by a Jewish trader . . . . My curiosity was aroused by the murmur of several voices in the adjoining room. Looking through a crevice I saw quite an assembly of some twenty men, all of the Jewish persuasion, who were holding their Sabbath service and reading their prayers under the leadership of the oldest man present who took the place of a rabbi. It was a memorable thing to see this religious gathering in so strange a setting and it said a great deal for the persistence with which the Jews everywhere, even in the most remote countries, practice their devotional exercises.23
The Klondike Gold Rush, 1898-1998

The last great gold rush on the North American continent to the Klondike River, Yukon Territory, began in the summer of 1898. The Canadian census of 1901 lists 163 Jews residing in the Yukon Subdivision, but there is some confusion in the listings. Another researcher confirmed 138 Jews from this census. The majority of these were living in Dawson City, the commercial centre of the rush, with others scattered throughout the smaller communities. A Dawson business directory for 1903, published in Seattle, identifies sixty Jewish names in this city.

An eyewitness account tells that, in September 1898, forty worshippers attended Rosh Hashanah services in the store of Charles Rosener. The following Yom Kippur, attendance was larger so the services were held in the Yukon Pioneer Hall, a log building. A news item of October 1899 reported that Mr. M. Marks of the Victoria congregation left for Dawson City on business just before New Year, taking with him a Sefer Torah “so that our brethren in the Klondike should be able to have divine service.” The Dawson City Hebrew Congregation, of which Harry Pinkert was president and Abe Isaacs, secretary, consecrated a cemetery in 1902; in it are seven known burials.

11. Arthur Mitchell, vice-president of the Jewish Historical Society of Yukon, presides at the rededication of the Jewish Cemetery, Yukon Centenary; Dawson City, YT; August 23, 1998
The year 1998 marked the centenary of the Klondike Gold Rush and the birth of the Yukon Territory of Canada. As part of the celebration, the small Yukon Jewish community restored its historic cemetery. On the weekend of August 21-23, Jewish services were held in the capital of Whitehorse and at the Dawson Jewish cemetery. The residents of both cities and visitors from Vancouver, Edmonton and Ottawa, including the Deputy Prime Minister of Canada, Herb Gray, attended the services. Rebbetzin Joan Cohen, wife of Rabbi Martin Cohen, then of Richmond’s Beth Tikvah Congregation in Metro Vancouver, conducted the services. For only the second time known in B.C. history, a Torah was brought to Yukon (under the care of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) to be read at the Sabbath service.25

Prince Rupert, 1908 to the Second World War

Other than the Hudson’s Bay Company posts, not until the first decade of the twentieth century did a permanent white settlement establish itself on Canada’s North Pacific coast. Prince Rupert, named after the first governor of the HBC and located on an island near the mouth of the Skeena River, was chosen as the Pacific terminus of a
second transcontinental line, the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. With a splendid deep-water port and the shortest route to the Orient, Prince Rupert was touted as a major northern shipping centre and economic rival to Vancouver. Clearing started in 1906, and a townsite was surveyed by 1909. Beset by financial and construction difficulties, the last spike on the railway was not driven until April 1914, on the eve of the First World War.

In 1908, Prince Rupert’s first Jewish residents, Isidor Director and Maurice B. Cohen, starting out as squatters on the unsurveyed land, established the first Jewish clothing business in northern British Columbia.26 Other Jewish peddlers, merchants and fur traders soon settled in the new town and formed the Beth Israel Congregation of Prince Rupert. A news report of October 1909 lists the officers: Mr. Weinstein, who owned a tailor shop, president; H. Hoffman, vice-president; J. Levy, secretary; and I. Director, treasurer. That year Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services were held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. I. Director, with twenty-five people attending.27

On February 4, 1910, Mrs. Hoffman gave birth to a son in Prince Rupert. A news item reported:
Owing to the smallness of our numbers we are, unfortunately, not in a position to have a rabbi amongst us and the difficulty arose as to the Bris-Milah (circumcision ceremony) of Master Hoffman . . . . Three months later, on the 29th May the Rev. Jacob Goldberg, of Vancouver, was persuaded to visit us and perform the ceremony. Every Jew within a possible radius was present and the Hoffmans’ residence was well filled and the host and hostess royally entertained their guests.28

Rosh Hashanah services in 1910 were again held at the Directors’: “The total Jewish population of about twenty people were present including women. H. Frome of Winnipeg, assisted by M. Weinstein and A. Simon, conducted the services. S. Hoffman sounded the shofar and delivered a short sermon.”29 That November, J. Levy was elected president of the newly formed Young Men’s Hebrew Association:

There are at present nearly forty Jewish residents in the city, all of whom enrolled as members and are very enthusiastic. The object of the Ass’n is to cater to the physical, social, and intellectual welfare of the young men of Prince Rupert. The greater number are prominent merchants of the city.30

The Jewish residents contributed substantially to the cultural life of the overall community – the opera house/theatre and the new General Hospital. However, with the death of C.M. Hays, the railway’s president, who went down with the Atlantic steamship Titanic in April 1912, and the onset of the First World War, Prince Rupert’s bubble burst and its economy relegated to mainly a fishing centre. As a result, by the early 1920s most of the Jewish community had dispersed.

During the Second World War, Prince Rupert became a strategic base for the Canadian Armed Forces. As well, thousands of American military personnel transshipped here for Alaska and the Far East. Fur and hide dealer, William Goldbloom, Prince Rupert’s longest-lived Jewish resident (until the age of eighty-eight years), enjoyed one of
the most moving experiences of his long and colourful career when he conducted a Passover Seder for 150 army and air force personnel of both the Canadian and American forces.31

Prince George, 1914-1960s

Prince George, in north-central British Columbia, was a hub city on the Grand Trunk Pacific line at its junction with the Canadian Northern Railway, another trans-continental line that headed south to Vancouver. This city has had a small Jewish population from its first days to the present, but only sporadically large enough to support any organized Jewish community life. The earliest, and long-time residents were the Spaner brothers, Isaac and Louis, and the Leith brothers, Arthur and Jacob. Louis Spaner was in the fur trade while Isaac, in 1914, opened the first men’s wear store in Prince George. At the same time the Leiths were hardware merchants.32
We have this eyewitness account of Prince George, Passover 1943, by Janice (Grossman) Pollack, a young schoolteacher there during the Second World War:

A first seder in many years was held in this small northern community. A regiment from Ontario was posted there. (Prince George having been considered as a 3rd line of defense from attack.)

A number of Jewish soldiers and their young brides planned a seder dinner, for themselves and three widowers who were living there. [Ed.: two of whom were Isaac Spaner and Jacob Leith.] I was there teaching school. I had just become engaged to a soldier, Harold Pollack of Toronto. (A whirlwind wartime romance.)

With the help of [Canadian Jewish] Congress [who provided the matzos and haggadahs], and the generosity of one of the gentlemen, Mr. Spaner, who offered us his home for the affair, the First Seder became a reality.

Most of the women – like myself, had very little experience in
cooking, much less in providing a Passover meal. With the help of the National Council of Jewish Women cookbook (which I had with me), we managed to serve a traditional dinner. We even made [eight] sponge cakes – baking one at a time on an old wood stove. [The late] Mrs. Spaner had one cake pan.

We really had fun and it was a memorable evening. We continued this event for the next two years, but as the number of soldiers grew, we couldn’t be accommodated in a home so we rented a hall.33

After the war, a pulp mill, sawmills, gas line and other industrial developments increased the Prince George population from seven thousand to fifty thousand. The city’s Jewish community reached a peak through the 1950s to the mid-1960s when there were enough men to form a minyan. At Rosh Hashanah 1955, we have a report on the New Year service held in Prince George with makeshift outside assistance: Ben Billinkoff of Winnipeg, a lumber buyer in the city, donated the Torah; a relative in the United States sent tallisim (prayer shawls); and Rabbi Bernard Goldenberg of Congregation Schara Tzedeck in Vancouver

forwarded *sidurim* (prayer books) and a *shofar* (ram’s horn). Charles Graham, a city councillor in Prince George, on receiving training from the rabbi in the ritual, acted as *chazzan* (cantor), and Jacob Leith is remembered as the “learned old gentleman” who read the Torah. (He died in 1969 at the age of ninety-four.)

**Trail-Rossland, 1930s-1950s**

Located in the West Kootenay mining belt of southeastern British Columbia, this was another small-town centre where an organized Jewish community formed and survived for three decades during the Great Depression, the Second World War and the immediate post-war periods.

Ever since the beginning of white settlement in the province, the occasional Jewish sojourner involved in mining or trading traversed this region. As an example, the Oppenheimer brothers and the Gintzburger brothers had mining interests in the Kootenays in the early years.

Frederick Augustus “Fritz” Heinze was born in Brooklyn, New York, his father being of German-Jewish descent. In 1899, Fritz graduated as an engineer at the Columbia School of Mines. He prospected near

![Frederick Augustus Heinze's B.C. Smelting Company; Trail Creek Landing, B.C.; [1897]](image-url)
Butte, Montana where he found a rich copper vein, built a smelter and became known as the “Copper King of Montana.” In 1895, just twenty-six years old, he moved into Canada along the Columbia River to the steamboat landing at Trail Creek, 11 miles (18 km) north of the U.S. border. There on benchland above the river, Heinze built a two-furnace copper smelter and a narrow-gauge railway into the nearby mining camp of Rossland where rich mineral deposits were being found. In 1898, the smelter and railway were sold for a reported $1.2 million to the Canadian Pacific Railway Co. Later, combining it with other mineral properties and a power company, the Consolidated Mining and Smelting Co. (COMINCO) expanded into the largest non-ferrous smelting operation in the world. During the Second World War, its lead, zinc, phosphates and heavy water were vital to the Allied war effort.

Even during the Great Depression, the payroll of the smelter provided an economic stability to the towns of Trail and Rossland that was rarely found in other regions of Canada. Then during wartime, the smelter was operating at full capacity for the war effort. This attracted a number of Jewish merchants – retailing clothing, shoes, groceries and hardware – with their families to settle and establish businesses in these towns or small cities. As well, especially during the war, there were some young Jewish professionals – chemists and engineers – employed in the smelter.

Because of the mountains, this region was isolated from the populous Lower Mainland of B.C. so that most of the settlers came from Calgary or other prairie towns that were hard-hit by the Depression.

Trail-Rossland had a unique Jewish community. Active participants in the community at large, though isolated from the main Jewish centres in Canada, the twenty-two families tenaciously practiced their Judaism. They formed a Jewish Benevolent Society to handle all community matters. Keenly Zionist, the community managed to support a branch of the Zionist Organization, a Hadassah chapter (with Pearl Levey as president) and a Young Judaea group. Their zeal was recognized when Israeli speakers on cross-country tours would stop over to address this small community.
As soon as sufficient Jews arrived, a small congregation was formed, with Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) services led by Pearl’s father, Mr. Goldstein, and her husband, Leo Levey, as chazzan (cantorial singer). Community services and events were celebrated in the Knights of Pythias Hall. Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year) was usually spent in Spokane, Wash., the largest neighbouring city, some 106 miles (170 km) distant, where there were both Orthodox and Reform synagogues. As needed, a rabbi was brought in from Spokane to perform special events such as circumcision and marriage.

After the war, the opportunities offered by the big cities, with their colleges, universities and entrée to the professions, drew the young people away from the small towns. When the parents retired and sold their businesses they joined the children in the cities. Thus by the 1950s, the Trail-Rossland Jewish community disintegrated. Other small cities or towns in the Kootenays of that time, such as Nelson and Cranbrook, had a small number of Jewish families and singles, however they were not large enough to sustain an organized Jewish community life.
Leopold “Leo” Levey, 1936-68

Leo Levey was the acknowledged leader of the Trail-Rossland Jewish community as well as a prominent citizen in the overall community. Of Polish Jewish ancestry, Levey was born on January 26, 1903 in Leeds, England. In that city, which had a large working-class Jewish population, Leo attended cheder (religious school), had a Bar Mitzvah, sang in the synagogue choir and developed a life-long interest in Jewish liturgical music and community work. As he later described it, though the family was poor, in Leeds he developed “very warm feelings for the Jewish quality of life.”

In 1916, during the First World War, the Levey family left England for Canada and ended up in Calgary. His parents and siblings soon departed for the United States, but Leo was very pro-British and wanted to stay in a country “where the Union Jack still flew.” As a young man, he worked for the CPR as a clerk, both in the office and on the road in an express car. In 1926, Leo married Pearl Goldstein, a legal secretary to R.B. Bennett (who in 1930 became Prime Minister of Canada). After marriage, Leo managed a clothing store, then opened his own ladies’ wear store in Calgary. Two children, a boy and a girl, were born to the Leveys. During the Depression they found making a living “pretty difficult.” In 1936, hearing of the growing economy of Trail, they relocated to this city in a similar business, which they jointly ran.

In Trail, Leo Levey quickly plunged into the business and service activities of his chosen community. He was a founding member of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. He joined the Board of Trade and became president of its retail branch. He was a board member of the Red Cross (a humanitarian non-denominational organization) and became its local president. During the unprecedented Columbia River flood of 1948, he was Disaster Relief Chairman and received the Red Cross Medal of Service for his effort. He became president of Trail Kiwanis.

As president of these organizations he attended national and international conventions, where he was notable for his erudite and fluent
English-accented speeches. City council appointed him as its lay representative on the newly built Trail Regional Hospital board, and he became secretary-treasurer of the hospital.

In February 1968, Leo and Pearl Levey retired and left Trail after thirty-two years of residence in this community. At a ceremony conducted by the Knights of Columbus (a fraternal and benevolent society of Roman Catholic men), attended by a large audience of dignitaries and citizens from all walks of life, the couple was honoured for their “contribution toward the betterment of the city,” and Leo was declared “Citizen of the Year.” At a separate event, Leo was presented with the Kiwanis International plaque. Thus ended the saga of the Jewish community of Trail.

A resident of the Jewish Home for the Aged in Vancouver, Leopold Levey passed away on October 25, 2002, just three months short of his hundredth birthday. His wife Pearl had predeceased him.38

At the outset, Leo Levey proved true to his democratic British birth and resisted the lure of American destiny. He chose to spend the best years of his life, living well but modestly, in an isolated small community
in Canada. There he planted his beloved Jewish roots and saw them flower. In an intimate multi-ethnic community, along with his wife, Pearl, he gave unstintingly of his time to all aspects of community service. Leopold Levey fulfilled his life’s work as the proverbial “big fish in a small pond,” albeit a significant pond.

IV. THE RISE OF VANCOUVER AND ITS JEWISH PIONEERS

Birth of Vancouver, 1865-86

The city of Vancouver was a latecomer on the British Columbia scene. The fur-trade and early gold-rush eras had completely bypassed it. In 1792, Captain George Vancouver of the British Royal Navy was the first white man to explore Burrard Inlet to its head at Port Moody. As it neither met his objectives of negotiating with the Spaniards for valuable sea-otter pelts, nor his last hope of finding the North West Passage, he quickly departed. He named the inlet after a colleague in the Royal Navy, noting the shore “on the southern side, was of a moderate height, and though rocky, well covered with trees of large growth, principally of the pine tribe.” Though the land would lay dormant for another seventy years, Captain Vancouver had established British sovereignty, identified the site of the future metropolis that would bear his name, and the timber resources that would become its principal industry. Not until the late nineteenth century would his namesake, the city of Vancouver, be born as the child of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR).

Before arrival of the transcontinental railway, the mountain ranges, which lay north to south, made east-west lines of trade virtually impossible. When contact with the outside world was by sea, during half of the nineteenth century, Victoria on Vancouver Island was the province’s principal urban and commercial centre. Its island location and deep-sea harbour at Esquimalt were more accessible to sailing vessels than Burrard Inlet, thus Victoria was commercially linked to San Francisco, London and Pacific Rim nations. As purveyor to the gold camps, Victoria developed a commission merchant and warehousing
infrastructure, a business and social elite and capital and political power, providing a head start that Vancouver could only dislodge with difficulty at the beginning of the twentieth century.

With discovery of placer gold on the Fraser River and its tributaries in the central interior of British Columbia, the first substantial white population swarmed into the region in the period 1858-63, most arriving from the United States. The Fraser Valley traditionally has been the gateway to British Columbia’s interior. Fort Langley (1827), and with the coming of the gold rush, New Westminster (1859), the first mainland capital and river port, were distribution points for goods taken into the interior and for gold and agricultural products coming out. New Westminster was connected to Victoria by fast river steamboats. With the coming of the railway, such functions were largely taken over by Vancouver.

But Vancouver, owing to its geography (superior harbour, large land area and mainland location) was destined to become Canada’s major Pacific port and its third-largest city in the twentieth century. Vancouver’s late birth and rapid ascendency were the results of Confederation with Canada (1871), its position as terminal city of the CPR (1886-87) and, by the First World War, its domination as the commercial, management and world transportation hub of a vast hinterland resource economy based principally on forest products, fishing and canning, coal and metal mining, and agriculture.

In its formative period, Vancouver passed through several phases: lumber village of the mid-1860s; railway boom town, 1886-92; severe depression of the mid-1890s when the speculative bubble burst; economic revival at the end of the nineteenth century, precipitated by the Klondike gold rush, 1898-1901; and the expansionist period in the early twentieth century, based on population and economic growth of the British Columbia interior and the Prairie Provinces.

In the summer of 1865, Captain Edward Stamp, who had previously built a mill at Alberni on Vancouver Island, acquired a sawmill site on the south shore of Burrard Inlet at the foot of present-day Dunlevy
Avenue. Using machinery ordered from far-off Great Britain, it was not until two years later, in June 1867, that he cut his first lumber from timber logged by Jeremiah Rogers at Jericho Beach and loaded his first ship destined for the export market. Named Hastings Mill after Rear Admiral George F. Hastings, commander-in-chief of the Pacific Station, it was sold to British interests in 1870. Eventually, with population growth, the mill would become a huge operation, also supplying the Western Canadian housing market.

In 1867, squatting on government property just west of the mill, riverboat captain and entrepreneur “Gassy” Jack Deighton from New Westminster was the first to build a small hotel and saloon to serve the mill workers. Soon an agglomeration of hotels, saloons, boarding houses, stores, a Chinese laundry and homes accumulated in a muddy two-block clearing along the waterfront, backed by rain forest. In 1870, the colonial government surveyed and laid out the townsite naming it Granville, colloquially known as Gastown. Within a few years Granville, the nucleus of the future Vancouver, boasted a customs house and jail, post office, school and daily steamboat connection to New Westminster. This ramshackle village burned down in Vancouver’s Great Fire of June 13, 1886, which began from brush clearing fires in the forest.

In May 1880, construction on the British Columbia section of the
Canadian Pacific Railway began at Yale, the entrance to the Fraser Canyon. Meanwhile Federal-Provincial government squabbling on location, an arbitration by the Colonial Office in London, and disinterest by the CPR in a Vancouver Island line, ruled out the proposed terminus at Esquimalt harbour near Victoria, where a federal graving dock (dry-dock) was under construction. Obviously too, the enormous cost (estimated at $25 million) of bridging over Seymour Narrows to the Island could not be financially supported by the governments or the railway. By 1882, these events assured that Burrard Inlet would be the western terminus of the trans-continental railroad.

But where in Burrard Inlet? Port Moody, located at the shallow tidewaters at the head of the Inlet, had been nominally designated by the federal government and land speculators as the end of the line. However, an engineering report issued in 1882 settled the question that the deep water of Coal Harbour just to the west of the Granville townsite would be the ideal port site. No public announcement was made at the time to allow for the negotiation of considerable land grants to the railway, made by the provincial government as well as by private landowners. The largest of the latter was the Vancouver Land and Improvement Company, a group of Victoria investors led by the Oppenheimer brothers, who owned lands through which the line would run. In 1885, CPR surveyor L.A. Hamilton laid out the streets of downtown Vancouver substantially as they remain today.

On February 15, 1886, 125 citizens of Granville, all men and virtually all of British ancestry, petitioned the Provincial Parliament in Victoria for incorporation of “The City of Vancouver,” a name apparently chosen by CPR General Manager W.C. Van Horne because of its international familiarity. Eighteen Victoria residents, led by Isaac Oppenheimer who had business interests in the new city, backed them up. Incorporation was promulgated on April 6, 1886.

**Vancouver’s First Election, 1886**

The election for the first city council took place on May 3, 1886. Mayoral candidates were Richard H. Alexander, manager of Hastings
Mill, who represented the established British business interests, and the dark-horse candidate, Malcolm A. MacLean; a realtor recently arrived from Winnipeg who championed the “Canadian” newcomers. Qualifications for voting were ownership of freehold property, or a pre-emptor or tenant for six months. However, there was no voters’ list; all who came voted. Many of the electors were disgruntled white employees of Alexander, who had the additional handicap of being seen as hiring competing Chinese workers. Four hundred and sixty-seven electors, all men, placed their ballots in the only ballot box.47

MacLean was declared winner by seventeen votes. Louis Gold, Vancouver’s first Jewish citizen and a backer of the MacLean campaign, loaned his horse and buggy to parade the new mayor around the block in the victory celebration.48 No record exists of who actually voted in that controversial first civic election. In October 1886, six months after the election, an official Voters’ List of Vancouver was issued. Of the 528 men then listed, only seven were Jewish: Louis and Edward Gold, Jack Levy, David and Isaac Oppenheimer, H.S. Ripstein and M.A. Rothschild. These seven men and their families marked the beginnings of the Vancouver Jewish Community.49

The Golds, Vancouver’s First Jewish Family, 1872-1946

In 1872-73, Louis and Emma Gold, with their young son Edward, were the first Jewish family to take up permanent residence in Granville, the forerunner of Vancouver.50 The Polish/Prussian-born Golds had been living in Kentucky, USA, and were acculturated to American ways. They were experienced merchants and had accumulated some capital before coming to Canada. Son, Eddie, was born in the United States.

British Columbia had joined the Canadian Confederation in mid-1871, with the promise that the federal government, within a decade or so, would build a transcontinental railway connecting the various segments of the country. As a result, the enterprising Golds decided to seek their fortune in the developing North West. As the Union Pacific Railway connecting the Eastern United States with San Francisco Bay was now complete, it was comparatively easy for Louis Gold to make
the journey. Travelling alone in 1872, he crossed the continent by rail, then by regular steamship passage from San Francisco up to Victoria.

Gold, with considerable prescience, established his business in Granville, bypassing the long-established and competitive Victoria, then the principal city of the province, gambling that the terminus of the yet unsurveyed Canadian Pacific Railway route would be located near Granville. There was no regular steamship service from Victoria to Burrard Inlet at the time; instead, he made the passage to the mainland by tug. Thus in 1872, Gold became the first Jewish businessman in the village when he quickly opened a general store on the waterfront. The next year his wife and five-year-old son joined him, following a roundabout route to reach Granville from New Westminster.51

Reunited with his family, and with the capable support of his wife, Emma, Louis Gold soon established himself as a supplier to the growing settlement. He also began to make speculative land investments. In 1877, Gold pre-empted two large blocks of land along the North Arm Waggon Road (which connected Granville with the farms along the Fraser River) in what would later become the separate municipality of South Vancouver. As well, Emma proved to be a businesswoman in her own right. In 1882, she set up two shops on Columbia, the main business street of New Westminster, the West End Grocery and the Royal City Boot and Shoe Store.

Two months after Vancouver was incorporated, on June 13, 1886, catastrophe struck with the “Great Fire.” All of Granville’s wood buildings were burned to the ground, including Gold’s store. Louis saved himself by jumping into the waters of Burrard Inlet. Their recovery efforts were swift and impressive. Before the year was out, the Golds had rebuilt their business at 64 Water Street, now named the Gold House. A famous hostelry in its time, this hotel was described as “a 3-storey frame building accommodating 100 guests, with large sample, billiard and bath rooms and fire-proof safe.” On August 24, 1886, soon after Vancouver’s first horse-pulled fire engine arrived, the fire brigade sponsored Vancouver’s inaugural formal ball in Gold House.52
Louis Gold died in 1907 at the age of seventy-two, leaving Emma and Edward to manage the family holdings. By 1913, a severe pre-First World War depression had set in. South Vancouver was particularly hard hit. A vast, sprawling sparsely settled suburb, the cost of servicing the land with public utilities was more than the tax base could sustain. Emma Gold had subdivided her property into lots for sale, but the market was stagnant. Like other property owners with unmarketable land and mounting tax debts, she was land rich and cash poor. This precipitated the entry of her son Edward into politics. In 1914, he was elected chairman of the Finance Committee of South Vancouver; the next year he was elected Reeve. A fiery outspoken man, Gold gained notoriety at hectic council meetings when he instituted unpopular cost-cutting measures in order to ease the tax burden. He was defeated in the next election.

Edward Gold then joined the war effort on active service overseas. He returned from the war and continued to live with his mother, running small brokerage and investment businesses. Emma died in 1929 at the
Edward Gold grew up at a time when there was no organized Jewish life in Vancouver. What he knew of Judaism was learned from his European parents. Yet he remained true to his Jewish roots. When Vancouver’s first Reform Congregation, Temple Emanu-El, was organized in April 1894, Ed Gold was secretary. When the Hebrew Free Loan Association was started in 1915, Gold was on the first list of contributors. After the Vancouver Jewish Community Chest was established in 1924-25, he made generous annual donations. In his later years, he lost personal contact with Jewish people. Yet, leaving no heirs, he bequeathed his estate to the Jewish community. The estate consisted of little cash, but valuable real estate in the West End and Downtown Vancouver. The land was sold off over time by the trust company and the proceeds distributed to various Jewish charities, such as an extension to the Jewish Home for the Aged, named the Emma Gold Memorial Wing.

As directed in his will, Edward Gold was given a Jewish burial alongside his parents in the family plot in the Jewish section of Mountain View Cemetery, which served as the Jewish burial ground during the early years of Vancouver settlement. This ended the seventy-five year saga of Vancouver’s first Jewish family.53

**Jack Levy**

Jack Levy, born in Sydney, Australia of English parents, was one of the well-known Levy brothers of Victoria. The family moved to San
Francisco at the time of the California gold rush and eventually settled in Victoria. His brother, Henry Emanuel Levy, was an early police officer in Victoria, then for half a century he and his family operated Victoria’s famous Arcade Oyster Saloon, the first gourmet restaurant in the Pacific North West. Another brother, Joseph, was a coastal trader and adventurer who married a Haida woman of the Queen Charlotte Islands. Levy Haida descendants still live in Alaska. Jack Levy ran a “sweet shop” (confectionery) on Government Street, Victoria in the 1870s. By the summer of 1886 he had opened one of Vancouver’s earliest retail businesses, the Gem Cigar Divan on Cordova Street, stocking “smokers’ goods to suit all tastes.” A bachelor, he died in April 1913 and is buried in the Levy family plot in Victoria’s Jewish cemetery.54

David and Isaac Oppenheimer, 1886-1922

Foreseeing the business opportunities offered by the new railway terminal city, David and Isaac Oppenheimer, with their families, moved their residence from Victoria to Vancouver.55 In 1887, Oppenheimer Brothers opened a wholesale-grocery warehouse in Vancouver’s first brick building (still extant in the Gastown district at 102 Powell Street). Once settled, they turned their attention to civic affairs. In the second municipal election in 1887, David and Isaac were both acclaimed aldermen for Ward 4, a working-class district on the east side where most of their land was located. As chairman of the Finance Committee, David earned a reputation for putting the city’s financial affairs in good order. He was acclaimed mayor in 1888. Thereafter, Isaac retired from politics to devote his time to management of the family businesses.
Mayor Oppenheimer became Vancouver’s principal booster. He served without salary and hosted civic guests at his own expense. He declared: “At no time in the history of the world has there been a city whose prosperity has been so marked or its future promises so bright.” He had worked hard to bring the transcontinental railway to Vancouver and as mayor he welcomed the arrival of the Empress of India, the first of the CPR’s trans-Pacific liners.

With city council, Oppenheimer spent much time setting up basic city services, a fire department, a water works, and constructing sewers, roads, sidewalks, bridges, a city wharf and a ferry to
Burrard Inlet’s north shore. He was proud of his success in selling city bonds in London to pay for such projects.

As a pioneer entrepreneur in the province, David Oppenheimer understood the necessity of bringing commerce and industry to the city. He joined with a group of businessmen to organize the Vancouver Board of Trade and in November 1887 was elected the first president. He promoted trade far and wide. He travelled to Europe seeking investors and was successful in attracting industries such as the B.C. Sugar Refinery and the two pioneer engineering firms, Vancouver City Foundry and Machine Works, and B.C. Iron Works. Oppenheimer Brothers invested in the Vancouver Electric Railway and Light Company and a brick plant.56

For his time, David Oppenheimer was a strong believer in public amenities. He was an advocate of parks, treed city squares and playgrounds for healthy outdoor activities. In September 1888, he presided at the opening of Stanley Park as “a public recreation ground . . . of a city where its inhabitants can spend some time amid the beauties of nature away from the busy haunts of men.”57 He urged completion of the city hospital, describing the current institution as “a disgrace to us as a progressive people.” He was a benefactor in founding such charities as the Alexandra Orphanage and the YMCA.

What of the Jewishness of David Oppenheimer? For much of his life he lived in frontier towns where there were no Jewish communities or religious services. When residing in Victoria, he became a member of Temple Emanu-El, then the only synagogue in British Columbia. In 1888, when the first two Jewish deaths occurred in Vancouver, where there was no consecrated Jewish burial ground, he arranged for the bodies to be interred in Victoria’s Jewish cemetery. After this, during Oppenheimer’s term as mayor, a separate section of the city’s Mountain View Cemetery was allotted to the Jewish community.

The first public Jewish High Holy Day services in Vancouver took place in 1891-92 at the Knights of Pythias Hall on Cordova Street. Oppenheimer’s daughter Flora later explained: “My father and uncle
[Isaac] were not particularly religious, but felt it a duty to be present on those occasions, as well as send us children.” The Oppenheimers also offered to donate land for a synagogue, although the Jewish community was too small and too poor at the time to act on this offer. In 1921, a nephew, Milton Oppenheimer, then head of the firm Oppenheimer Brothers, contributed generously to the building campaign of the Schara Tzedeck synagogue.

David Oppenheimer served four one-year terms as undefeated Mayor of Vancouver, but declined to run for a fifth term citing ill health as the reason. Six years later on December 31, 1897, he died in Vancouver of heart failure, aged 64. His body lay in state in Vancouver’s Masonic Temple and then was buried next to his second wife Julia in the historic Salem Fields Cemetery in Brooklyn (where many of “Our Gang,” the German Jewish financial and social elite of New York, are interred). His obituaries were uniformly praiseworthy of his public service, his love of Vancouver and for his generosity. Later, when a memorial bronze bust was unveiled at the English Bay entrance to Stanley Park, Premier Richard McBride called him the “Father” of Vancouver.58

In April 2008, coincident with the sesquicentenary of the first Jewish settlement in British Columbia, the Government of Canada, on the recommendation of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, designated David Oppenheimer (1834-1897) as a “National Historic Person.”59

After David’s death, Isaac Oppenheimer and his wife Celia moved to Spokane, Wash.,
where their son Sidney was practicing medicine. Isaac died there in 1922 at the age of eighty-seven. Celia predeceased him.

Dr. Sidney S. Oppenheimer, born in Yale, B.C., in February 1873, graduated in medicine at McGill University in Montreal in 1898. He first practiced, and was medical health officer, in the city of Greenwood, in the Boundary district, a mining-smelting area in British Columbia, before moving to Spokane. He died there in 1940. The families are buried in the Fairmont Cemetery in Spokane.

The Ripstein-Goldbloom Family, 1886 to the Second World War

In 1880-81, H.S. Ripstein was a member of one of the earliest Jewish families to settle in Winnipeg, just prior to the arrival of the CPR. In that city he had a grocery and liquor store. Ripstein came out to Vancouver shortly after its incorporation. Displaying “great faith” in this city, and with the intention of transferring his business and family out here, he bought a property on Carrall Street and obtained a retail liquor license effective July 1, 1886. However, by September he had changed his mind, sold the license and returned to Winnipeg. Later, members of the Ripstein family took up residence in Vancouver.

In 1905, another pioneer Winnipeg family, William and Rachel Goldbloom and their two daughters, Nellie and Florence, moved to Vancouver. Nellie had the distinction of being the first Jewish girl born in Winnipeg. Mother Rachel, originally from New York, was the first woman active in the Jewish community of Vancouver. Almost every Jewish organization of that time is said to have started in her home.

27. Portrait of Rachel Goldbloom, Vancouver Hadassah founder; [1920]
at 540 Burrard Street. Her husband, nicknamed Buffalo Bill because of his resemblance to the American folk hero, became a legendary character himself, for thirty-five years of trading furs up and down the Pacific coast from Victoria to Skagway, with his headquarters in Prince Rupert. In 1907, two Ripstein brothers, Max and Louis, married the two Goldbloom sisters. Louis Ripstein became a coastal fur trader associated in business with his father-in-law, Bill Goldbloom.62

The West Coast Rothschilds

As early as 1884-85, Rothschild and Ehrenpfort of San Francisco were advertising in British Columbia directories as manufacturers of confectionery and dealers in nuts. Both M.A. and D.C.S. Rothschild owned lots at the outset in Vancouver, although their connection to the company is unknown. It is doubtful that either man spent much time in Vancouver. By January 1892, Maurice A. Rothschild, then
The president of Wertheimer Company, was comfortably established in San Francisco, when his “notable” wedding to Miss Hilda Slessinger was reported. The Rothschilds did not contribute to the development of Vancouver’s Jewish community.63

The Waves of Russian Immigration, 1881-1921

In the nineteenth century, the greatest concentration of Jews in the world resided within the boundaries of the Russian Empire. The population growth had been explosive, rising more than fivefold from one million in 1800 to 5.5 million in 1887, becoming virtually an empire within an empire. Most of this population was confined to the Pale of Settlement, a band along the southern and western fringes of the Tsarist Empire encompassing the Ukraine, Russian Poland, Belorussia and southern Lithuania. Less than half of these Jews were town-and-city dwellers, with the rest dispersed throughout rural villages and hamlets. At mid-century, Jewish life was insular and economically straitened. Their occupations were largely petty traders, peddlers, wagoners, artisans, storekeepers and innkeepers in the towns and cities.

When Tsar Alexander II came to the throne in 1855, he initiated some improvements, including liberation of the serfs and better economic opportunities for the Jews. However, his assassination in March 1881 resulted in a series of pogroms (organized massacres) and restrictive legislation against the Jews. There were three large-scale waves of pogroms, each surpassing the preceding in intensity: that of 1881 to 1884; a second from 1903 to 1906 connected with revolutionary agitation; and the third from 1917 to 1921, instigated by the revolution and civil war and far surpassing the others in scope and gravity.64

These pogroms resulted in a mass exodus of Jews from Russia. They precipitated the advent of Zionism, a movement to create a national home for the Jewish people in their ancient homeland of Israel. Nevertheless, the majority of Jews looked towards America as their *golden medina* (golden land), where democracy prevailed and there was a large land mass open for settlement and development.65 While the first
choice of the ensuing waves of immigrants arriving in the hundreds of thousands was the United States, a smaller percentage came to Canada. The Russian exodus coincided with the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway across Western Canada and the policies of the Macdonald and Laurier federal governments to fill up the empty lands of the West with settlers.

The majority of Russian Jewish immigrants in Canada settled in the principal cities of Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, and some settled as farm homesteaders on the prairies. However, a number came directly or later drifted out, to the end of the track at Vancouver. In numbers, they quickly surpassed the earlier Anglo-acculturated group. They brought with them their Orthodox Judaism, folklore, customs and manners, and Yiddish, their spoken language; Hebrew was reserved as the language of the Bible and prayer. Most had no knowledge of the English language before arriving in Canada or the United States.

**Arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway, May 23, 1887**

On May 23, 1887, the first Montreal to Vancouver trans-Canada passenger train, pulled by wood-burning steam Locomotive 374, arrived at the CPR dock at the foot of Howe Street. Virtually all Vancouver was there to greet her. (This historic engine is now preserved at the Roundhouse Arts and Recreation Centre in Yaletown, Vancouver.)

In the spring of 1887, among the earliest rail passengers to arrive in Vancouver were twenty-four-year-old Zebulon Franks, his wife, Esther, and their two Canadian-born daughters – the vanguard of the East-European Jewish immigration.

**The Zebulon Franks Family, 1887 to Today**

Zebulon Franks was born in November 1863 in Yelizavetgrad (now Kirovograd) on the Ingul River, a major trading centre of the Ukrainian steppe. Jews formed a third of the population, playing an important role in the grain trade, flour mills, spirits and tobacco factories. Franks’ father was the head rabbi of the synagogue. In the Easter season of April
1881, a period of intensified religious passion, severe riots broke out in the town, marking the beginning of a spate of pogroms that struck the Jews of southern Russia. Zebulon, a seventeen-year old Talmudic scholar, escaped the massacre of his family by hiding in a woodpile. He made his way to Brody across the Austro-Hungarian border, where he joined a group of other emigrants, including the Jacob Blonde family and their sixteen year-old daughter, Esther.

That summer the party journeyed across Europe to an Atlantic port, then sailed to New York, passing through the historic Castle Garden immigrant reception depot. After spending the winter in New York, they proceeded on to Winnipeg in the spring of 1882, among the first party of Russian Jewish refugees to arrive in Western Canada. Zebulon Franks' first job was on Canadian Pacific Railway construction. He was later listed as a junk dealer in Winnipeg, where in 1884 he married Esther Blonde. Two daughters were born there.

On arrival in Vancouver in the spring of 1887, the Franks soon owned a fruit and confectionery store at 218 Carrall Street. By 1896, Franks opened his eponymous hardware business at 42-44 Water Street, selling stoves, guns, tools and kitchen utensils. The store was described as stocking "every imaginable article – from bucksaws to snow shoes – needed by logger, fisherman, miner and trapper." He was inventive in his business and in 1914 was issued a patent for a kitchen frying pan.

Zebulon and Esther had four more children born in Vancouver. Tragically, during another pregnancy, Esther died in March 1897 aged thirty-two years, leaving Zebulon six children under twelve years old. In a year, an arranged marriage was made between Zebulon and twenty-one year old Yetta Halperin, recently arrived in Canada from Safad, Palestine. The couple had six children together, making Zebulon the father of twelve.

Zebulon Franks is acknowledged as the first Orthodox Jewish religious leader from the moment he arrived in Vancouver. The first daily prayer services were said to be held in his store and home. He arranged for the
first kosher meat to be brought in from Seattle. 72 In 1907, he became the president of Congregation Sons of Israel, which built Vancouver’s first synagogue. He was a founding member of the first B’nai Brith lodge in 1910, and in 1915 he was the Vancouver Jewish Community’s representative to a Canadian conference on alleviating the distress of war-stricken European Jews. 73

On Franks’ death in March 1926, he was eulogized by his friend, Professor Edward Odlum, as “wonderfully well read in Talmudic literature, one of the most devoted students of Scripture and prophecy, and a most zealously orthodox son of Judah.” He was buried in the family plot in Vancouver’s pioneer Mountain View Cemetery. 74

Zebulon’s son David Franks carried on the business for another forty years until his death in October 1966. 75 The business continues today under different ownership as Y. Franks Appliances Ltd. and Y. Franks Parts & Service Ltd. Named for Zebulon’s second wife, Yetta, it is one of the oldest-surviving businesses in Metro Vancouver. The facade of Franks’ original hardware store has recently been restored as a
Vancouver heritage building in the Gastown district. Norman Franks, a third-generation descendant of Zebulon Franks and Esther Blonde lives in Vancouver today, marking 121 years of the family’s residency in this city.

**Occupations of Vancouver’s First Jewish Citizens**

As we have seen by the above examples, some of the earliest Jewish residents in Vancouver came from established families in Victoria, the United States and, particularly after completion of the railway, from central Canada. Before arrival, they were already acculturated to American/Canadian society, business practices and fluency in the English language. They were corporate business people, landowners and professionals, but at the outset of Vancouver they were few in number.

The Franks family represented the first of the refugee families from Russia and other East-European countries, whose larger numbers would soon dominate the Jewish community of Vancouver.

Occupations of this new immigration were predominantly: horse and wagon peddlers – junkmen, ragmen and bottle men (which in today’s parlance would be called recyclers); second-hand dealers; tailors and clothiers; pawnbrokers and loan offices; goldsmiths and jewellers; grocers, confectioners and fruiterers. There were only a few professionals

30. *Mrs. Eva Cibular selling fruit from a street cart; Vancouver, B.C.; [1934]*
lawyers and doctors – in the community. Their stores and shops were located in the then-central business district of the city, just uphill from the piers, docks and railway yards that formed the hub of commerce in the area encompassed north to south by Water, Cordova and Hastings streets, and east to west by Main, Carrall, Abbot and Cambie streets, today’s historic Gastown district.

V. THE BEGINNINGS OF INSTITUTIONAL JEWISH LIFE IN VANCOUVER

Strathcona – the First Jewish Neighbourhood

Many of these small business people settled their families nearby in the East-End ethnic working class neighbourhood of Strathcona (named after Donald A. Smith, Lord Strathcona, one of the principals of the CPR). More than half of the Jewish population lived in this

31. Max Rothstein with his horses and wagon and nephew Sam Pelman, in front of working-class residences, 700 East Keefer Street; Vancouver, B.C.; [1913]
neighbourhood and their religious and communal organizations were located there. At its peak in the 1920s, Strathcona housed an Orthodox synagogue, Talmud Torah school and hall, the Well Baby clinic, the Zionist hall, National Council of Jewish Women neighbourhood house, Jewish grocery stores and kosher butcher shops.

A pocket of the more affluent and Anglo-acculturated Jews settled in the upscale West End neighbourhood of the downtown peninsula, where they built their Jewish religious and communal life around the moderately Reform Temple Emanu-El congregation.

**First Vancouver High Holy Day Services, 1888**

The first record of High Holy Day services, Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, took place in 1888 when Congregation Emanu-El of Victoria received a request from a member of the Vancouver community for the loan of a *Sefer Torah* and *shofar* to be used that fall for the coming holidays. Victoria replied that they couldn’t supply any of theirs, but knew of such articles “in the hands of private parties that [Vancouver] might borrow for a consideration [fee].”76 Presumably this information was acted upon.

**Orthodox Judaism**

Orthodox Judaism considers itself the authentic bearer of the divinely revealed Jewish religious tradition. It derives from two sources; one, the written and oral laws as set out in the Torah, the Hebrew Bible (particularly in the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses) propounded by the Prophets; and two, later elaborations and extensions by rabbinic scholars in the Talmud and the *Halakhah*, laws. Orthodoxy held sway over virtually the entire Jewish world community until the Emancipation, when Jews left their ghettos and were granted equal rights and duties of citizenship in their various countries of abode. The Orthodox believe that the revealed word of God, rather than the attempts to adjust Judaism to the values of any given age, is the ultimate standard that must be followed.77
Agudace Achim, 1891-1906 – First Orthodox Congregation

Five years after Vancouver’s early Jewish arrivals, the first public Jewish New Year service, held on October 3, 1891, was of significant enough interest to the general community to be reported in the daily press:

Many Vancouverites wondered yesterday why all the Jewish stores in the City were closed. The reason is that the Jewish community are [sic] now celebrating their New Year’s Day, the year being according to their calculations, number 5652.

New Year’s Day has been celebrated before in this City, but there have been no regular services . . . . When Mr. D. Goldberg came . . . he set to work to organize a synagogue, and as there are now a considerable number of Jewish families [about 200 Jews] . . . he met with very good support.

The reporter then goes on to describe the decor of this first temporary synagogue, located in the Knights of Pythias Hall in the Dunn-Miller Block at 14 Cordova Street, as well as the services:

The synagogue is very comfortably furnished and fitted up. At one end of the room is the ark and desk, both of which are of mahogany, which is splendidly polished. The curtain over the ark is of fine silk with gold fringe. On either side of the ark are splendid upholstered chairs for the President and Vice-President, while in the ark is a copy of the Pentateuch. From the ark are a couple of handsome brass candlesticks, while the rest of the room is lighted by a costly chandelier . . . . The floor is all carpeted.

The services . . . were very well attended [by] at least seventy [people]. [They] are conducted in strictly orthodox manner, otherwise the congregation would be larger as there are a number who belong to the reformed Jewish faith. At present there is no permanent Rabbi and the services . . . were conducted by a volunteer. A Rabbi will, however, be secured as soon as possible . . . . The service was in Hebrew, with exception of the . . . prayer, for the Queen and Royal Family, which was read by Mr.
D. Goldberg . . . in English and it shows the loyalty of the Jewish people in this City. 78

The news item also gave the names of the congregation officers:

President: David Goldberg
Vice-President: Zebulon Franks
Treasurer: Joseph Brown
Secretary: A. Goldstein
Trustees: A. Goldstein, Simon Petersky and Jacob Izen

It is informative to note what the occupations of these “fathers” of Vancouver’s first Jewish congregation were: D. Goldberg & Co, clothing and gents’ furnishings, 17 Cordova; Jos. Brown, cigars and tobacco, 7 Cordova; Abraham Goldstein, the Parisian clothing store, 6 Cordova; Aaron Goldstein, second-hand store, 213 Carrall; Simon Petersky, fruits, etc., 37 Cordova; J. Izen, second-hand dealer. Thus the Jews were quickly moving from hawking, horse and wagon peddling,
back lane junk and ragmen to small-scale retailers located in the heart of Vancouver’s then business centre, historic Gastown.79

Simon Petersky, 1891-1932

Simon Petersky was an outstanding example of the enterprise of these early Jewish residents of Vancouver. In 1881, he obtained a passport and left his native Russia. He was among a number of immigrant Russian Jews who congregated in the impoverished East End of London. There, a Russo-Jewish Committee was formed to help settle these unfortunate refugees. Alexander Galt, the Canadian High Commissioner and a trustee of this committee, was recruiting colonists to settle the vast agricultural lands being opened by construction of the CPR across the prairies. In May-June 1882, 340 of these immigrants arrived in Winnipeg. However, it took two years for the government to assign some 9,000 acres of land for group settlement near Moosomin, Assiniboia, known as New Jerusalem.80

Meanwhile, attrition of many of the projected colonists occurred due to alternative employment, including building the railway. Yet Petersky was one of the group who persisted in trying his hand at homesteading.81 The colony was beset by the vagaries of nature that plagued agricultural attempts in the North West: early frost, inadequate winter shelter in sub-zero temperatures, driving snow, summer drought, hail that destroyed the crops, and finally, a fire that engulfed the entire hay crop. By 1890, when the colony had completely failed, the Petersky family took a train out to Vancouver.82

In 1892, Simon Petersky was a confectioner, tobacconist and fruit seller on Cordova Street. Achieving remarkable upward financial and social mobility, in 1899 S. Petersky & Co. established the Vancouver General Store in Steveston, a bustling fishing and cannery harbour on the Fraser River south of Vancouver. The store was a major emporium on the river, stocking groceries and provisions, tobaccos and cigars, temperance beer and gents’ furnishings.83 It was razed in Steveston's Great Fire of 1918, which destroyed most of the wood buildings in the village’s downtown.
Petersky was on the executive of Agudace Achim (Congregation of Brothers), Vancouver’s first organized Orthodox congregation. However, as their business and family grew, the Peterskys moved to Vancouver’s West End and there they joined the Reform Temple Emanu-El. In 1903, he became its president. In 1906, a son, Samuel Petersky, was one of the first Vancouver Jewish young men to graduate in medicine at McGill University. He practiced in a number of small towns in B.C. before taking up permanent residence in Vancouver at the end of the First World War, where he was one of the few professionals and intellectuals in the Jewish community. Samuel Petersky was among the last trustees when the Reform congregation officially dissolved in 1932. The Petersky family is buried in the Mountain View Jewish cemetery. Descendants today live in the Seattle area.84

Mountain View: The First Jewish Cemetery, 1887-1929

In 1887, the City of Vancouver reserved a parcel of land between 33rd and 37th avenues, bounded on the east by Fraser Street and on
the west by a row of tall trees. Known as the Old Cemetery, this was the only burial ground in town; then located in the suburb of South Vancouver, now central in the city. Today, this land is part of an enlarged civic cemetery known as Mountain View. Even in the sociology of death, people want to congregate with those whom they have a common bond and religion. In the early years of development, special agreements were entered into with various fraternal organizations and ethnic societies to set aside blocks of graves for burial of their members and families.85

In 1888, when the first two Jewish deaths occurred in Vancouver, there was no consecrated Jewish ground in which to bury them. Mayor David Oppenheimer, who was a member of the Victoria Jewish congregation, arranged to have the bodies sent to Victoria where a Jewish cemetery had been established in 1860. The families of the deceased were so poor that they were unable to pay for the plots, therefore the Victoria congregation assumed the cost.86 It was an awkward and unfortunate situation. As a result, the “Jewish Society” of Vancouver’s Old Cemetery reserved a block of graves. The original documents of this agreement are lost, so the precise date is unknown.

34. Pioneer Jewish Cemetery, Mountain View Cemetery; Vancouver, B.C.; [1909]
After the first Jewish congregation, Agudace Achim, was established in the fall of 1891, it apparently took possession of and consecrated this ground, located at the corner of East 37th Avenue and Fraser Street. Segregated by a fence (now a hedge), the Jewish Cemetery had a decorative gate and hitching post for horses, both fabricated in wrought iron. The first recorded burial was in 1892. The agreement for lease of plots was between the individual families and the city, which owns the land.87

In modern times the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board is responsible for the burials and pays an annual fee to the city for maintenance. Nevertheless, in at least one recorded case the City Metropolitan Health Committee buried an indigent member in a family grave without Jewish rites and without notice. The board accused the city of defiling the grave. The city countered that they were in the right in accordance with their lease with the family.88

After November 1929, when Schara Tzedeck developed their own Jewish community cemetery, they ceased using Mountain View Cemetery for burials except in family plots. In 1986, the Cemetery Board acquired from the City all the remaining plots in Mountain View Jewish Cemetery, which have been transferred to individuals, so that Jewish burials will continue into the future.

**Lathleu Baer, First Orthodox Rabbi, 1892**

The news report of October 1891 on Vancouver’s first Orthodox congregation also stated that, “A Rabbi . . . will be secured as soon as possible, and the Jews will then take steps to build a permanent synagogue.” The plans were overly optimistic because it would take the impoverished Jewish community another twenty years to construct Vancouver’s first wood synagogue building. In contrast, the more affluent Victoria community had taken only five years from their arrival in 1858 to build their substantial brick synagogue. Nevertheless, by the summer of 1892, the Vancouver congregation did indeed engage a rabbi.
The first congregational rabbi in Vancouver was Lathleu Baer, age thirty-four. He arrived in 1891 from Russia where he had received his rabbinical training. He first comes to our attention in a news item of August 2, 1892, titled “A Solemn Celebration.” (The early gentile press seems to have taken a special interest in Jewish ceremonies, which were novel to them.)

Rabbi Baer conducted special services in the Jewish synagogue last evening and today in celebration of the Fast of Ab [sic. Av], which commemorates the destruction of the Holy Temple [in] Jerusalem. Selections from the book of Lamentations were read and special prayers offered. An outline of the occasion of this fast may be of interest. On the ninth day of [Av] Nebuchadnezzar took the city, burned the temple, massacred thousands of people, and caused the sons of Zedekiah, king of Israel, to be killed in their father’s presence. Zedekiah’s eyes were put out, and he and a number [of] captives taken away to Babylon.89

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur Services, 1892

On September 23, 1892, the newspaper reported on “The Hebrews Celebrating Their New Year,” under the caption “Faces Towards Jerusalem”:

Services were held by the Hebrews of this city yesterday in the Pythian Castle Hall. Rev. Rabbi Baer conducted the service and delivered a lengthy and appropriate address in Hebrew . . . . The Musaf [sic. Musaf] service was gone through . . . and during it some of the elder members of the congregation were visibly affected.

The blowing of the shofar or trumpet . . . and other sacred rites were carefully observed . . . . One had a strange feeling when listening to those memories of rites that have come down through the tremendous sequence of fifty centuries.”90

The editor of the Daily World, Vancouver’s principal newspaper, dispatched a full-time reporter to cover the Yom Kippur service of October 1, 1892. The congregation recognized the limited appeal of
the recently arrived Rabbi Baer (whose mother tongue was Yiddish) to their more Reform minded members and to the general public. Consequently, they invited the English-trained Samuel Solomon Hyams of Victoria to assist in the services and to deliver the sermon in English. Under the headline “God’s Peculiar People,” the event was covered in long columns of print:

Not until the first star appears . . . this evening will any devout Jew in the city or for that matter in the whole world have tasted a morsel of food or drank a drop of water for the space of 24 hours . . . . The old Mosaic Day of Atonement . . . in every land under the heavens today is a day of solemn fasting, serious reflection, devout repentance for past sins and imploration to have them forgiven. The local synagogue or Agudace Achim Society commemorated the day . . . with faces turned eastward . . . in a becoming manner significant for the earnest piety manifested.

According to the news account, the majority of those present were members of the synagogue, but the services were open to all and a number of gentiles took advantage of the opportunity to witness the ceremony, “which recalled to the spectator’s mind incidents of Old Testament history.” To the World reporter, the “custom of wearing hats at so impressive a ceremony appeared . . . strange.” When he left his hat in the anteroom, he was politely asked to go out and put it on.

He reported further on the service:

All the Jews present wore robes according to their standing in the synagogue, the superior ones being clad in garments that looked simply magnificent. At the head of the hall was a representation of the Holy of Holies, the veil that hid the interior from view being pure white silk, while on either side candles burned and added to the brightness of the scene. Above . . . was a tablet on which were engrave[d] the Decalogue in Hebrew hieroglyphics. The officers of the synagogue performed their part of the functions with becoming piety which made the service all the more impressive to the initiated.
The hall was “full to overflowing” on Friday evening to hear S.S. Hyams of Victoria deliver his discourse on “The Jewish Mission of Priesthood on Earth.” It was reported:

The aged rabbi [he was only fifty-two] . . . took up a position facing the audience and leaning on the altar addressed them briefly in a very sincere and earnest manner. His pleadings for the members of his own race to live Godly lives could not fail to have their effect, his manner of speech being at once winsome and convincing. His address was delivered in the English language, interlarded at frequent intervals with Hebrew quotations. The Jews, he said, should be a monument of religion, benevolence and purity wherever they existed . . . . By carrying out such principles the race would be fulfilling the true functions of Jewish priesthood.

Referring to benevolence in particular, the rabbi urged upon his hearers the importance of giving to worthy objects liberally and with a good heart. “If you can’t afford,” he said, “to give $50 or $25 or $10, give 25 cents; but what you do give, give it willingly, for thereby much good may be accomplished.”

No doubt this was the first Jewish fund-raising appeal in Vancouver. Not much has changed in Jewish community affairs in more than a century!

**Samuel Solomon Hyams, 1858-94**

Sam Hyams was a native of London, England who, at the age seventeen, first came to British Columbia during the gold rush of 1858. He was a nephew of Judah P. Davies, a prominent Victoria businessman. After the rush subsided, Hyams returned for a time to England, where he probably completed his education.

Afterwards, he immigrated a second time to America to Boston, New York and then San Francisco. He was a very talented and capable man who lectured at the Harvard University anatomical museum in Boston.
Hyams married and in 1870, a son Solomon (Sollie) was born in Boston. About 1884, joined by his wife Miriam, Sollie, and a daughter Addie, Hyams returned to Victoria where he practiced as an optician.

Samuel Hyams took a prominent role in organizing three Jewish communities in the North West. In Victoria, when the cemetery was being organized in May 1859, he was secretary pro-tem. That June he was elected secretary, and later vice-president, of the First Hebrew Victoria Benevolent Society. An erudite scholar and a gifted orator in English, his native language, on his return to Victoria Hyams was engaged at times by Congregation Emanu-El to deliver the sermons during the High Holy Days and other occasions, under objection from some Orthodox members who did not want English spoken in the services.

At Rosh Hashanah 1889, when formal Jewish worship was inaugurated at Ohaveth Sholom, Seattle’s first Jewish congregation, Hyams assisted in the service and was engaged to lecture to the congregation on subsequent occasions.
Unfortunately, both male members of the Hyams family were in poor health. Sollie died of tuberculosis in 1890 at the age of twenty.96 Samuel died in October 1894 at the age of fifty-three.97 Father and son are buried in Victoria’s Jewish cemetery, of which Samuel had been a founder. Daughter Addie married Moritz Gutmann, a furrier in Seattle. Descendants have lived in that city into modern times.

The Seidelman Family, 1889 to Today

Rabbi Baer also performed wedding services. One of note was the marriage on August 30, 1896 of William Seidelman of Vancouver and his younger bride Esther Pearlman of Winnipeg, an immigrant from Russia.

Born in Budapest, Hungary, William Seidelman, immigrated to the town that became Kansas City during the American Civil War (1861-65). Citizens of this community played a large part in the anti-slavery movement and in the Union Army, in which Seidelman fought during that war. Subsequently, he was postmaster in a small town in Kansas State. Later, he moved to Winnipeg where he worked as a butcher.

Seidelman then moved on to the recently incorporated City of Vancouver, where, by 1889, he established a grocery-general store at Cedar Cove in Burrard Inlet (now Powell Street at the foot of Victoria Drive).

![Receipt issued to William Seidelman for purchase of lot at Cedar Cove; Vancouver, B.C.; May 2, 1889](image-url)
In 1900, a post office was opened in the store and Seidelman became Cedar Cove’s first postmaster. William died in 1919 while Esther lived until 1938.

The Seidelman home was at 1735 2nd Avenue in the East Grandview district. They kept a kosher home where Seidelman, a butcher by trade, was his own shochet (ritual slaughterer). Five children were born to the family: the eldest were Edward Joseph (Joe), Rachel and Harry. All three graduated from Britannia, the multi-ethnic high school in the East End that educated many Jewish students through the years and this year, 2008, is celebrating its centenary. Joe was in the first graduating class at the University of British Columbia. In the First World War, he enlisted in the Western Universities Battalion and was killed in the Battle of Passchendaele in Belgium on December 13, 1917, the first member of Vancouver’s Jewish community to give his life for his country. A memorial plaque in the War Memorial Gymnasium at UBC commemorates his service.

Rachel trained at Vancouver Normal School, taught at Strathcona Elementary School and taught English to new immigrants at night school. By 1919, she was an active community volunteer in the Hebrew Aid Society, Council of Jewish Women and in the effort to build a Reform synagogue. She was athletic, playing basketball, tennis and golf. In 1925, she married Dr. William Morris, a pioneer chest specialist who practiced in British Columbia for forty years.
Harry, in 1917 at age seventeen joined the Canadian Pacific Ocean Services as a cadet, sailing on the *Empress of Japan* and RMS *Niagara*. He later worked for many years as a partner in the United Milling and Grain Co. In community affairs, he was active in the first Jewish Community Centre.98

Today Seidelman grandchildren take pride in being one of Vancouver’s oldest Jewish families. They include Dorothy Grad, daughter of Rachel, president of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia (1996-2001), and Perry Seidelman, son of Harry, the first principal of King David High School (2005-08).

**An Early Jewish Wedding Reported, 1899**

By the end of the nineteenth century, as well as Baer, there was another Orthodox rabbi officiating in Vancouver, as evidenced in a news report in July 1899:

> The Knights of Pythias hall, Cordova street, was the scene of a pretty wedding according to the Hebrew rites on Sunday evening. The ceremony was performed according to the ancient form under the wedding canopy and accompanied by the breaking of the goblet. The groom was J[acob] Venogrodsky, a young man employed at D. Stewart’s merchant tailoring establishment, and the bride was Miss Sarah Grossman, daughter of the late M. Grossman of this city. The ceremony was performed by Rabbi Friedman, who was in the singing part assisted by his two little sons Jakey and Morris, who astonished all present with their vocal ability . . . . A very tasty wedding supper was served, after which the evening was given over to amusements of various kinds.99

**The Orthodox Synagogue into the 20th Century**

Apparently the fledgling Agudace Achim could not support a full-time salary, as Rabbi Baer was listed in the 1901 Census of Canada as “Minister and Cigar Store Keeper.” The synagogue continued to worship at the Knights of Pythias Hall through 1906. By 1907, the group was
Reorganized into a new congregation named B’nai Yehudah (Sons of Israel).

Reform Judaism

Reform Judaism, also known as Liberal or Progressive Judaism, is a modern interpretation of Judaism that emerged in response to the changed political and cultural conditions for Jews brought about by the Emancipation. Reform Judaism originated in the first half of the nineteenth century in Germany, where in 1837 Abraham Geiger convened the first meeting of Reform rabbis. Brought to the United States by German immigrants, it was in freethinking America with its separation of church and state that the Reform movement flourished.

The leading Reformer in the United States was Isaac Mayer Wise (1819-1900), who arrived in 1846. Reform Judaism envisioned an evolving liberal Judaism intellectually compatible with modern science and scholarship. It sought to reform traditional domestic and synagogue rituals that no longer appealed to the sensibilities of an acculturated modern society through liberalizing archaic dietary laws, greater English content in the liturgy and schools, gender equality (such as eliminating separate women’s galleries in the synagogue), and introduction of choir and organ music to the services.

In 1873, Rabbi Wise organized a conference of lay and rabbinical leaders, which became the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (including Canada). In 1875, he founded the Hebrew Union College as the first American rabbinical seminary to train Reform rabbis at a time when American-born English-speaking rabbis were scarce. Wise was a moderate reformer who believed that the various factions could cooperate in the creation of a unified American Jewish religious body. However, when the Reform rabbinate met in Pittsburgh in 1885, the conference announced a radical platform in which many of the rituals such as kashrut (koshering) were considered dispensable. The ultra-Reform even advocated a change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. This was the final break with the traditionalists, who argued that these doctrinal changes were based on the Protestant Christian model. When later introduced into Canada, where there was never a
large German Jewish immigration, Reform practices were and remain much more moderate.

**Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver – First Reform Congregation, 1894-1919**

Yet again history is indebted to the *Daily World* for its coverage of the birth of Vancouver’s second congregation in April 1894:

Since arrival in this city of the well-known Philo family, of which the Rev. Dr. S. Philo, late minister of the Emanu-El of Victoria is the head . . . all respectable and good members of the Hebrew community . . . have organized a congregation to be known as the Emanu-El, and of which the Rev. Dr. S. Philo has been unanimously chosen as pastor. As the Hebrews have no permanent place of worship dedicated to the Lord God Jehovah, the services will be temporarily conducted at the Masonic temple or in Sullivan’s new hall . . . . It is to be hoped that the congregation will soon have its own place of worship – the energy and ability of the Rev. Dr. S. Philo and his talented family will greatly aid towards this end.

The article went on to explain the features of the Reform congregation as contrasted to the Orthodox:

The services will be conducted in a moderate reform way, so as to give ample satisfaction to every one. Choir and organ and hymns in the English language, as well as prayers will be introduced at the services, besides Friday evening lectures . . . . The congregation will also have a Sabbath school for the children of the members, of which Rev. Dr. S. Philo will be the superintendent.  

An incorporation was obtained and the founding officers of the congregation were reported as:

President: Joseph Brown
Vice-President: Solomon Weaver
Weaver operated the London Loan Office and was a pawnbroker and jeweller at 319 Carrall, with his residence at 624 Burrard; Ed. Gold, the son of Vancouver’s first Jewish family, operated the Vancouver Collateral and Securities Loan Bank, 308 Abbott, corner of Cordova; and Bernhard Simon was a merchant tailor at 51 Cordova. These were traditional Jewish occupations in the Old Country. Money lending and pawnbroking were particularly apropos in a resource economy where loggers, miners and fishermen came to town and quickly spent their cache on pleasurable pursuits.

Brown and the Goldstein brothers, who had been on the first executive of the Orthodox congregation, found the Reform congregation more to their taste.

The first service of Congregation Emanu-El took place on Friday evening April 20, 1894 at the new hall in the Sullivan Block at 80 Cordova Street, temporarily fitted up as a synagogue. The newspaper reported:
there was a large attendance... many Gentiles taking advantage of the opportunity to hear Rev. Rabbi Philo. The hall was brightly lighted and suitable ecclesiastical decorations were placed on or about the rabbi's desk. Joseph Brown, president of the synagogue, acted as reader, and a capable choir, assisted by an organ, furnished the music.

The report went on to explain:

[This was] the beginning of the feast of Passover, which is celebrated on the anniversary of the exodus from Egypt – the 14th of Nisan... the period of the first full moon in the spring. The feast lasts eight days during which good Jews eat unleavened bread, hence the name sometimes given to this feast of Chag Hamatzoth.

Rev. Philo took a text, suitable for the occasion, from the Psalms... They were, he said, celebrating deliverance from oppression... but it was not simply that they might reach a land of milk and honey... but to be a great religious body... The Lord brought them out of Egypt and gave them the law that they might go everywhere and establish shrines and instruct the whole world to believe in one God-Jehovah... Moses was a truly inspired man... The Jew's religion means a love for all mankind and an unbounded charity; his mission is to make the Lord's name holy before all peoples, all nations, and all denominations.106

However, Rabbi Philo did not find his “land of milk and honey” in British Columbia. By June he wrote in a somewhat embittered and biased report to his mentor, Professor Gotthard Deutsch, historian at the Hebrew Union College, who had enquired about the status of Judaism in this region:

Rabbi Philo’s Report on the Status of Judaism in British Columbia, June 1894

Yours duly at hand, in reply I, too, am sorry to state that I can say little about the Jews in British Columbia, and the little I have to say is not of a nature that would make it worthy to bring
it before the public at large.

The religious standing of the Jews in B.C. is very mournful. I hardly think you will find any of their names inscribed in the records of Orphan As[ylums] or houses of O.A. [Old Age] or hospitals or the like. They live . . . among the Siwashes [Native Indians] and they are little better than they are.

Victoria, which is the capital city of B.C., some . . . years ago had some [119] Jewish families, all well to do. The trade laid mainly in their hands. They . . . then built a synagogue . . . . Once upon a time they had a minister by the name of [Morris] Cohen who, after the expiration of his term, had to leave on account of want of support. [Then] services were conducted by some private men alternatively.

Since that time . . . there was no rabbi, no preacher and no teacher in Victoria. Some four years ago, I happened to pass through Victoria, inquiring as how Judaism lives (or is buried) in Victoria. I was then asked to stay with them for three years. After the expiration of my contract, I too had to move on, on account of lack of maintenance for the support of a teacher. Now Victoria has about 30 to 34 Jewish families, all well to do; some even are very rich, but they do worship the money (the golden calf). They have a synagogue, but no rabbi, or teacher, hence no congregation.

Nanaimo, B.C. is a small place. Some five Jewish families live there, of whom Jake Mahrer is the most prominent citizen. He was twice elected as mayor [sic. as councillor] of the city, is the president of the water works, the owner of the big opera house and the brewery and also the holder of property to the value of $200,000 worth. The man is a true good man, to every one alike without distinction of nation, discrimination or race. He is very charitable and benevolent.107

Philo goes on to talk about the current situation on the Lower Mainland:
Westminster B.C. has some two or three Jewish families, yet no body knows them, if they are Jews. Vancouver B.C. has some 25 to 30 Jewish families. The most of the Jews here in Vancouver are refugees sent out by the aid association of B. Hirsch [Philanthropist Baron Maurice de Hirsch]. The only prominent family here is the Oppenheimer Bros. They are not only very rich but also intelligent and occupy prominent municipal positions. Also an Orthodox Congregation is here which was established two years ago, but now counts only 10 to 12 members, all Russians.

They had no [Reform] congregation until some three months ago when I came here and formed one. My congregation counts some 22 families and we hold services in a hall as we have no synagogue yet, but our services are strictly ‘Reform.’ Yet I do not think that I will be able to remain with them, simply because they are not used to pay toward the maintaining of a rabbi or teacher.108

Philo was of course an experienced rabbi and an eloquent preacher. In the established Victoria community he had commanded a monthly salary of $100, which would be a steep price for the fledgling Vancouver congregation to pay. But there may have been another factor. While Philo’s service was “strictly Reform,” as he put it, in accordance with American practice, his Canadian audience was more traditional and tended to be only moderately Reform. This had also been true during Philo’s controversial tenure in Victoria. In fact, the Vancouver congregation that he founded became semi-Reform after he departed.

Ascendancy of Temple Emanu-El

For a time, Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver became the influential Jewish synagogue in the city. It attracted about thirty upper middle-class families composed of established businessmen, landowners and the few professionals in the community. Already acculturated to Anglo society, most lived in the upper class West End of the city. The congregation also included some of the former Orthodox “Russians” as they became affluent and moved to the West End. These included
Jacob Izen, owner of the National Theatre at 58 West Hastings Street, the earliest talking movie house in the city, and the Petersky family.

The High Holy Day services in the fall of 1894 were held in the Astor Hotel at 147-149 W. Hastings Street (close to the former Woodward’s Department Store), which along with Granville Street were becoming Vancouver’s principal business streets. However, in the early 20th century, the more imposing Labour Temple at 411 Dunsmuir Street (now the site of Vancouver Community College), centrally located in the Downtown Business District, became the principal venue for this congregation.

As the Reform congregation stabilized and matured, by the beginning of the twentieth century two men stood out as the long-time leaders, Solomon Weaver and Samuel Gintzburger.

**Solomon Weaver and Abraham Charles Cohen, 1894-1930s**

Solomon D. Weaver was born in Poland and emigrated to Ontario in 1874 at the age of nineteen. In 1862, he married Leona (Lena) from...
the United States, a German Jew then twenty years old. Three children were born to the couple in Ontario: Henrietta, Laura Bertha and Samuel Theodore.\textsuperscript{109}

In 1894, Weaver is listed in the Vancouver City Directory as proprietor of the London Loan Office at 319 Carrall Street and variously thereafter as a pawnbroker and jeweller. Their house was at 667 Richards Street in the Downtown district. By 1907, an economic boom period, Solomon achieved business success as president of the B.C. Wire & Nail Co. Ltd., with a factory at the foot of Hawks Avenue near the CPR tracks. By 1911, the family moved their residence to upscale Beach Avenue along English Bay.\textsuperscript{110} Weaver was an early president of Congregation Temple Emanu-El, a founder of Vancouver’s first B’nai Brith lodge in 1910 and the Hebrew Free Loan Association in 1915.

Solomon Weaver died on June 10, 1915 in his sixty-first year. His son, Samuel Theodore, had predeceased him in 1908 at the age of fifteen. The first Samuel Lodge (later Vancouver Lodge) of B’nai Brith was named after him. Both father and son are buried at Mountain View Jewish cemetery, a massive granite monument marking their graves. Nothing is known about the eldest child, Henrietta. In June 1911, at the age of twenty-five, daughter Laura married Abraham Charles Cohen.

A.C. Cohen, born in Riga, Latvia, received his public and high school education in New York City and began his career there in the knitting industry. In 1898, he served as a volunteer

\textsuperscript{40. Gravestone of Samuel and Solomon Weaver, Mountain View Cemetery; Vancouver; B.C.; [1990]}
during the Spanish-American War. He then joined the regular United States Army as a non-commissioned officer for several years.

Cohen came to Vancouver in 1909, starting as an employee in the knitting industry. In 1914, he formed the Universal Knitting Company, manufacturing high-quality sweaters, sweater coats, bathing suits and athletic jerseys for women and children. By the mid-1920s, with a staff of 125, this business was the largest employer of the needle trade in Western Canada, exporting its goods nationally and internationally. Cohen also took an active interest in communal and philanthropic affairs. He was a president of B’nai Brith Vancouver Lodge and District Deputy of the Grand Lodge, a member of the Order of Elks, the Concordia Club (a Jewish business and professional men’s social club) and the Schara Tzedeck congregation. A.C. and Laura Cohen had four sons.111 However, the family moved away from Vancouver sometime in the 1930s and no contact has been made since.

Samuel and Maurice Gintzburger, 1887-1927

Samuel Gintzburger was the outstanding Reform Jew in the early history of Vancouver. He was born in February 1867 in Neuchâtel, Switzerland. His father was a watchmaker who had come from Alsace – a border region of France, Germany and Switzerland. Samuel arrived in Vancouver in February 1887 at the age of twenty, along with his brother Maurice. For thirteen years, Samuel took on the hard life of a pioneer: farmer, trader, sealer, prospector and miner. The brothers first took up a pre-emption of 160 acres in what is now North Vancouver City. Here they resided and planted 300 fruit trees, mostly apples, but this could not support their livelihood. Maurice took employment for eight years with Oppenheimer Brothers, wholesale grocers.
Samuel then engaged in trading with the Natives on the west coast of Vancouver Island. In 1888, he signed on as a hunter on the *Black Diamond*, a pelagic sealing schooner out of Victoria. The schooner was seized by the United States for “illegal” hunting in the Bering Sea, but the vessel and crew escaped. Discoveries and mining of gold, silver and lead in 1897 attracted the Gintzburger brothers to the Slocan and West Kootenay districts, where Maurice remained for ten years until 1907. In 1899, Samuel joined the gold rush over the ice to Atlin, where he engaged in placer mining without great success. He returned to Vancouver and engaged as a financial and insurance agent and notary. Samuel married Rosina Robinson in February 1895 and Maurice married her sister, Henrietta, in September 1898.\(^{112}\) A third sister married Solomon Blackson, a pioneer tobacconist of Vancouver.

With the Vancouver boom in full swing in 1907, the Gintzburger brothers entered and prospered in the real estate business in Vancouver and on the North Shore (of Burrard Inlet). In 1912-13, Samuel served on the first municipal council of West Vancouver. In 1913, he was appointed consul-general of Switzerland for British Columbia and Alberta and thus had charge of German properties interned during the First World War. He remained in this post until his death.

Samuel Gintzburger was a philanthropist who worked indefatigably for charities and amenities in the young city. He was the beloved Uncle Sam, the daddy of the beach to thousands of children who frequented English Bay. Many an erring boy or girl was turned over to him by the juvenile court as their advisor.

For a Jewish man of the day in Vancouver, his interests and hobbies
were unprecedented. He owned one of the first motorcars seen in the city and was a founder and Honorary President of the Vancouver Automobile Club. He was an executive officer of the Art, Historical and Scientific Association of Vancouver, L’Alliance Française and the Philatelic Society. His postage collection, then valued at $50,000, was reputed to be unrivalled in its completeness of early British Columbia and Canadian stamps. As a horticulturist, he was renowned for his “magnificent” collection of orchids and noted for wearing a different variety in his buttonhole every day.

Samuel Gintzburger was the outstanding leader of the West End Jewish community during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. He was a charter member of B’nai Brith and the Zionist Society, and a long-time president of Congregation Temple Emanu-El. Along with Solomon Weaver and Jacob Fleishman, he organized the Vancouver Hebrew Free Loan Association to help immigrants set up in business, and became its first president from 1915 to 1924.113

Maurice Gintzburger died on November 3, 1922 at the age of fifty-five. Samuel, in ill health for some time, died at his home, 1075 Harwood Street, on January 23, 1927, a month short of his sixtieth birthday. His funeral was conducted by Samuel Lodge, B’nai Brith. Both men are buried in the family plot at Mountain View Cemetery. Samuel’s obituaries were given headline coverage in the daily newspapers. He was remembered as “one of Vancouver’s most picturesque and lovable citizens . . . . For 40 years his kindly disposition and shrewd mind have been contributing to a score of public and semi public activities in the upbuilding of this city.”114

First Secular Organization, 1909

In September 1909, the Jewish men of Vancouver initiated their first secular organization, the Young Men’s Hebrew Association (YMHA) of Vancouver, to provide the young men in the community with educational, social, athletic and recreational services. The Honorary President was Samuel Gintzburger and President, Dr. Samuel Petersky. As reported, there were fifty-eight paid-up members. “It seemed almost
incredible to the young men themselves, that there are so many of them in Vancouver, and they regarded each other with astonishment, most of them having met for the first time.” A Chanukah Ball, the first affair by the club held on December 14, 1909, was attended by the largest number of Jews congregated in the city at any prior event.

**Decline of Reform Congregation in the First World War**

In 1911, a campaign was launched to build a semi-Reform synagogue. $18,000 was raised and the congregation purchased a property on Melville Street in the West End as a site for their new synagogue. With the onset of war in August 1914, they suspended the building plans as a result of a depression and the war effort. The congregation struggled on until the end of 1917 when services were cancelled and their last rabbi departed.

Armistice Day occurred on November 11, 1918. With the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the post-war reconfiguration of Europe, there was another influx of Eastern European refugees into Canada. The Reform congregation had remained static, but now the Orthodox element was growing in numbers and formed the majority in the Vancouver Jewish community. Realistically, the Jewish population of some 1,500 could afford to build only one synagogue. Therefore, in 1919-21, the Reform men joined with the Orthodox Schara Tzedeck (the successor to Agudace Achim) to build one large synagogue to serve all Vancouver Jewry, to be located in the working-class East End where over half the Jewish community lived.

Thus Temple Emanu-El’s men’s activities ceased. This forced union was never a happy one. As covered below, the Temple Emanu-El Ladies’ Auxiliary continued its social and charitable activities in the West End and operated a successful Sabbath school for their children through the 1920s.

**Rabbis of Temple Emanu-El, 1894-1917**

The life of a rabbi in the emerging West in the mid-nineteenth century
was not an easy one. Often he came from Europe, where he had learned his profession, and his first languages were Yiddish and Hebrew, not English. He may have trained in a renowned Hebrew academy, but more often than not, he came from one of the many small yeshivot (rabbinical schools) scattered throughout the towns of the Diaspora. Unfortunately, their academic credentials were uneven. Even if he had expertise in Jewish ritual practice and the Law, the social sciences were in their infancy. By the nature of his insular environment, he may have lacked skill in interpersonal relationships.

On his arrival in America, the immigrant rabbi usually found a job ministering to a new small congregation whose congregants, coming from everywhere, varied in their Judaic practices from Orthodoxy to Reform. The receiving congregation was normally administered by volunteer laymen and was often without an adequate administrative structure or fund-raising capacity. The rabbi may have been the only employee, and was usually required to be the spiritual leader, interpret Jewish Law, supervise and teach in the school and conduct B’nai Mitzvah, marriages and funerals. Thus, like the proverbial wandering Jew, it is little wonder that the rabbi moved from congregation to congregation seeking to improve his calling and lifestyle. In the twenty-four years that Vancouver’s Temple Emanu-El congregation held religious services, they were served by five consecutive rabbis.

**Rabbi Solomon Philo**

Dr. Solomon Philo, a German Reform rabbi, was a graduate of the Breslau, Silesia (now Wroclaw, Poland) College of Germany. Many of the leading Breslau families were in favour of Haskalah (The Enlightenment) and had Reform tendencies. On his immigration to America, Philo became affiliated with the Reform Hebrew Union College of Cincinnati. After occupying a pulpit in San Francisco, in March 1891 Dr. Philo was engaged as rabbi of Congregation Emanu-El of Victoria. On his arrival in British Columbia, the English-speaking rabbi was welcomed in the daily newspaper as an “eloquent preacher,” a “profound scholar” and “a favorite pastor.”

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At first, Rabbi Philo was welcomed by the Jewish community, and by Christians who attended his lectures, and his term was extended from the original one to three years.

Shortly problems concerning spiritual practices began to arise between the Reform rabbi and his congregation, composed largely of Orthodox Polish and Russian Jews. The arguments involved the form of rendering the holiest prayers, the use of English in his sermons, the employment of instrumental and choral music, and allowing the children to attend school with uncovered heads. These practices were condoned, indeed encouraged by the Reform, but were anathema to the Orthodox. Consequently, at the end of March 1894, the Victoria congregation dismissed Philo at the termination of his contract.\textsuperscript{119}

It was natural that Rabbi Philo would look across the water to budding Vancouver, where some of his more Reform-minded congregants had moved. Early that April he arrived in Vancouver to agitate for a new congregation, Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver, a namesake of the old. Although he succeeded in his mission, his tenure was short-lived because the nascent congregation could not then afford to pay the requisite salary for an experienced rabbi-teacher with a family. He also may have been too Reform for the sensibilities of his Vancouver congregants, as after his departure the congregation became semi-Reform.

Rabbi Philo’s peripatetic career continued. In September 1902, when the founders of Beth-El Congregation of Fort Worth, Texas, sought to “worship on the reform plan” they hired Philo. Although he was helpful in the organizational meetings, nevertheless the women of the congregation found the rabbi to be “quarrelsome and meddlesome” and his appointment was soon terminated.\textsuperscript{120} In June 1912, he became rabbi of the Liberal Shaarey Shomayim Congregation in Winnipeg to replace the incumbent Rev. J.K. Levin who accepted a call to Helena, Montana. Without consultation, Philo performed the marriage of a gentile man with a Jewish woman. This proved to be too radically Reform for the congregation and he was dismissed.\textsuperscript{121}
Philo’s family was apparently more respected than the rabbi. When the B’nai Brith Women later instituted a chapter in Victoria it was named the Regina Philo Chapter in honour of the Rebbetzin. Two daughters married local men, with their father conducting the services, and remained permanently in the community. Minnie Philo Waxstock and her husband, Isaac, were well-known members of the Victoria community, where Isaac became a multi-term president of Temple Emanu-El. Louise Philo married John Mahrer, the Nanaimo brewer and opera house proprietor. In Nanaimo, and later in Vancouver, Louise and her family were notable in musical circles and community service. In 1928, as president of B’nai Brith Women, she was given the honour of turning the first sod of the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre, the main project to which these women were devoted.\textsuperscript{122}

**Rabbi Victor Rosenstein**

Rev. Victor Rosenstein served as cantor in Congregation Shaar Hashomayim of Montreal. In July 1894, he applied for the position of resident minister of Temple Emanu-El of Victoria, which had been vacant since Dr. Philo’s departure a year earlier. The congregation paid his expenses to meet with them in Victoria. The Board of Officers were satisfied that he could meet the qualifications for a “chazzan [cantor] and teacher,” then appointed a committee to wait on all members and non-members to see if funds could be collected for the minister’s support.\textsuperscript{123} However, in September the Special Committee on Collection advised that the money could not be raised.\textsuperscript{124}

Rosenstein moved on to Emanu-El of Vancouver and was retained into about 1899. Then, apparently leaving his family resident in Vancouver, he travelled to the Eastern United States seeking employment. Emanu-El of Victoria was again looking internationally for a rabbi, so in August 1899, writing from Philadelphia, Rosenstein offered that congregation his services to officiate during the forthcoming High Holy Days for $200 plus expenses. The board countered with a firm offer of $250 inclusive.\textsuperscript{125} Nevertheless, they instead hired a British rabbi at an annual salary of $900, although he only stayed for the year.\textsuperscript{126}
Rosenstein’s case is an extreme example of the job and financial insecurities faced by European-trained rabbis in early America. Away from his family, in Evansville, Indiana, Rosenstein died suddenly from heart failure on April 12, 1903, the first day of Passover. The incumbent rabbi of Emanu-El of Vancouver, Dr. Farber, through a national Jewish newspaper, appealed to the Jewish communities in Montreal, Vancouver and Victoria who had known the late rabbi to provide relief to his family, “consisting of a wife and two daughters all three of whom are so ill that their lives hang on a thread. What is more aggravating is that they are in abject poverty, destitute to such an extent that they have not the wherewith to get the next meal.”

The men of the Victoria congregation held a special meeting to discuss the matter and requested the Hebrew Ladies’ Association to “interest themselves in the case.” However, about two weeks later the congregation took more positive action by appointing a committee of two to solicit subscriptions. No report is extant to tell how much was raised. We do know that a granddaughter of Rabbi Rosenstein, Rebecca De La Feraude, lived in Metro Vancouver up to recent times.

Rabbi Elias Friedlander

In the first two decades of the 1900s, the West End congregation stabilized and a women’s group formed. During this time their rabbis, all English-speaking, made the biggest impact on the Vancouver Jewish community. Arthur H. Fleishman, a lawyer and an early president of Schara Tzedeck, forty years later reminisced about this period:

With the growth of the community came the recognized need for spiritual guidance. Steps were taken to secure the services of a competent rabbi. So it was that Dr. Friedlander came to Vancouver to minister. He was the first spiritual leader of any note. This learned gentleman proved to be highly cultured and scholarly . . . . In spite of the fact that the hall was a poor and unauspicious affair . . . each Sabbath eve found the meeting place filled to overflowing. To hear Dr. Friedlander preach was certainly a spiritual treat.
Born in Russia in 1849, Friedlander received his rabbinical training in Germany and was ordained at the age of twenty-three. After serving in pulpits in England and in British Kingston, Jamaica, he came to Montreal as head minister (1884 to 1896) of the Shaar Hashomayim Congregation of English, German and Polish Jews, the second oldest in Canada. In September 1886, he officiated at the impressive consecration services of its magnificent McGill College Avenue synagogue. Later he served as minister of Shaarey Shomayim, a Liberal congregation in Winnipeg, and officiated at the cornerstone laying of their new synagogue on May 7, 1907.

Rabbi Friedlander was indeed ahead of his time in Vancouver, which was too small and immature to meet his financial and intellectual needs, and he stayed there for only two years. Afterwards he received a call to New York. Rabbi Friedlander completed his career in his seventies as rabbi to the Victoria community from 1910-1920, although he served only sporadically during the war years. He died there in 1927 at the age of seventy-eight and was the first rabbi buried in Victoria's historic Jewish cemetery.

Rabbi Rudolph Farber

Fleishman continued his reminiscences:

Following Dr. Friedlander in the role of rabbi was Dr. Farber. While the latter had not the scholarly grasp of his predecessor, he was equally far ahead of his time for the small community of Vancouver. He stayed for a few years, endeavouring to hold the small community together.

We first encounter Austrian-born Rabbi Rudolph Farber, at thirty-three years of age in 1895, as rabbi of the Reform Temple Emanu-El in
Spokane, Wash. Dedicated in September 1892, the beautiful Classical-style synagogue was one of the first two Jewish houses of worship in that state. During his term there, Farber organized the Spokane Hebrew Ladies’ Benevolent Society. However, the peripatetic rabbi soon moved on: he had a brief stint as rabbi of the traditional Ohabai Shalome Congregation in San Francisco, lived in Portland for a time, and in 1898 took charge of Congregation Ryhim Ahovim in Stockton, Calif., where he delivered his inaugural address to a temple “filled to capacity.” The congregation had been nominally Orthodox but became increasingly progressive, adopting the Reform Union prayer book in 1897. They unanimously elected Farber because of his reputation as a modern English-speaking rabbi, yet he only stayed into 1900.

We do not have a precise date Farber arrived in Vancouver, but it was probably 1901. His signature appears on a Confirmation certificate for Meyer Grossman in May 1903. During Farber’s tenure, the Ladies’ Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El was formed and probably benefited from his experience with the group in Spokane. Farber remained with the Vancouver congregation for a comparatively long time, into 1912. In 1913, we find him rabbi of Sinai Temple, Los Angeles. Years later in Waukegan, Illinois in January 1927, we again encounter Rabbi Farber when he officiated at the marriage of Sadie Marks (Mary Livingstone), lately of Vancouver, and Jack Benny, when the rabbi apparently was ministering in that region.

Rabbi Bernard H. Rosengard

Rabbi Bernard Rosengard was born in “Russia,” perhaps Lithuania, around 1866. The 1900s found him in Grimsby, England (near the eastern port city of Hull), ministering to a congregation that had emigrated from Lithuania. In July 1906, at age thirty-eight, he immigrated to New York on the ship Carmania with his wife and four daughters born in England. His first pulpit in the United States was at San Antonio, Texas. By 1910, Rosengard was rabbi of the Orthodox Keneseth Israel in Spokane. There, in 1911, he initiated daily and Sunday Hebrew classes for thirty to forty students, but the board was dissatisfied with his teaching and did not renew his contract.
Rosengard came to Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver, probably for the High Holy Day services and beginning of the school year in the fall of 1913. On May 31, 1914 he held Confirmation services for three girls, long before this became the customary practice in Vancouver synagogues. In September, the rabbi conducted High Holy Day services to large audiences in the hall of the Labour Temple. He was accompanied by a special voluntary choir, which “render[ed] ancient temple music.”141 In January 1915, in common with other religious denominations, Dr. Rosengard, as was reported in the daily press, preached to the Hebrew community in “special intercessory services for the success of the allied arms and for the speedy termination of the war.”142 That year, at the Vancouver Labour Temple, Rabbi Rosengard conducted the wedding ceremony of Saydye Franks, second daughter of the Orthodox Zebulon Franks, to Isaac Jacobs of Bellingham, Wash.143 Two of the Rosengard daughters taught at the Orthodox Vancouver Hebrew School.144 These latter occasions show that the division between the rabbi of the semi-Reform Congregation and the Orthodox element at that time was not too great.

Rosengard’s incumbency had come at a time of flux. The Great War was raging in Europe, spearheaded by Great Britain and backed up by its Empire. The war was taking its toll physically, morally and financially. The Jewish population of Vancouver was still too minuscule to support a viable community. The hopes for a Liberal West End synagogue had been quashed by the war effort. The Orthodox congregation, centred in the East End, was poor, religiously struggling in inadequate quarters, and in-between ministers. The few affluent business leaders of the community realized that, at the conclusion of the war, the community would be able to afford only one substantial synagogue and conceded that inevitably, by majority rule, it would be Orthodox. Thus the Orthodox standard of the Jewish community was set for the next fifteen years. Rabbi Rosengard unfortunately found himself in the midst of this dilemma. A.A. Fleishman succinctly summarized the situation in his reminiscences:

Dr. Farber was succeeded by Dr. Rosengard, also a highly cultured person. He was definitely a thinker and a scholar, and
it was our good fortune to have him in our midst for some little time . . . . Unfortunately the community was so concerned with looking ahead that it concentrated all its energies on thoughts about the future, without concerning itself about the needs of the immediate present. As a result the guidance of Dr. Rosengard failed to bear the fruit it might have done under more favourable circumstances. In a word, no place was made for him . . . . While the agitation for a West End synagogue was great, it was finally decided to use the land purchased so long before and build in the East End. That was, in my opinion, not a good move.145

Rabbi Rosengard remained in Vancouver through 1917.146 The census of 1920 showed him living in Hudson, New York, probably serving there as rabbi of Congregation Anshe Emeth.147

End of Reform Services for Half a Century, 1918-65

The departure of Rabbi Rosengard at the conclusion of 1917 ended Jewish Reform services in Vancouver for nearly half a century. On July 23, 1965, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations presented a charter to the Vancouver Reform Congregation. This new congregation knew nothing of the history of their predecessor and named their synagogue Temple Sholom (Temple of Peace). Not unlike Temple Emanu-El of Vancouver, which operated as a semi-Reform Congregation, Temple Sholom advertises itself as “A Reform Congregation with a Deep Sense of Tradition.”148 With a membership approaching 800 families, it now rivals the Conservative Beth Israel as the largest Jewish congregation in Vancouver.

Ladies’ Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El, 1910-27

This was a small circle of some twenty women formed around 1910 to assist Temple Emanu-El in their activities. Indeed, it was probably the first active Jewish women’s organization in Vancouver. The women met on a weekly basis for socializing and such activities as sewing clothing for the needy “among our own people, or for any needy cause.” Frequent events were held for “pleasant social gatherings”
and fundraising. These activities included monthly bridge teas, sales of home cooking and art needlework, public dinners and dances. As stated, "the great ambition of the society is to help the men to erect a Semi-Reform Synagogue and to assist them in any way when this building is completed."

During the four war years, the Auxiliary affiliated with the local Red Cross and devoted their time exclusively to this cause. These weekly work gatherings became so large that private homes were found to be inadequate and halls were rented. After the war, the activities of the society turned to the “Ukrainian sufferers,” and garments for little children were sent in quantities through the Hadassah Society to their proper destination.149

In January 1920, the younger West End women inaugurated the Ha-
levi Literary Society with a “delightful dance,” held in the West End Academy. The objective of the society was to encourage the study of Jewish history and literature.150

The existing after-school Hebrew School associated with the Orthodox synagogue was located across town in the lower-class immigrant district. This was not only inconvenient to students who had to travel the long distance by streetcar, but incompatible to the sensibilities of the upper-class West End ladies. Therefore, around 1922, the Auxiliary, under the leadership of Mrs. E.R. (Anne) Sugarman, formed a Sabbath school taught by volunteer members of the auxiliary, with classes held in the Women’s Building at 752 Thurlow Street in the West End. The school was considered a “great success,” and included the presentation by the children of concerts and plays “on every important holiday or festival.”151 When the Vancouver Council of Jewish Women was formed in 1924, Mrs. Sugarman led a study class on the Bible.

In 1926, the officers of the Auxiliary were:

President: Mrs. S. Gintzburger
Vice-President: Mrs. L.A. Rostein
Treasurer: Mrs. M. Koenigsberg
Rosina Gintzburger and Anne Sugarman were Vancouver’s outstanding Liberal Jewish women of the first half of the twentieth century. Both of these women were non-sectarian and made their mark in the overall Vancouver community as well as in the Jewish community.

**Rosina (Robinson) Gintzburger, 1895-1946**

Rosina Gintzburger was born in San Francisco but grew up in Montreal, where her father, Louis Robinson, was a merchant tailor and an officer of the Young Men’s Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Baron de Hirsch Institute. The family later moved to Vancouver. In February 1895, she married Samuel Gintzburger and, in September 1898, her sister Henrietta married his brother Maurice.

Mrs. Gintzburger joined her husband in devoting her time on behalf of philanthropic and charitable endeavours. She was instrumental in the formation of the Ladies’ Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El, which she served as life president, and became a charter member of the Vancouver Council of Jewish Women. Her non-sectarian interests included membership in the local Council of Women and the Vancouver Aid Society, which offered assistance to immigrants newly arrived at the port of Vancouver.

Samuel and Rosina Gintzburger had one daughter, Pauline Emma (Mrs. Frank Taylor). Pauline was the first Jewish woman to graduate from the University of British Columbia (B.A., M.A.) and won
the Governor General’s Gold medal, class of 1919. She became a schoolteacher.

Rosina died on May 4, 1946; she had survived Samuel by nineteen years.\textsuperscript{154} Her sister Henrietta died on November 6, 1948; she had survived Maurice Gintzburger by twenty-six years and had no surviving children.\textsuperscript{155} The sisters are buried in the family plot at Mountain View Cemetery. Because of the premature death of their husbands, they lived in straitened circumstances in their later years. Rosina operated a flower shop in the West End.

Rosina Gintzburger had been the chief officer of the ladies’ group in the congregation, which operated long after the men’s activities were dormant. She was still living when Temple Emanu-El was dissolved in 1932, but as a woman was never among the Board of Trustees.

\textbf{Anne (Wodlinger) Sugarman, 1919-42}

Anne Sugarman was a generation younger than Rosina Gintzburger. In a sense, the younger woman followed her senior’s mission and completed her work.

Anne Dorothea Sugarman was born in 1895 in Gretna, Man., daughter of a prominent prairie family. She was educated at Havergal College in Winnipeg. In 1916, she married Ephraim R. Sugarman, who was born in Ontario and educated at Osgoode Law School.\textsuperscript{156}

The Sugarmans, during their time in Vancouver (1919-42), were leaders of Liberal Judaism. In 1922, she organized
the Reform Jewish Sunday School. In 1924, her husband drew up the constitution of the Jewish Community Chest and became chairman, 1926-27. That April, she became the first president of Vancouver Council of Jewish Women, whose object was to “supply inspiration in things Jewish and communal.” Within six months it had a membership of ninety-two. Elected chairman of Western Interstate, Anne was responsible for the first seeing-eye dog program in America. The Sugarmans were also prominent in the formation of Congregation Beth Israel; Ephraim drafted and presented the charter to the inaugural meeting.

During the Second World War, while their two sons were serving overseas, Mrs. Sugarman founded and chaired the successful Red Cross “Salvage Scheme.” Anne Sugarman, along with Nellie McCay, was the moving force for nine years of the Vancouver Folk Festival, which predated the current Vancouver Folk Music Festival. After the war, Anne attended several sessions of the United Nations as an observer and arranged for many famous lecturers to tour Canada. Representing women’s organizations, she presented a brief on women’s rights during the Canadian Bill of Rights hearing. Anne Sugarman died at her home in Toronto in May 1973.

The First Vancouver Jewish Community Centre, 1928-61

In 1928, a Jewish community centre was opened at Oak and 11th Avenue in the Fairview district and soon became the hub of Jewish communal activities. With the stock market crash of 1929 and onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s, much of the Jewish community left the West End. A number of the families departed to more promising economic regions such as southern California. Those who stayed moved from the downtown peninsula to the newer elite districts of Shaughnessy and Point Grey south of English Bay. As a result, the Ladies’ Auxiliary of Temple Emanu-El disbanded.

However, the school continued in the Community Centre as a lasting legacy of these women. Mrs. Sugarman had been the founding president of the Vancouver Section of the National Council of Jewish
Women in 1924, so that body took over running the Sunday school, which at its peak had an enrollment of 125 children. The school continued until 1932, when the Conservative Beth Israel Congregation was formed and took over this area of work.¹⁶¹

B’nai Yehudah – Second Orthodox Congregation, 1907-16

Familiarly called Sons of Israel, this name is a mistranslation of the Hebrew B’nai Yehudah, which literally translates as Sons of Judah, but the name stuck.

This reconstituted Orthodox congregation first comes to our attention in 1907 with a simple directory listing of Elias Healman as “Secretary, Sons of Israel.”¹⁶² Since the founding Orthodox Jewish fathers of Vancouver have left us no minutes, the details of the transition from the earlier Agudace Achim to the new B’nai Yehudah is unknown. This was an economic boom period in Vancouver and the constituents of the new congregation seem to be an amalgam of the old guard, notably Zebulon Franks, and many newcomers such as Healman. Nor are the
founding officers, other than Healman, precisely known. Franks, Bernard Simon and Harry Braverman, listed as a junk dealer at 1016 Main Street, are remembered as the early leaders, and Franks was probably the first president.

One of the first acts of the congregation was to rent more modern premises, moving from the Knights of Pythias Hall to the Whetham Block at 165 Cordova West, where they remained from 1907 to 1911 until their synagogue was built. This building also housed the earliest Jewish communal offices, the Jewish Aid Society and the Jewish Young Men’s Association.163

In 1907-08 Sons of Israel engaged its first rabbi, H. Valenski;164 however, he only stayed the year. As his replacement, in 1908-09165 the congregation was fortunate in securing the services of fifty-six-year-old Rabbi David Belasoff, the first full-time Orthodox rabbi in Vancouver. A recent immigrant from Russia who had been living in Winnipeg,
Belasoff was a qualified and experienced rabbi. With his Rebbetzin (rabbi’s wife), Nachama, they would serve the congregation for eight years until his retirement at the end of 1916.

The next act of the congregation was to raise funds for construction of a synagogue. The economy being very strong, their fundraising was successful.

Elias Healman started out as a clothier at 18 Water Street. He was successful and soon moved his clothing store to the more upscale 223 Carrall Street. He owned a row of four working-class houses on small lots at the southeast corner of Pender Street and Heatley Avenue (facing Heatley, but now 700 East Pender), in the heart of the Strathcona Jewish neighbourhood. Later the Healmans moved to the West End, where his wife was on the executive of the Ladies’ Auxiliary of the Reform temple. In 1910, Zebulon Franks and Henry Sigler, a realtor, negotiated on behalf of the congregation to purchase Healman’s Strathcona property as a synagogue site.166

First Vancouver Synagogue, 1911-18

Sigler chaired the Building Committee. A small synagogue, constructed of wood with traditional round-arched windows, was erected on one of the lots at 510 Heatley. The completed 200-seat building was dedicated on November 19, 1911, when the Jewish population was some 1,300. Twenty-five years after the founding of Vancouver, this was the first Jewish community-owned building, and for the first time attracted city and provincial dignitaries to a Jewish event.

The English-speaking rabbi, J.K. Levin, B.A., a graduate of Jews’ College originally from London, officiated at the dedication ceremony. This is rather surprising at an Orthodox congregation inaugural because Rabbi Levin was the incumbent Rabbi of Shaarey Shomayim, a Liberal congregation in Winnipeg.167

The event was reported in the Canadian Jewish Times, an eastern-based newspaper:
A large and representative gathering of Jewish citizens of Vancouver were present on Sunday afternoon and evening . . . at the dedication exercises of the new synagogue Congregation Sons of Israel . . . . Rabbi Levin . . . thanked the congregation for the honor bestowed upon him in asking him to officiate at the dedication exercise. He complimented the Vancouver Jews upon having established a synagogue in their midst . . . . The new synagogue, while small, was a beginning, he declared, and prophesied that with the united efforts of the now large Jewish population, they should, in the near future, have a large and commodious edifice.

48. B’nai Yehudah (Sons of Israel), 510 Heatley Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. First Vancouver synagogue, 1911-19; [1970]
The synagogue, he added, was the oldest institution known to the civilized world, its history being recorded for over four thousand years . . . . And he warned the congregation of the danger of present day commercialism, a result of the race from poverty to affluence, and to remember that the synagogue was still the house of God . . . . While we are now living in a . . . free country, he continued, where every man is free to worship according to the dictates of his own heart, we should be aware, now that prosperity has come upon us, lest it result in our undoing.

He gloriéd in the splendid relations that now existed between the Jew and the Gentile and that the enmity that formerly existed had ceased.

Mr. Leon Melekov . . . thanked the congregation for the honor of electing him as its first president and said he would do all in his power to merit their confidence. He praised the work of the building committee and especially its chairman, Mr. Seigler [sic. Sigler], while not long a resident here, had devoted all his time and energies for the success of the undertaking. Mr. Melekov then presented Mr. Seigler [sic.] with a beautifully engraved golden key as a token of the work he had accomplished . . . .

The Mayor [Louis D. Taylor] congratulated the congregation on their new synagogue. He said that the Empire was much indebted to the Hebrew race who had produced some of the greatest statesmen, financiers and artists. Vancouver owed much to one of its early mayors, Mr. Oppenheimer, who was a man of great foresight and executive ability.

Mr. H.H. Watson, M.L.A., who represented Premier McBride, praised the sterling qualities of the Hebrew and reviewed the lives of some of the great statesmen it had produced. He congratulated them in their residence in British Columbia, which he thought the most favoured and richest province in the Dominion, and welcomed the Jewish people within its borders because of their thrifty and uplifting characteristics.

Mr. A[braham] J. Bloomfield thanked the speakers for their
presence at the dedication. Refreshments were afterwards served by the ladies of the congregation.  

Melekov was the president of the Standard Trust & Industrial Co. It is interesting to note that the three principals of the East End congregation who participated in this event, Melekov, Sigler and Bloomfield, also a realtor, were all West End men who had achieved their comparative wealth in finance and land sales.

**Henry Sigler, 1909-14**

Born in Romania in 1867, Henry Sigler as a young man of twenty-one crossed the Atlantic to New York in 1888. The next year he found his way to Eastern Canada. In 1892, he came to the North West, where he engaged in general merchandising in Edmonton for fourteen years. In September 1898, Henry returned east to marry Fannie Lehrer in Montreal. They became the parents of two sons, David and Maurice.

Sigler moved to Vancouver with his family in 1909, just in time to partake in Vancouver’s real estate boom of 1909-12. He joined a group of Vancouver businessmen in the Progress Club, devoted to the development of the city and exploitation of the province’s vast timber, mining and fishing resources. In 1911, Sigler organized the Alberta Financial Corporation of which he was elected president. In general community affairs, Sigler was a member of Edmonton Lodge AF & AM, then transferred this membership to Melrose Masonic Lodge in Vancouver.  

In August 1914, Canada joined the British Empire forces in the Great War. British Columbia’s pre-war boom period had crashed. Sigler, along with many other business entrepreneurs, left the province for better economic prospects elsewhere. Although a participant in Vancouver’s Jewish community for only half a dozen years, in his roles in acquiring the Heatley Avenue property, in financing it and as building chairman, he had been a key mover in Vancouver’s first purpose-built synagogue. Henry Sigler’s important role in Vancouver’s Jewish history has been long forgotten; hopefully, this paper will correct the oversight.
Sons of Israel in Receivership, 1914

Synagogue membership fees were set at one dollar per month. By 1914, a severe economic depression set in. The synagogue was built at a cost of some $22,000, and a mortgage of $7,000 remained as a charge against the congregation. Many of the sponsors and congregants had left the city, payments were in arrears, and the mortgage was foreclosed on the property. A committee was formed to raise sufficient money to buy back the mortgage for a negotiated $4,500 and to redecorate the synagogue. This building served as the Orthodox synagogue from 1912 to 1920, when it was relocated to the back of the property and remodelled to become the Hebrew school and hall.170

Rabbi David Eliezer Belasoff, 1908-16

David Eliezer Belasoff, son of Moishe Belasoff, was born in 1853 in a shtetl near Yekaterinoslav (since 1927 Dnepropetrovsk), Ukraine, an industrial city on the Dnieper River midway between Kiev and the Black Sea. The city had a well-organized Jewish community (which in the 1890s numbered 41,000 – 36 percent of the total population) composed of shopkeepers, artisans, workers and dockers, and included some very wealthy members. Several Jewish agricultural colonies were also founded in Yekaterinoslav province.172 David came from a well-to-do family who sent him to be educated in Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania), a preeminent centre for rabbinical studies.

On ordination, Belasoff returned home to serve as a rabbi in the community, which maintained a network of educational, charitable and religious institutions including a small yeshiva. Around 1870, he married a local girl, Nachama Anne Altchular. From the mid-1890s, Belasoff served as a rabbi in Odessa, then the largest Jewish community in the whole of Russia. Six children were born to the family in Yekaterinoslav and Odessa.

Pogroms broke out in the region in 1905. As a result, the Belasoff family immigrated to Canada. The parents and their younger children settled in Winnipeg, where there was a strong Orthodox Jewish community,
until Belasoff’s call to Vancouver came in 1908. The elder children, son Judel Zundel Bellas, and daughter Anne with husband Michel Goorevitch, homesteaded in the Jewish agricultural colony at Lipton, Saskatchewan.¹⁷²

David Belasoff was the incumbent rabbi when B’nai Yehudah, Vancouver’s first synagogue, was built. He supervised the construction of the religious elements: the bimah (altar, still extant in the Jewish Museum and Archives of British Columbia) and aron kodesh (Holy Ark), which were hand-made by the congregants, and the mikvah (ritual bath).

From the outset, Sons of Israel synagogue was too small to hold the full Orthodox congregation for the High Holy Days, when attendance was at a maximum. Therefore the large O’Brien Hall, located at the southeast corner of Hastings and Homer streets, was customarily rented for this occasion.

The Yom Kippur service of September 1, 1912, conducted by Rabbi Belasoff, was reported in the daily newspaper:
There was a large attendance in the O’Brien Hall this morning. The customary service prescribed by the Jewish ritual was gone through, and for the benefit of the younger attendants at the synagogue, the rabbi explained what the Day of Atonement stood for. Atoning for what has been done wrongly was not to be construed as a license to repeat the offence. The heart that approaches Jehovah Shekina in the sense of true contriteness should also be seeking to draw strength so that the sins of the past might be doubly guarded against in the future.

For the benefit of the stranger within the gates the rabbi also made a few remarks. He said that the breadth and catholicity of Judaism are organic. The Jew, he said, does not seek proselytes. He believes with Maimonides [12th century Jewish scholar] that the pious of all nations shall have a share in future bliss. His aspirations are not tribal as many suppose, said the rabbi. He believes in the perfectibility of humanity, and he holds that the time will come when all men will acknowledge the unity of God and the brotherhood of man.
On January 1, 1914, Rabbi Belasoff, in the first marriage held in B’nai Yehudah Synagogue, officiated at the wedding of his younger daughter, Rose, to Mr. John Mallin (Malinsky) of Saskatoon, where the couple was to reside.

Rabbi Belasoff faithfully served the Orthodox synagogue, while Rebbetzin Nachama was active in the Ladies’ Society through 1916. Approaching age sixty-five and after a long rabbinical career in Russia and Canada, it was time for him to retire. The couple returned to Winnipeg for a brief period; however, by 1918, they moved to Saskatoon where their two daughters were now living. David Belasoff died in that city in 1928 at the age of seventy-five and Nachama in 1931, aged seventy-six.

A number of descendants of the Belasoff/Bellas family have continued to live in Metro Vancouver over the past century. These include two noteworthy local Hadassah leaders, sisters Blossom Wine in Vancouver and Esther Lesk in New Westminster. A great-great grandson, Rabbi Matthew Bellas, is Judaic Studies Principal at Vancouver Talmud Torah.

**Schara Tzedeck – Second Synagogue, 1920-47**

The Jewish community was growing in size. With a view to future charitable fundraising and expansion, on June 14, 1917, B’nai Yehudah was incorporated under the British Columbia Benevolent Societies Act in the name of Schara Tzedeck (Gates of Righteousness). (In 1957, the name was changed to Congregation Schara Tzedeck.) Signatories were President David Marks and Treasurer Benjamin Wolfe. The latter was
listed as a second-hand dealer at 56 Water Street.

Around the holiday of Purim (March) 1918, Nathan Mayer Pastinsky of Winnipeg, on a tour of Jewish communities in the western provinces, arrived in Vancouver. Equipped for the cold and snow he had experienced in the prairies, he was wearing a coonskin hat and a heavy muskrat coat. But here in Vancouver, spring flowers were blooming in the little garden in front of the CPR station. Coincidentally, Schara Tzedeck officials were searching for a new rabbi. Protracted negotiations over several months began and Pastinsky finally made the difficult decision to sever his connections with the prairies. Because he did not have official rabbinical accreditation, he was engaged as the chazzan (cantor), shochet (kosher slaughterer) and mohel (ritual circumcisor) of the congregation. An immigrant from the Ukraine in 1913, Pastinsky’s life mission began in ministering to newly arrived immigrants on the Pacific coast.

A humanitarian and a tireless worker, Pastinsky won the deepest respect of the Vancouver community and he soon assumed full rabbinical duties. A gentleman of the old school, with his red flowing beard and long black kapotth (clerical robe), he was instantly recognizable as the “personification of Vancouver Jewry.” To the Jews he was their revered rabbi and confidant; to other ethnic groups he was an advisor and helper, known and beloved as Father Pat. The Pastinsky home at 1160 East Georgia Street, in the heart of Vancouver’s ethnic ghetto, became the open door of the community, particularly to any one in need. Rabbi Pastinsky would remain an icon in Vancouver for thirty years until his death in February 1948.
On Yom Kippur eve in 1919, when Kol Nidre – the most solemn prayer of the year – was chanted, management of O’Brien Hall urged an enraged Pastinsky to hurry the service to accommodate a dance (by others) that would follow. On Yom Kippur the following day, Rabbi Pastinsky delivered an impassioned sermon, which stirred the congregation to action on a new synagogue building large enough to accommodate the entire congregation.175

In order to turn Pastinsky’s dream into reality, a Building (and Fund Raising) Committee was soon struck, chaired by barrister, Max M. Grossman, a West Ender and one of the few professionals in the Jewish community. Other members of the committee were: president of the congregation, David Marks, Charles Goldberg, M. Stochinsky and Nace Swartz.

The Grossman Family, 1914-89

Max Malit Grossman was a first-generation Canadian born in Toronto. His parents, Abraham and Minnie Grossman, were from Russia but had married in Toronto. The family came out to Vancouver in 1892 when Max was three weeks old. Abe acquired The Hub, Vancouver’s first men’s wear store, started in a tent on the waterfront. Catering to loggers and miners, this store was the city’s largest clothing emporium in its day.

Max Grossman was educated in Vancouver schools and then studied law at McGill University. There he met another student, Dorothy Goldstein, whose grandfather had started the first Reform Temple Emanu-El in Montreal. In 1914, the couple was married in a Reform ceremony in Montreal; they then moved to Vancouver. Max had the distinction of studying law under Joseph Martin, K.C., an ex-Premier of British Columbia, and was admitted to the Bar of British Columbia in 1917. He enjoyed a long and distinguished career as a barrister and was the first Jew in Vancouver to be honoured as a King’s Counsel. He involved himself in the business and social affairs of the city including the Canadian Club, the Terminal City Club, the Vancouver Board of Trade, the Automobile Club and a golf club.
From the outset, M.M. Grossman was indispensable in Vancouver Jewish community affairs. He was president of B’nai Brith Samuel Lodge in 1915, 1918, and again in 1924. From 1916 to 1924 he was District Deputy, and in 1924 on the Executive Committee of the District Grand Lodge and chaired the Immigration Committee. Grossman was also an early president of the Hebrew Aid Society. During the First World War, he was on the Speaker’s Committee of all the Victory Loan and War Relief campaigns and chairman of the local Jewish War Relief Committee.

Although he was a Liberal West End Jew himself, Grossman’s greatest contributions to Jewish life came as the chairman and driving force behind the building of the East End Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, and then as the first president of the Vancouver Hebrew School. He was also a key mover in the building of the first Jewish Community Centre and editor of the Centre Bulletin, forerunner of the long-lived Jewish Western Bulletin, now the Jewish Independent.

The Grossman women, wife Dorothy and daughter Janice, had a lifetime commitment to community service. Dorothy remembered her arrival at Vancouver in 1914 as a new bride, where they lived comfortably half a block from beautiful English Bay beach: canoeing at the beach, the legendary lifeguard and swimming coach Joe Fortes, band concerts at the now historic bandstand, the landmark Sylvia Hotel at the Bay, built by her father’s cousin, Abraham Goldstein, and named for his daughter, Sylvia (Ablowitz). Being from a Reform-oriented family, they naturally moved in that small circle of friends who formed Temple Emanu-El and its Ladies’ Auxiliary. In 1924, Dorothy Grossman was founding secretary of the Vancouver Section, National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), participating in such work as teaching night-school English to Russian émigrés, in Girl Guides, in
summer camp for underprivileged children, and in a well baby clinic at Talmud Torah Hall. NCJW women were also very busy during the Second World War with volunteer Red Cross work.\textsuperscript{177}

Janice (Grossman) Pollack grew up in a protected upper middle-class lifestyle in Vancouver’s West End, complete with nannies and Chinese cooks. She attended the University of British Columbia and then earned a teaching certificate at Vancouver Normal School. In contrast to Jan’s upbringing, her first job was teaching the children of Japanese fishermen in a two-room school at Tofino on the remote west coast of Vancouver Island. This was the time of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941), shelling of the local lighthouse at Estevan Point and blackouts. Jan’s job ended because of the war and the internment of the Japanese, including women and children, in the interior of the province. Her next position was as an elementary school teacher in Prince George, where she met her husband, serviceman Harold Pollack.

Jan was involved as a volunteer in Jewish community affairs from her youth. She attended the original National Council of Jewish Women Sunday School and, starting at age sixteen, drove outpatients to the General Hospital clinic. For five years she was a counsellor at the camp for underprivileged children at Crescent Beach and as an adult was president of several NCJW branches.\textsuperscript{178} When the new Reform congregation, Temple Sholom, started in the mid-1960s, she was a charter member of the Sisterhood and acted as a host at services.

In 1974-75, Jan became president of the congregation, the first woman president of a Vancouver synagogue. From 1987 to 1989, she was president of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia at a crucial time when the society established its first permanent office.
at the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre. Grossman-Pollack descendents still live in Vancouver but are not connected to the Jewish community, although Jan’s daughter Jill curated an exhibition for the Jewish Historical Society of B.C. in 2000.

**Building of Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, 1920-21**

The Building Committee swung into action. The Laying of the Cornerstone ceremony for the Schara Tzedeck Synagogue took place in June 1920. According to one eyewitness account recalled fifty years later:

Max Grossman by his forceful oratory mesmerized the Jewish Community into putting up enough money to make the envisioned synagogue a reality by the following High Holidays, only 4 months away . . . . Eight cornerstones were sold that day on which were to appear inscriptions honouring the memory of deceased parents and grandparents of the buyers. Several hundred bricks in the foundation were also sold from a numbered plan as commemorative objects.

Unfortunately none of these artifacts have survived to the present day.

On July 17, 1920, Corporation of the City of Vancouver building permits were issued to Schara Tzedeck and Gardiner & Mercer, Architects for a $25,000 synagogue, and to Snider Bros. & Son for removing three houses and moving the old synagogue. The new building would face 700 East Pender Street (although the building is still commonly known as the “Heatley Street” synagogue), while the old structure would be attached to it at the lane side to become the Hebrew school and hall.

Dedication of the new synagogue took place on Sunday, September 6, 1920 with an “impressive ceremony,” which was covered by the three daily newspapers of the day:

Before . . . the largest gathering of Jewish people ever held in the city, a procession was formed on Heatley avenue [led by Gabbai
Ezedor Morris], which moved to the synagogue bearing the Scrolls of Law under a canopy and lighted candles. As the door of the building was reached a key of solid gold was inserted in the lock and the portal opened with all due ceremony, and as the procession moved into the building the lights were turned on for the first time.\(^{181}\)

Rabbi Pastinsky, who conducted the ceremony, then kindled the *ner tamid* (eternal light) over the altar.

The reports also advised that the synagogue “will seat 800 persons [later reports more accurately said 600], and will cost $40,000.” The building was still unfinished, but was used for the Rosh Hashanah services on September 12-13, during which the congregants pledged the sum of $15,000. The final utility connections for the synagogue and school were made in May/June 1921. On July 6, the Very Rev. Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, on an official visit to the province, addressed a meeting at the synagogue and examined the
children of the school.\textsuperscript{182} By the time of the High Holy Days of 1921, the building was completed. The Building Committee issued its final report on November 6, 1921. A sum of $45,637.27 had been raised.\textsuperscript{183} The total cost of the building, including the fittings and fixtures, was in the order of $60,000 to $65,000, a huge expense for Vancouver’s Jewish population of some 1,550.\textsuperscript{184}

Project architects were the Vancouver firm of Gardiner & Mercer, British-trained and credited with a long and substantial career in designing institutional and private buildings in the province. The building was solidly constructed of concrete and brick with steel roof trusses. Apropos for a synagogue, the Romanesque-Revival building had round-arched doors and windows, wall buttresses and Spanish tile gables giving it a Mediterranean flavour common to early Canadian synagogue architecture. This firm in 1928 would also design the Jewish Community Centre at Oak Street and 11th Avenue, this time in the Tudor Gothic-Revival style.\textsuperscript{185}

For the interior, the mill of J. Hanbury & Co. of Vancouver was
commissioned to build the beautiful quarter-cut oak aron kodesh, where the Torahs were stored, and the bimah (altar) on which they were read. When a new Schara Tzedeck on Oak Street was built in 1948, these artifacts were moved and are now the focal point of the synagogue. The newspaper also reported that “a feature of the interior is an elaborate lighting fixture which hangs from the dome of the ceiling and . . . will cost $1200.” Peddlers’ horses and wagons lined the back lane of the synagogue during morning and evening services.

From 1918 to 1946, three Orthodox rabbis, all distinguished men in their own right, served Schara Tzedeck.

Rabbi Nathan Mayer Pastinsky, 1918-46

Rabbi Pastinsky was born in 1886 in the Ukraine, where he spent the first twenty-five years of his life. There he suffered the bitterness and uncertainty of life in a turbulent and pogrom-wrecked country. From a strict Orthodox Jewish family, Pastinsky studied under well-known European rabbis, but did not achieve formal rabbinic ordination. In 1912, Pastinsky immigrated to Winnipeg with his wife, Freida (Watcovitch), a person equally dedicated to humanitarian service. There, in the ethnic ghetto of North End Winnipeg, a baker’s dozen of small congregations were rising composed of lantzman (people from the same old-country towns or districts). Usually the clergy, of varying qualifications, also served as cantor and shochet. The congregation that Pastinsky led, founded in 1913, was Chevra Mishnayos on Stella Avenue. Self-contained and independent, these congregations and
their rabbis filled the immediate religious needs of their own generation, but most of them were unable to bridge the religious, language and cultural gap between themselves and their Canadian-schooled children and hence died out within a second generation.188

When Pastinsky arrived in Vancouver in the spring of 1918 on what was really a speculative mission, he was shrewd enough to realize the future potential of Canada’s main Pacific port city. The First World War was ending and he knew that there would be a large influx of post-war refugees. The Jewish community had been devastated by the war, had been divisive about its religious practice and had lost both its Orthodox and Reform rabbis. Pastinsky knew the Vancouver Jewish community was ripe for rehabilitation and growth. With his devotion, dedication, drive and charisma, he was the right man at the right time to unite the community and give it a mission. In this he would prove to be admirably successful.

For a number of years Pastinsky was the only congregational rabbi in town. His rabbinical duties were time-consuming, beginning at 6:00 AM to inspect the koshering of meat at the slaughterhouse and ending well after evening services at the synagogue. Far beyond his religious duties, he extended his functions to educational, philanthropic, mutual aid, cultural and fraternal organizations, and to Zionism; in fact to every worthwhile cause in the Jewish community.

Pastinsky was heavily involved in the immigration problems of the time: people escaping White Russia to a port where they could sail to Vancouver; those who were crossing the Atlantic and arriving by trans-Canada train. He was a well-known greeter at the port, the train stations and the immigration hall. He provided advice and solace at the hospitals and prisons. He was never too busy or too tired to aid those who needed that help; the judiciary and the police respected him. He served as Yiddish interpreter in the courts and at the police station, and even acted as a pinch hitter in the Slavic languages when no other translator could be found. To make his peripatetic rounds, the community finally gave him an old Ford “tin-lizzie” car. An erratic driver, the police turned a blind eye to his automobile misadventures.189
On the twentieth anniversary of his incumbency, in December 1939, in a ceremony then unique in the Jewish history of the city, the community paid tribute to Rabbi Pastinsky. The Lodge Hall of the Jewish Community Centre was filled to capacity by all sectors of the community – businessmen, lawyers, doctors, spiritual heads, and laymen – to pay honour to the outstanding man in their midst.\(^{190}\) He had instigated building the first major synagogue in the city, developed the Hebrew school and had nurtured Jewish life, with its many traditions. He had ministered to the sick, aided the poor, brought help to the immigrants and had fought for those in trouble.

But time and his strenuous life had taken its toll. In March 1939, he had been hospitalized;\(^ {191}\) in September, on his physician’s orders, he had been unable to deliver his lengthy annual New Year’s message to the press.\(^{192}\) Nevertheless, his absence was short-lived. The Second World War broke out and he was compelled by his conscience to return to the service of his congregation. His retirement was slated for January 1946, but he carried on because no successor could be found; he collapsed nine months later.\(^ {193}\) Pastinsky died at his home on February 17, 1948, just sixty-one years old.

Rabbi Pastinsky was buried, as described in the press:

> On a day surely as perfect as man could wish to enjoy, clear sunlight flashing, frosty with the city in fresh bold relief with the snow-capped mountains and snow-flecked slopes hedging
in the deep-blue of the inlet, seemingly just at our feet [from the] recently dedicated [New] Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, its spotless shining expanse filled with mourners, and with automobiles lining both sides of the streets for blocks in every direction.\footnote{194}

While Pastinsky was a hands-on, pragmatic congregational rabbi ideally suited for a first-generation immigrant community, there were specific roles that he was unable to adequately fulfill. Some learned men in the community wanted a leader more rigorously trained in Judaic scholarship and Law from a renowned Talmudic academy in Europe, Great Britain or the United States. As well, the congregation realized that an old-country Yiddish-speaking rabbi would have a limited appeal to the second-generation Canadian-schooled and English-speaking youth who were quickly rising in the community. Consequently, two attempts were made to bring in younger rabbis with modern scholarly training to fill such voids and to assist Pastinsky.

Rabbi Solomon P. Wohlgelernter, October 1926-August 1930

Solomon Wohlgelernter was born of a rabbinic family in the early 1900s in Konskawola, a small town in Lublin province of eastern Poland. He studied under the Ostrover Goan (a renowned Talmudic scholar) in the academy at Radzyn, a centre of Hasidic Judaism, and was granted smicha (rabbinic ordination) by the Lubliner Rebbe (Rabbi) Meier Shapiro. At the beginning of the 1920s, with revolution sweeping the region, the Wohlgelernter family escaped across the border. Like many other Polish Jews, they settled in Toronto, Ont.

When he arrived in Toronto in his early twenties, the Yiddish-speaking Solomon did not know a word of English. Even so, he managed to land a job as a correspondent for a Yiddish newspaper. One of his early assignments was to cover the Zionist Organization of Canada’s annual convention, held in January 1921 in Montreal. At this meeting Wohlgelernter met the distinguished and dynamic Israel Isaac Kahanovitch of Winnipeg, known as the Chief (Orthodox) Rabbi of Western Canada. Rabbi Kahanovitch, also a native of Poland, took a
liking to this young, handsome Talmudic scholar. In fleeing across the Polish border, Wohlgelernter had lost his ordination papers. So the Chief Rabbi invited him to Winnipeg to become a student-assistant and ultimately earn Canadian ordination. Kahanovitch also had another motivation; he wanted to make a shidduch (marriage match) for his eldest daughter Fannie.

As a result, Solomon Wohlgelernter came to Winnipeg as an understudy to Kahanovitch and to a lengthy, more than three-year engagement to Fannie Kahanovitch. During this period, under the aegis of the Chief Rabbi, he became completely conversant with Torah, Talmud and Jewish Law, as well as the practicalities of relating to people and leading a congregation. Perhaps as important, spending much time under the tutelage of Fannie’s younger sister Sophie, a teacher by profession, Wohlgelernter gained a mastery in speaking and writing the English language that stood him in good stead in his future rabbinical career.

Solomon and Fannie married in June 1925. That year his father-in-law gave him smicha. Wohlgelernter then took further studies in New York, where he obtained a universally accepted Orthodox ordination. Coincidentally, his original Polish Rebbe had come to New York and issued him a duplicate certificate to the one he had lost. Thus, for the remainder of his rabbinical career, Wohlgelernter enjoyed the rare privilege of displaying three smicha certificates. Daughter and wife of rabbis, Rebbetzin Fannie also had a thorough grounding in Judaism.

Schara Tzedeck of Vancouver was now looking for an assistant to Rabbi Pastinsky, who had been a colleague with Kahanovitch in Winnipeg. As a result, in the fall of 1926 Schara Tzedeck engaged Wohlgelernter, by now regarded as one of the foremost young leaders in the Orthodox movement in Canada. Julius B. Jaffe, congregation president at the time, later remarked that Wohlgelernter “was one of the most distinguished Hebraic scholars we have ever had. The new rabbi took his ministerial duties with a will and his preaching was to leave a lasting impression upon his flock.”

As was his mandate, Wohlgelernter took a particular interest in the
An exponent of traditional Judaism, he was able to demonstrate that it is possible to lead a true Jewish life and yet be a modern Canadian. When the first weekly Jewish newspaper in Vancouver was instituted on February 21, 1930, Wohlgelernter became a contributing editor and his very first editorial had the provocative title, “An Organized Community or a Community of Organizations?” His influence in the ministerial association had much value in building up a spirit of good will between Jew and gentile. On his departure, the Vancouver Sun editorialized: “Rabbi Wohlgelernter’s labors have been turned towards complete and friendly co-operation with other members of the community.”

Nevertheless, after four years of service, the Vancouver Jewish community was too small to satisfy an ambitious young rabbi whose career was ascendant. As he put it, “as a Jewish religious leader, I had to answer the call which came to me from a larger Jewish Centre where the
possibilities to render spiritual service are greater." As well, he would be advancing to senior rabbi.

Vancouver’s loss was Seattle’s gain when on September 1, 1930 Wohlgelernter moved on to become rabbi of Bikur Cholim Congregation. Inaugurated in October 1898, this was Seattle’s oldest Orthodox congregation and anchor of the Yesler Way-Cherry Street Jewish neighbourhood. Rabbi Wohlgelernter enjoyed a substantive career, remaining with Bikur Cholim for seventeen years until November 15, 1947. He helped to establish Seattle’s first Jewish day school and its first yeshiva program.

Rabbi Wohlgelernter became one of the outstanding leaders of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada. At the request of the European Committees of the Vaad Hatzalah (rescue committee) in Switzerland, England, Belgium and France, at the end of the war Rabbi Wohlgelernter was given a six months’ leave of absence by Bikur Cholim, among several highly qualified delegates, to control and supervise relief and rehabilitation work in Europe.

Rabbi Wohlgelernter continued to keep close ties with the Vancouver
community. On June 22, 1947 at the cornerstone laying of the new Schara Tzedeck Synagogue on Oak Street, he was the keynote guest speaker before five hundred enthusiastic persons. In an inspiring address, the rabbi reported on his visit overseas where he had personally viewed the terrible destruction wrought on European Jewry. Wohlgelernter strongly urged the Vancouver community “to complete this Synagogue as a memorial to the Jewish martyrs and as a well-spring for the upbuilding of traditional and Orthodox Judaism in Canada and America.” Solomon and Fannie Wohlgelernter and sister Sophie spent the latter period of their lives residing in Israel.

Rabbi Judah Leib Zlotnik, September 1934-August 1938

Rabbi, scholar, statesman, administrator, Zlotnik was the most worldly-minded leader ever to occupy the pulpit of a Vancouver synagogue. However like Rabbi Wohlgelernter before him, Vancouver would retain his services for only four years.

Judah L. Zlotnik was born on April 15, 1888 in Plock, a Jewish centre in Poland. His father died when he was young and Judah was brought up in the home of his two brothers, both rabbis. In 1910, smicha (ordination) was conferred upon him at the renowned Volozhin Yeshiva. He first served as a congregational rabbi and soon became a member of the Central Committee of the Polish Zionist Organization. The Zionist movement was largely secular, yet the national aspiration and the religious impulse were inextricably intertwined. In 1917, Zlotnik presided over the first conference of Polish Mizrachi, representing 100,000 Orthodox Zionists. He then resigned his pulpit and went to Warsaw where as general secretary of the organization he created Mizrachi schools throughout Poland and a yeshiva in Warsaw.
In July 1920, Zlotnik participated in the post-war World Zionist Conference held in London, England, then was invited by Mizrachi to come to America. Soon, Zlotnik filled the position of executive secretary of the Zionist Organization of Canada. He then moved on to become director of Montreal’s Jewish educational institutions. As well, Rabbi Zlotnik was becoming well-known in the Jewish world (under the pseudonym Y. Elzet) through his essays and treatises on Jewish scholarship, his poetry in Hebrew and Yiddish, and as a contributor to the best Hebrew, Yiddish and English press on this continent.

After so many years in key administrative roles in national and international organizations, Rabbi Zlotnik’s return to the pulpit in September 1934 as rabbi of the relatively small Schara Tzedeck congregation in remote Vancouver remains something of an enigma. As he explained it:

I feel quite a thrill at the thought that after 14 years . . . I have been away from the Rabbinate, I am again to occupy officially a pulpit. I want to believe that these years which I have given to national work and to travelling, have not been wasted and that the experience I have gained, will prove useful in my future work. Deciding as I did, to go back to the work for which I was trained and to which I dedicated my early life, I think I could not wish for a better place than Vancouver, so beautifully situated and where I have such a number of good and true friends.

The engagement of Rabbi Zlotnik, described in the press as “leader of Congregation Schara Tzedeck,” was a coup for the Vancouver community. The primacy of the two Schara Tzedeck rabbis was skirted over; officials of the congregation denied that Rabbi Zlotnik would act as assistant to Rev. Pastinsky. The parochial Pastinsky was senior in age and tenure and beloved by the immigrant generation as their rabbi. Yet Zlotnik was senior in rabbinical rank and in the forefront of modern world Jewish education and Zionism. A Jewish education was a prime concern for the survival of Judaism in the diaspora.

For Zlotnik, Vancouver offered a retreat from the rigorous
administrative work that he had been performing. He seemed to be a great fit since the majority of Vancouver Jews had derived from Russia and Russian Poland, the wellspring of both Orthodoxy and Zionism. While most Vancouver Jews did not seek a Jewish homeland for themselves or their children, they supported the movement culturally, spiritually and monetarily as a haven for the displaced Jews of Europe, Africa and Asia.

Zlotnik put the following riders on his commitment: “I assume that my communal work in Vancouver will not claim my whole time and that I will have also some leisure hours left for my studies and literary work, and I trust that you will pardon my conceit if I wish to persuade myself that I will thus have an opportunity to serve Israel at large.” Indeed both of these commitments were realized. In the summer of 1935, he was given five months’ leave by his congregation to tour South American and European countries on behalf of the Jewish National Fund and as a delegate to the Nineteenth Zionist Congress in Lucerne, Switzerland. During his four years’ tenure in Vancouver, the learned rabbi authored two books in Hebrew, published in Palestine.

Rabbi Zlotnik was a fine speaker: profound, thoughtful, stimulating and steeped in Jewish lore. He gave many lectures to the community at large. His articles appeared frequently in the local Jewish Western Bulletin newspaper. An experienced pedagogue and a powerful educative force in the community, he was deeply interested in youth and was a vital factor in the formation of the Jewish Youth Federation, out of which sprang many future community leaders.

Despite these accomplishments, near the end of his four year stay in Vancouver, Rabbi Zlotnik encountered criticism and opposition. For example, a powerful group in the synagogue attacked him for not being sufficiently Orthodox. The rabbi was a strong man with decided views on Jewish subjects arrived at after deep study and research. He was willing to stand up to his views and, if necessary, suffer the consequences. His supporters offered to set up a break-away congregation, named Shaar Hashomayim (Gate of Heaven), with Zlotnik as spiritual leader.
Nevertheless, recognizing the futility of the situation in Vancouver, Rabbi Zlotnik instead accepted the post as Education Director of all the Jewish communities in the Union of South Africa. In August 1938, he was tendered a tribute dinner attended by all sectors of the Vancouver Jewish community. Rabbi S.P. Wohlgelernter of Seattle was the principal guest speaker. “Rabbi Zlotnik,” he said, “in accepting so important a position in the Union of South Africa would be furthering the cause of Judaism.” His name, he ventured, “would go down in history as having made a distinct contribution to Jewish life.” Zlotnik would remain in this job, with great tribute, for more than a decade. After the Jewish State was formed in 1948, Zlotnik spent his remaining years in Israel where he continued his studies and writing.

What of Vancouver? Rabbi Pastinsky was unable to attend the Zlotnik tribute dinner because of ill health, which he would continue to suffer over the next decade. Zlotnik, the heir-apparent, had now departed, as had Wohlgelernter before him. This caused a decade-long void in the Vancouver Orthodox Jewish community, particularly for the younger generation. No doubt, this situation also opened the door for the rapid growth of the new Conservative Congregation, Beth Israel, which was led in this period by a dynamic Canadian-born rabbi, Samuel Cass.

Lay Leaders

Congregation Schara Tzedeck, in its long history, can be proud of the many distinguished lay leaders who have served as president. Only a few of these men can be included within the scope of this paper. However, they are recounted in a number of commemorative booklets published by the congregation over the years. The two presidents who served during the building and initiation of full services at the synagogue and school are covered below.
David Marks's term as president of Schara Tzedeck in the period from 1917 to 1921, marked the efflorescence of the congregation that encompassed legal incorporation, the engagement of Rabbi Nathan Pastinsky and the building of the Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, completed in the fall of 1921.

David Marks is first listed in the Vancouver City Directory of 1913 as manager of the Canadian Pacific Junk Company and he remained in this occupation until 1922. The business was located on Alexander Street alongside the CPR mainline tracks in present-day Gastown. The Marks home was on Lakewood Drive in the working-class East End and within easy streetcar distance of the office. The business apparently prospered so that by 1918 the Marks family relocated their home to the West End.217

David Marks is better remembered as the father of Mary Livingstone Benny (nee Sadie Marks). The older Marks daughter, Babe, was a starstruck adolescent who hung around the local Orpheum vaudeville theatre to meet the stars.218 The Marks parents, Esther and David, opened their home as a home away from home to these performers, many of whom were Jewish. In 1922, at a Passover Seder at the Marks home, Zeppo Marx showed up in company with his roommate Jack Benny. The Marx brothers headed the Orpheum bill; Benny was an obscure performer who played the violin. The Marks
girls were teenagers and Benny, who was still a bachelor at age twenty-nine, was disinterested in them at that time.

The Marks family moved to California in 1926 after Sadie graduated from King George High School. Jack Benny was playing the Orpheum circuit in Los Angeles and Babe dragged Sadie along to a performance. A whirlwind romance followed and Sadie and Jack were married in his hometown Waukegan, Illinois. Coincidentally Rabbi Farber, who had served the Vancouver Temple Emanu-El congregation, performed the ceremony. Sadie joined Benny’s comedy act as his smart-alec girlfriend, Mary Livingstone.

On April 19, 1944, Jack and Mary Benny returned to Vancouver to kick off the Sixth Victory Loan drive before thousands of fans, helping to raise millions of dollars for the Canadian war effort. For Mary, it was a homecoming to the town of her youth. For the couple, it was a nostalgic trip back to the place where they had first met twenty-two years before. They had left as unknowns – he as a struggling vaudeville actor; she as the shy little Miss Sadie Marks. They returned as stars of vaudeville, motion pictures, and the continent’s number one radio show, their American dream fulfilled.

**Kostman Family, 1909-59**

Isidore L. Kostman succeeded David Marks as president of Schara Tzedeck from 1921 to 1925. He was the first truly substantial businessman to serve the Vancouver Jewish community unstintingly over a period of sixty years. During his term of office, Kostman’s business acumen put the congregation on a financially secure basis. At the time his successor, lawyer Arthur H. Fleishman, took office in 1925-26, the congregation had fully paid up the synagogue mortgage. Philanthropically,
Kostman set the tone for others in the Jewish community to follow in future years. He believed that those who were financially successful in the opportunity offered by Vancouver should be prepared to give back some measure of their wealth and service to the public welfare of the community.

From their native Australia, the thirteen-member Kostman family first settled in St. Louis, Missouri. Nevertheless, I.L. Kostman’s first business venture was in San Francisco, where his store was destroyed in the great earthquake and fire of 1906 and where he barely escaped with his life. Seeking a new opportunity to invest, the Kostman family came to Vancouver in the boom year 1909. Here he established the Famous Cloak and Suit Company at Hastings and Granville Street,
which he operated for fifty years until it closed its doors in 1959. He then became associated with his son, Harry, in their national chain of women's wear, the Sally Shops.

The Kostman family home on Davie Street in the West End, where they lived from 1914 to 1934, became the open house for every worthy cause. In these years he and wife Lena expended great effort towards the Jewish Immigrant Aid Society, assisting needy immigrants with hot meals that Lena prepared herself and clothing taken from his store. Their affiliations encompassed numerous Jewish philanthropies and organizations including the Zionist Organization of B.C., B’nai Brith, the Montefiore Club, the Community Chest, and Congregation Beth Israel when it was founded. Isidore Kostman died in Vancouver in 1959 at the age of eighty-eight. His wife Lena had predeceased him.

The Role of Orthodox Women in the Synagogue, 1907-68

From the beginning, pioneer women were integrated into traditional Jewish community life, but their role differed from the men and was often harder. The old Orthodox rule was not to hold women responsible for religious duties. In the synagogue, they didn’t partake in the daily minyan, the quorum needed for a service. The women attended services only during the holidays and special events, but were segregated from the men into upper galleries and took no roles in conducting the services. No women served on synagogue boards until after the Second World War. Girls, unlike boys with their Bar Mitzvah, were not offered Confirmation.

The Orthodox man believed that a woman could best serve the interests of the congregation by devoting herself to her home and family. In the home, women were busy raising large families with minimal domestic assistance (unless there were older daughters to help), preparing kosher meals and elaborate festival banquets with special foods, such as for the Passover Seder. In the home women had several domestic religious obligations including observance of kashrut (kosher rules), kindling the Sabbath and Festival candles and responsibility for the early education of the children in Jewish tradition. As an example of
her traditional role, when Rebbetzin Freida Pastinsky died on February 18, 1949, she was eulogized as:

. . . extremely charitable and helped establish the Pastinsky household as a haven for the weary, destitute and the immigrant. . . . During the war she was known as ‘mother’ to hundreds of refugees . . . who cooked and gladly ministered to the continuous flow of guests at her home.\(^{224}\)

From the very beginning of the Orthodox congregation in 1907, a women’s group formed known as the Ladies’ Aid Society. By the mid-1920s it was called the Schara Tzedeck Ladies’ Auxiliary. In contemporary times it has been renamed the Sisterhood. As connoted by the name “auxiliary,” initially it played only a supporting role to the main affairs of the synagogue. However, in time the ladies’ group became independent, planning its own social activities and fund-raising events. In 1968, the president of the Sisterhood became an official member of the congregation Executive Board, with full voting rights.

The Sisterhood has served the congregation in many important ways. It has held and sponsored many festivals, social and cultural events and supported the religious school. The women operated the gift shop and managed the kosher dairy and meat kitchens and the auditoriums. The Sisterhood has also been responsible for and has funded the remodeling and refurbishing of these facilities.\(^{225}\)

Chief Rabbi of the British Empire Visits Victoria and Vancouver, July 1921

On October 8, 1920, the Very Reverend Dr. Joseph H. Hertz, Chief Rabbi of the United Congregation of the British Empire, embarked from London, England on a nine-month 50,000 mile round-the-world pastoral tour of the outlying Dominions including South Africa, India, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.\(^{226}\) The United Synagogue, founded in Great Britain in the nineteenth century, was the Orthodox Jewish establishment’s closest equivalent to the Church of England model. It supported Jews’ College, a seminary for the training of Orthodox
rabbis, and supplied religious instruction for Jewish students in state schools. Recognized by an Act of Parliament, the United Synagogue had the authority to elect the Chief Rabbi, whose mandate extended throughout the Dominions. In Canada his role was largely spiritual and exemplary.227

Rabbi Hertz’s trip was ostensibly for the benefit of the Jewish War Memorial Fund to provide religious education for Jewish ministers and teachers in English-speaking countries. Primarily, the tour acted as a goodwill mission amongst the British Commonwealth of Nations who had served Britain so faithfully with the sacrifice of a high loss of life during a long dreadful war. There were reportedly 450,000 Jewish men, women and children in the Empire. War office records showed that 50,000 had fought in various theatres of the Great War under the British flag. Five Victoria Crosses were awarded to Jews, 11,000 won honours in battle, while thousands were killed and wounded. (For Canada, with a Jewish population in 1911 of 74,800, 4,000 Jews served and 130 died.)

In Victoria and Vancouver, where the majority of the population were of British descent, the visit of a Chief Rabbi of the British Empire was an event of significance to government officials, patriotic institutions, the public, and of course their small Jewish communities. In turn, they went all out to welcome and celebrate Dr. Hertz’s visit and the events elicited front-page headlines in the daily press.

Dr. Hertz disembarked in
Victoria from the S.S. *Niagara*, arriving from New Zealand on the morning of Monday, July 4, 1921. Lieutenant-Governor Walter S. Nichol, Premier John Oliver and Mayor John Porter as well as leading members of the Jewish community met him at the dock. They also participated in the following well-attended events: an address to the Canadian Club luncheon at the Empress Hotel; preaching at an evening public service at Temple Emanu-El Synagogue; and a reception at the Knights of Pythias Hall where the King was toasted and a music program was arranged by the Jewish community. Next morning the Chief Rabbi attended to the children at the synagogue school, then was taken on a tour of Victoria and environs. In the evening, a public reception was held at the Empress Hotel at which he lectured on “The Bible as a Book.” He left on the midnight boat for Vancouver.

Certain racial undertones, common to the times, were expressed at the Canadian Club luncheon. The Victoria *Daily Times* reporter described Dr. Hertz as a “striking figure – a short man with large silky black beard and typically Jewish features . . . . He spoke with the eloquence of the trained orator and the fluency and gesture characteristic to his race.” Introducing the speaker, Club President B.C. Nicholas referred to Dr. Hertz as “an eminent author, a noted scholar and a world figure.” He pointed out that distinguished members of the rabbi’s faith now represented the British government in Palestine and India adding, “The Jewish race exercises a tremendous influence upon the welfare of the Empire – is pre-eminent in music, art, finance, science, and in this connection I might point out that Dr. Einstein, a Jew, recently evolved a theory which has shaken the scientific world.”

Dr. Hertz responded in what the press described as an inspiring address:

I fully realize that the honor you have shown me is not tendered to me alone but to the position I hold. This honor is shown to the spokesman of Jewry – the mother of religions. The message I bring to scattered congregations throughout the Empire is the vital necessity of religious education. If it should be necessary to emphasize this in the Old Country it is still more necessary
in virile democracies where education is free and compulsory. Religious education is the rock on which alone character is built. This is the first and foremost of the messages I bring.

He went on to extol the “British Commonwealth of nations [as] the most perfect political combination the world had seen because it allowed its many different peoples to live in their own way – it did not demand of its peoples that they should think alike, live alike and speak alike.” “The Empire was based not only on individual freedom but national freedom,” he said. “Intense loyalty to the countries in which they live is an ‘ethnic passion,’ a fixed part of the character of all Jews,” he declared. “This loyalty had been reflected by the response of Jews all over the world to the call to arms at the commencement of the Great War and subsequently by the heroic deeds of Jewish soldiers at the front.”

Premier Hon. John Oliver in thanking the speaker, welcomed him on behalf of the Club and of the people of British Columbia:

> Dr. Hertz has refreshed our memory on some of the many things we owe the Jewish people and the Jewish religion. He has uttered, too, a profound truth in stating that all true liberty is based on religious education.²³⁰

Three leaders of Vancouver’s Jewish community, E.R. Sugarman, A.C. Cohen and David Marks, went over to the Victoria reception and accompanied the Chief Rabbi back to Vancouver.²³¹ Wednesday, July 6 was a full-day program largely arranged by the Jewish citizens of Vancouver: a tour of the city; an afternoon civic reception at the Hotel Vancouver; and examination of the children of the Talmud Torah school. He later preached at an evening service at the newly-built Schara Tzedeck Synagogue.²³²

To his Jewish audience, Dr. Hertz stated the purpose of his mission as uniting the Jews within the Empire more closely. He also urged greater unity of the Jews throughout the world, claiming that as a united force they would be of greater service to themselves as a race and a greater
force in the world. He had been involved in negotiations that led to the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 which stated: “His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people . . .” Indeed, when the State of Israel was achieved in 1948, it went some distance in uniting the world’s Jewish peoples.233

On July 7, the Chief Rabbi addressed an overflow luncheon at the Vancouver Canadian Club where he repeated the messages given in Victoria.234 However, when pressed by gentile reporters to give his views on the Balfour Declaration and the Zionist movement, this was a political issue on which he refused to make any comment, referring them only to official statements made on the subject.235 Then Dr. Hertz was on his way to visit other major cities across Canada before embarking on a trans-Atlantic steamship home to England.

**Jewish Education in British Columbia – The Early Years**

In the insular Jewish village and small-town communities (shtetlach) of Europe, boys usually received their education in parochial schools: cheder, the primary school; Talmud Torah, the secondary school; and for a talented few, the yeshiva, a religious seminary, was the educational capstone. In Russia, only a comparatively few privileged Jews were permitted to live in major cities and attend secular schools and universities.

In North America where there was separation of church and state, secular schooling taught in the English language was available to all races and religions and was usually compulsory. Immigrant parents, for the most part, welcomed this entrée into the mainstream of social and economic advancement for their children. Nevertheless, a major concern of Jewish parents was to pass on their religion, language, culture and traditions to their children, the children being the future of Judaism in North America. Rabbis or cantors provided the religious training for Bar Mitzvah boys and in Reform Temples Bat Mitzvah for girls.

The Jewish “School Question” first arose in Victoria, B.C., as reported
in a London, England Jewish newspaper in February 1862:

   Let us cast a glance, in the extreme west, at a Jewish settlement, quite of recent date, which is far distant from all others. We allude to the small congregation at Victoria, British Columbia. The discoveries in Vancouver’s Island have brought to notice these remote possessions of the British Crown and, no doubt, drawn to the capital a number of co-religionists who have formed themselves into a congregation. Little beyond this fact is known of them. All that has transpired quite recently is that its members have in a body withdrawn their children from public school in consequence of the attempt made by the teaching staff - members of the Church of England - to seduce them from the religion of their fathers.\textsuperscript{236}

This situation was alleviated in the fall of 1863, when Temple Emanu-El was consecrated and a congregational rabbi, who also taught a Sabbath Hebrew school, was engaged.

In Vancouver’s early years, while there was limited secular schooling available, there was virtually no Jewish education. In 1873, five-year-old Edward Gold was the first Jewish child to arrive at Granville, incorporated in 1886 as Vancouver. Eddie’s secular education was received at the Hastings Mill School (Granville School), Vancouver’s first public school opened in February 1872.\textsuperscript{237} He grew up at a time when there was no organized Jewish life in Vancouver; his Judaism was learned from his Polish/Prussian parents. Nevertheless, he was active on the executive of the Reform congregation when it was founded in 1894.

Flora Oppenheimer, the mayor’s daughter, in the 1880s attended Schenley House School run by Miss Upton, a niece of the mayor of New Westminster. This was the first of the elite private British-style “dame schools” in Vancouver. Flora’s classmates were Jessie and Mary Gordon, two of three sisters who would found and run the now century-old Crofton House School. While nominally non-denominational, these schools honoured Anglican traditions.\textsuperscript{238} Flora later recalled the occasions when her parents made her attend Rosh Hashanah services at the local synagogue: “I know it annoyed me terribly, for I had to stay
[away] from school, and therefore could not get a diploma for ‘punctuality and regularity,’ for I had to miss those two days in every year.”

The first extant archival certificate of a Bar Mitzvah in Vancouver is that of Meyer Grossman, confirmed at Temple Emanu-El on Shavuot on the sixth day of Sivan 5663 (May 1903) by Rudolph Farber, Ph.D., Minister of the Congregation. The first known Confirmation service for a girl was that of Gertrude Weinrobe at Temple Emanu-El on Shavuot in 1911. Born May 12, 1893 on Princess Street in Strathcona, she was one of the first Jewish girls born in Vancouver. Her childhood was spent in the coal mining towns of Cumberland, Ladysmith and
Wellington on Vancouver Island, where her father had stores. Three years later, on Shavuot 1914, Dr. B.H. Rosengard of Temple Emanu-El confirmed three young ladies; among these was Gertrude’s sister, Violet, born in 1898 in Wellington.  

The initial solution to the problem of providing Judaic studies was to engage a private *melamed* (lay teacher) or to organize late afternoon (after secular school) classes. Shortly after completion of the Orthodox B’nai Yehudah Synagogue in the fall of 1911, thought was given to the problem of educating the young. Jacob Fleishman and Ezedor Morris played a role in setting up a Hebrew school. Classes were held in one of the houses next to the synagogue when a teacher was engaged and some twenty children registered. The earliest teachers (ca. 1913-14) remembered by Norman Brown, a pioneer pupil of the school, were two of the Rosengard sisters. They were the daughters of Rabbi Rosengard of Temple Emanu-El. Educated in the United States, they would have been among the few young ladies in the Vancouver community qualified to teach Judaic subjects.  

69. Award for Progress and Efficiency, presented to Violet Weinrobe by Rabbi B. H. Rosengard, Temple Emanu-El; Vancouver, B.C.; May 31, 1914
Vancouver at the end of 1917.) The school then apparently moved to a neighbourhood store, where the teacher was Jacob Narod.

**Jacob Narod Family, 1910 to Today**

In 1910, Jacob H. Narod arrived in Vancouver. He had studied at a yeshiva in Vilna, Lithuania and later trained as a chiropodist in Chicago. He served the Vancouver Jewish community as a lay reader-cantor at Schara Tzedeck and Beth Israel congregations, and at Victoria's Temple Emanu-El for eight years.\(^{243}\)

Dr. Narod had a long career, continuing in his professional practice until nearly ninety years of age. His four sons had substantive careers. Alvin and Milton were in the construction business. Alvin was the engineer for Expo 86; Narod Mews, a short street in the locality is named after him. The other sons were Leonard, a consulting engineer, and Philip, a physician practicing in White Rock. Alvin was the founding president of the new Jewish Community Centre from 1958 to 1962.\(^{244}\)

Sixty years later, Myer Freedman, who arrived in Vancouver in 1914 at the age of four, recalled the premises and the long arduous days of a young boy attending both Hebrew and secular schools:

>[At first] we had a Hebrew school in an old store at the corner of Jackson Avenue and Georgia, and the kosher butcher shop was three or four doors away . . . . My first Hebrew school teacher was Dr. Narod, the chiropodist, who became a dear friend of mine. The original synagogue . . . later became our school . . . an after-hours type of school for extra-curricular learning of language. I went to Strathcona School in the daytime, then always put in 2 hours late in the afternoon, 5 days a week and Sunday, in that particular building.\(^{245}\)
Organization of the Vancouver Hebrew School (Talmud Torah), 1918

In 1918, at the conclusion of the First World War, P. Tobin, an ardent worker for Judaism, devised a definitive school program that led to the formation and incorporation of the Vancouver Hebrew School, or Talmud Torah. The school was officially opened on Hanukah December 4, 1918 in one of the old buildings on Heatley Avenue, with Max M. Grossman as its first president (1918-21). In announcing the opening, Grossman stated “the object [being] teaching the ancient Hebrew language to the local Jewish children, and at the same time imparting a knowledge of the race,” which he represented as being “sadly lacking at the present time.” He was very insistent on carrying out this enterprise in the face of opposition. (Many immigrant parents were opposed to institutions that would segregate their children from the Canadian mainstream.) The school would be financed by a set tuition fee paid by the parents of children attending, supplemented by an annual subscription of the community at large, and this is how the school operates to this day.

With the very limited school facilities then in use, Grossman promised that they were not going to put the children in a “dirty barn.” The school would be “nicely heated, clean and attractive.” Arrangements were made with Schara Tzedeck for a combined synagogue and school by adapting the old B’nai Yehudah Synagogue as a school. In midsummer 1921, the school occupied the new Talmud Torah on Heatley Avenue. Grossman and his committee were assisted by the Ladies’ auxiliary, “who are responsible for the sanitary condition of the school, and who have generously provided treats for the children on Purim and Hanukah and given generous donations from time to time.”

At the beginning of the school year in the fall of 1920, Kiva Katznelson was hired as school principal at $200 per month. He was the first fully qualified Hebrew schoolteacher to serve in Vancouver and in his three short years placed the school on a sound academic footing. During Katznelson’s tenure, the school had an enrollment of fifty to seventy pupils. He taught Yiddish and Hebrew language and religious courses
to students aged six to thirteen (Bar Mitzvah age). Katznelsen also organized a Vancouver branch of Young Judea, an international Zionist youth movement.248

**Kiva Katznelsen Family, 1920-45**

Kiva Katznelsen was born in Minsk, Russia, where he was a yeshiva bocher (young male student) for many years. With the First World War pending and, at the age of twenty eligible for service in the Tsar’s army, he left his wife and young son, Harry, behind with her parents and immigrated to Montreal, arriving at an uncle’s home in that city on Passover 1914. His first employment there was as a tutor to the Chief Rabbi’s grandchildren. Encouraged by the rabbi, he soon became a teacher and later principal of the Talmud Torah in Montreal. As a delegate, he attended a Zionist convention in Toronto, then accepted a position at the Hebrew school in Hamilton for a short time. Concurrently, Vancouver Talmud Torah was searching nationally for a principal and Katznelsen noticed Abe Rothstein’s name on the school letterhead. Rothstein, also an ardent Zionist and a school director, had been a lantzman of Katznelsen in Minsk. Katznelsen applied for the position and won it, coming to Vancouver in 1920.

It took nine long years for Katznelsen’s wife and son, Harry, to immigrate in 1923. With a growing family, like Narod before him, Katznelsen found it impossible to subsist on a Hebrew school salary. As a result, after three years, he left the Talmud Torah to embark on a business career.249

In May 1932, Harry Katznelsen was one of the first of the Russian-born immigrants to win a scholarship at the University of British Columbia. He continued his studies at American universities, obtaining a doctorate in soil
microbiology and became head of the Canada Agriculture Microbiology Station in Ottawa. In 1945, Kiva’s daughter, Edith Katznelson, was the founding president of Delta Gamma chapter of Delta Phi Epsilon, the first sorority for Jewish girls at UBC.

Development of the Talmud Torah

In founding his school, Grossman, an acculturated Canadian-born and -educated lawyer, had stated his reasons for desiring a school: “There are a great many young men all through America who don’t know whether they are Jews or not,” so little attention had been paid to Jewish culture. In his own case, he declared, “If I’d turned into a Christian, I wouldn’t have been surprised.” Yet the men who molded the school, Katznelson and Rabbi Pastinsky, were pious old-country men who conducted their instruction in Yiddish and Hebrew on traditional parochial lines. This image was to stigmatize the school for many less-observant Jews and their Canadian-born children over several generations.

In its first years, the Talmud Torah operated as an independent body under its own executive committee, with fees paid by the pupils and other fund-raising events. Owing to the stream of immigrants that poured into the city in the wake of the First World War, many of them unable to pay for a Jewish education, the finances of the school were precarious and threatened its closure. Relief came in 1924 with the birth of the Jewish Community Chest, which undertook to give a generous quota of its collections to the work of Jewish education. From the outset, Schara Tzedeck provided the use of its classrooms, light, heat, fuel, etc., free of charge. In November 1928, the three parties — the School, the Synagogue and the Chest — agreed: “That the Talmud Torah cease to exist as a separate institution.” Henceforth, the Schara Tzedeck Executive Committee would run the school with the current members of the Talmud Torah board joining that committee.

A report on the school in 1926 stated: “Vancouver is very proud of its Talmud Torah. With an attendance of 112 children, and a staff of three teachers, it has earned a great deal of praise from all who have
visited this institution.” As the Jewish population moved progressively south of False Creek, a school annex was established in the Fairview district at Broadway near Cambie Street that same year. In 1928, it was moved to the newly built Jewish Community Centre. In March 1927, Joseph Youngson, a professionally trained teacher, was hired as “head teacher” (principal) at the “Heatley Street” school and remained for 7½ years.

Joseph Youngson Family, 1927 to Today

Joseph Youngson was born in 1904 at a Jewish colony outside Vilna, Lithuania. At age eleven his family moved into Vilna, where he studied in a yeshiva. During the First World War, under German occupation, the population suffered famine. After his mother died in 1916, Joseph suffered night blindness due to starvation. After the war, at age fifteen, Joseph moved with his father to Kovno when it became capital of the independent Lithuanian Republic. At first he worked loading wood, but soon got a job teaching rural fishermen’s children. He later attended teacher’s college in Kovno.

In 1922, at age eighteen and subject to the draft, Youngson immigrated to Canada where he had relatives in Montreal. He came west to work at the farm harvest in Manitoba, then moved to the Jewish farm colony at Hirsch, Saskatchewan. With his teacher’s training and knowledge of six languages, Youngson finally was engaged as a teacher, earning a salary of $125 per month at the Saskatoon Hebrew School, where he remained for two years before coming to Vancouver Talmud Torah.
In 1929, Joseph Youngson married Rose Goldberg (a daughter of Jacob Goldberg, a second-hand storekeeper), an English language teacher whom he met when she was teaching immigrant children. They had two children. However, in 1935 at the height of the Great Depression, due to lack of funds, Talmud Torah was forced to reduce the teacher’s salary from $175 to $100 per month, an unlivable wage for a family man. Such was the sad lot of Vancouver’s early Hebrew teachers. As a result, Youngson gave up teaching to establish the Main Hardware on Main Street, although he continued to maintain a lifelong interest in Jewish education. Later he chaired the Schara Tzedeck Religious School. Today a son, lawyer David Youngson, and his family are active in the community.

**Talmud Torah Becomes Independent, 1943-49**

In 1943, an eleven-room house was purchased at 814 West 14th Avenue as the first separate home of the Talmud Torah. This also marked the school as an independent organization, though the synagogue retained its interest and continued to provide leadership.

In the school year 1948-49, the Talmud Torah moved to its own permanent campus on Oak Street between 26th and 27th avenues. The
curriculum was converted to a full elementary day school, combining both secular and Judaic subjects. Afternoon schools continued to be conducted by the synagogues. With the increasing affluence of the community, Talmud Torah has become largely an upper middle-class school, with the expectation that it will be the training ground for future Jewish community leaders. Nevertheless, it generously offers scholarships to new immigrants and others less able to pay.

In recent decades, Canada’s national policy has turned towards multiculturalism, with increasing immigration from countries worldwide. Private schools along ethnic, social and economic lines have become popular with growing enrollments; yet, only a moderate proportion of Jewish students attend a parochial day school. In Metro Vancouver Jewish parochial schools now include the Vancouver Hebrew Academy, the Richmond Jewish Day School, the Pacific Torah Institute, Shalhevet Girls’ High School and King David High School. Such schools receive a combination of government, community and philanthropic support, although the parents still largely fund tuition.

Schara Tzedeck Cemetery, 1929 to Today

In 1910, Haim Leib Freedman arrived in Vancouver from Brest-Litovsk, a major centre of Lithuanian Jewry. He immediately set up a permanent Chevra Kadisha (the Vancouver Hebrew Burial Society), which was responsible for the care and management of all Jewish
burials and funeral rites in Vancouver. He was president for twenty-six years. By the mid-1920s, the Jewish population of Vancouver had reached 600 families and was growing rapidly. The Old Jewish Cemetery at Mountain View was limited in size and the Orthodox community wanted a burial ground that was owned and controlled by the Jewish community. Freedman pressed the demand for a new cemetery. In 1925, Arthur H. Fleishman was elected president of Schara Tzedeck on the plank of acquiring a new cemetery site. He set up a joint committee of the two organizations to find one.

The task was difficult due to neighbourhood opposition to cemetery sites and the high cost of a large acreage of land in built-up areas. Finally, a fourteen-acre parcel of land was found on Southeast Marine Drive at the border of Burnaby and New Westminster (now in New Westminster) in undesignated territory controlled by the Provincial government. Schara Tzedeck then applied to the Provincial cabinet for an order-in-council to designate the land as a Jewish cemetery. Residents of the neighbourhood, who were supported by the public press, raised strong opposition, consequently the Government demanded
a petition confirming that this was a needed Jewish community enterprise. Upon receiving a petition signed by 1,200 adult Jews, the government assigned the land for cemetery use.

A campaign for funds was launched and $2,000 was raised in addition to the $4,000 contributed by the Chevra Kadisha. The cemetery was formally opened on November 3, 1929, with the customary rights conducted by Rabbi Wohlgelernter and Rev. Pastinsky. Rachel Goldbloom unveiled a memorial stone in the centre of the grounds. The cemetery is administered by the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board, which includes members of the Chevra Kadisha, as a community
cemetery open to Jews of any denomination who want an Orthodox Jewish burial. In April 1944, a Schara Tzedeck Funeral Chapel was opened at 155 West Broadway in Vancouver. In August 1994, a new chapel was dedicated on the cemetery grounds.

In planning for the future, on March 16, 2008, the Schara Tzedeck Cemetery Board consecrated a second cemetery on 60th Avenue, Surrey, in Metro Vancouver.

**Schara Tzedeck Leaves the Strathcona Neighbourhood, 1947**

At the Annual General Meeting of the Schara Tzedeck on October 24, 1937, it was decided that the congregation would build a new synagogue in the Fairview district (where the Jewish Community Centre was located) “without further delay.” This was a startling announcement, considering that the Pender Street synagogue was only seventeen years old and that so much effort and money had been expended on what was still an attractive and serviceable building. The
reasoning was that the Jewish community was rapidly ascending to middle class status and moving out of the immigrant district to more upscale neighbourhoods south of the downtown. Action was quickly taken. By November 16 a site at 11th Avenue and Spruce Street was identified and on December 15, a fund-raising drive was launched with Abe Rothstein, the congregation president, as chairman of the Building Committee.

Citing poor synagogue attendance (except on the High Holy Days), the congregation’s new rabbi, Zlotnik, gave his full endorsement to the project stating that “the building of a new modern synagogue is a most crying need.” Rabbi Pastinsky was more ambivalent: “I am naturally one of those to whom the present Schara Tzedeck Synagogue has a sentimental appeal. I have seen a Jewish community growing up within and around this synagogue, but I, as everyone else in the community, must take into consideration the fact that the present building is too far removed from the residential section, to be able best to serve the religious community at large.”

The concept was premature by a dozen years. 1937 was at the height of the Great Depression and in the end the money could not be raised. This was followed by the Second World War, 1939-45, during which the community’s resources were turned to the war effort. As a result, the synagogue remained as it was. By the end of the war, the Jewish community had completely departed the East End Strathcona district and was moving to new residential areas in the south and the west. In September 1945, lots for a future synagogue were purchased at a cost of $6,500 at Oak Street and 19th Avenue, eight blocks from the Jewish Community Centre and central to the Jewish residential community.

The New Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, 1948

In 1945, right after the war, the “time for a change movement” brought forward Harry Toban as president of the congregation on the platform of a new synagogue. The membership was now 175 families. President Toban, at a special meeting of the newly formed Building Committee
chaired by Jack Diamond, announced plans to begin immediate construction of a modern Schara Tzedeck Synagogue on the Oak Street site. Plans were drawn up by Architect John Harvey and building designer Guy Poskitt for a 1,100 seat synagogue with auditorium at a cost of $135,000.\textsuperscript{268} Events proceeded quickly: turning of the First Sod on February 2, 1947;\textsuperscript{269} laying of the cornerstone ceremony on June 22;\textsuperscript{270} and dedication service of the completed building on January 25, 1948.\textsuperscript{271}

The ceremony centred on the formal dedication of the synagogue “as a memorial to Jewish War Veterans, who served in His Majesty’s Armed Services in the Second World War.” President Harold Zlotnik of the Jewish Veteran’s Branch No. 178, B.E.S.L., participated in the program.

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\caption{78. Harry Toban; [1948]}
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\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image2.jpg}
\caption{79. Turning first sod for new Schara Tzedeck Synagogue. Rabbi C.B. Ginsberg of Schara Tzedeck presided over the ceremony, with Mayor Gerry McGeer (seated centre) among the attending dignitaries; Vancouver, B.C.; February 2, 1947}
\end{figure}
Among the dignitaries attending the event were the Hon. Wendell B. Farris, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, the Hon. Gordon S. Wismer, K.C., Attorney General for the province, Mayor Charles Jones and Thomas Braidwood, President of the Vancouver Board of Trade. The event also marked the fortieth anniversary of the congregation.

The local Jewish newspaper vividly depicted the religious solemnity of the occasion:

Hundreds of disappointed members of the community found themselves unable to gain admittance to the main auditorium to witness the formal dedication of the new Schara Tzedeck Synagogue . . . on Sunday, January 25th. For those lucky enough . . . to be in the audience, the scenes which were enacted during the solemn ritual of dedication will be long remembered.

Rabbi Burstyn, assisted by Rev. Wm. Shuster, entered the rear door and were followed by a procession of the members of the Building Committee carrying the Scrolls of Law. During the processional the Cantor sang “Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness.”

As those carrying the Scrolls then took up assigned places in front of the bimah. At this point the Cantor chanted “How Goodly Are Thy Tents, O Jacob . . . .” There followed the solemn ritual of marching around the bimah for seven times, while the Cantor offered the chant, “We Beseech Thee, O Lord, Save [Us] Now!”

As those carrying the Scrolls approached the Ark, the Cantor took one of the Scrolls and chanted “And When It Rested He Said: ‘Return, O Lord’ . . . .”

Dignity and solemnity marked the lighting of the perpetual light [ner tamid] by the oldest member of the congregation, Mr. S. Toban, who recited the prayer “Blessed be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has given us life, sustained us and permitted us to celebrate this festive occasion.”
The Rabbi, Nachum Burstyn, then offered the memorial prayers for the departed members of the congregation and fallen war heroes.

The Dedication Service closed with the congregation joined in the singing of *Yigdal* [May He Be Magnified].

**Rabbi Nachum Burstyn, 1947-48**

With Rabbi Pastinsky’s final retirement due to illness in September 1946, and commencement of construction of the new Oak Street synagogue in February 1947, earnest discussion took place on the future of the congregation. The proponents of modernization, led by President Harry Toban, insisted that Orthodox Judaism could only be acceptable to the younger generation if an English-speaking rabbi were engaged to “talk to them in their own language.” The issue was fought with the “old guard” through a series of meetings until finally the advocates of moderate Orthodoxy had their way.

Accordingly, in April 1947, a young rabbi, Nachum Burstyn, was engaged. Born in Toronto and a graduate of a high school there, he was the son of an Orthodox Hasidic rabbi. He pursued his rabbinic studies at yeshivot in Chicago and New York, where he attended New York University. As sardonically pointed out by one congregant, with his sound knowledge of hockey, Rabbi Burstyn could indeed talk to Canadian youth in their own language. The young rabbi began the process of imparting a Jewish consciousness in the young members of the congregation. During his term in Vancouver, an organization for young adults was established.

Rabbi Burstyn had a busy and eventful year. He saw Schara Tzedeck
through its building period. As spiritual leader of the congregation, he led the dedication service in January 1948 and delivered the eulogy at the funeral of Rabbi Pastinsky in February.\textsuperscript{275} In the spring of 1948, a Men’s Club was founded and henceforth became an important arm of the synagogue program. Although Rabbi Burstyn stayed in Vancouver for only a one-year term, the tenor of Schara Tzedeck as a modern Orthodox congregation was set in his incumbency and was continued by his rabbinic successors. By the fall of 1950, a Sunday school was started on an experimental basis with a small group of children, which by 1957 had grown to a three-day-a-week religious school of 100 pupils.\textsuperscript{276}

In 2007, Congregation Schara Tzedeck celebrated its Centenary. It remains the pioneer and largest Jewish Orthodox house of worship in British Columbia, with a growing membership of 450 families. This includes up to four generations of the early families, a number of whom have become influential in the Jewish and general communities. The congregation also appeals to newcomers who are comfortable in practicing their religion in the modern Orthodox tradition.\textsuperscript{277} The synagogue maintains a program coordinator and a youth rabbi who leads over 350 teens.

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\caption{Celebrating 100 years – Schara Tzedeck Synagogue, Oak Street and 19th Avenue; Vancouver, B.C.; July 6, 2007}
\end{figure}
Aftermath of Strathcona, 1948-86

The Pender and Heatley building had served the congregation for thirty-seven years. In 1948, it was sold to the philanthropist Rufus Gibbs to become the Gibb’s Boys Club and was used as a vocational school for needy boys and girls. The aron kodesh and bimah were saved and moved to the new synagogue. Because Strathcona, one of the oldest residential neighbourhoods in the city, had by then badly deteriorated, the congregation realized a mere $15,000 on the sale.278

After Gibb’s death in 1979, the club closed and remained empty. During Vancouver’s Centenary in 1986, when the Strathcona district was being recognized for its historic interest and underwent rehabilitation, the old synagogue was adaptively reused as residential condominiums by the developer Jacques Khouri (whose mother was Jewish) and Spaceworks Architects, one of whose principals, Peter Reece, is Jewish. The facade was restored and redecorated, while the glass dome of the sanctuary now lights an inner courtyard.279 It was given a Class “B” designation of “heritage importance” on the Vancouver Heritage Inventory and the city placed a commemorative plaque on the building.280 Now named Alexander Court after Khouri’s son, it is still a visibly handsome building and serves as a monument to the pioneer Jewish families who got their Canadian start in this neighbourhood.

Beth Hamidrash B’nai Ya’acov – Orthodox-Sephardic Synagogue, 1943-79

In 1943, eleven men formed an ultra-Orthodox congregation, Beth
Hamidrash B’nai Ya’acov (House of Study Sons of Jacob), in a storefront at 3231 Heather Street just south of 16th Avenue. The synagogue was sponsored by A. Max Charkow, an underwear manufacturer and owner of Fitwell Garments, and named in honour of his father, Jacob. Jacob Charkow, who started out with a horse and buggy and then was in the egg business, was twice president of Schara Tzedeck, of which this new congregation was virtually an offshoot. The motivation was for Jacob and his elder colleagues, now living in the Fairview district far away from the Heatley synagogue, to be within walking distance of their synagogue, an Orthodox requirement on the Sabbath and certain holidays. The learned Rabbi, Chaim B. Ginsberg, a Polish refugee, was engaged as spiritual leader of the congregation.

Rabbi Chaim B. Ginsberg, 1941-60

Rabbi Ginsberg, born in Russia, was a graduate of theological seminaries in Germany and Poland, where he studied under the Chofetz Chaim, a great Talmudic scholar and author. Ginsberg served as spiritual leader of Radom, a prominent Polish Jewish community,
until the Second World War. When the Germans invaded Poland, Ginsberg travelled with a party of twenty rabbis to Shanghai, China via Siberia. He arrived in Montreal in 1941, then moved to Vancouver. Rabbi Ginsberg was well-known for his writings in the fields of Biblical and Talmudic studies. A most revered man, people from every part of the community sought his counsel. When Rabbi Ginsberg died in 1960 at the age of seventy-one, he was the last of the European-trained, Yiddish-speaking rabbis in Vancouver.282

**Sephardic Judaism in Vancouver, 1960s to Today**

The Jewish people who came to Vancouver up until the Second World War were predominantly of Polish and Russian descent. They used the Ashkenazic (German) ritual and their mother tongue was Yiddish. Beth Hamidrash was described as “practically the last refuge of Jewish orthodoxy in this city [and] a place for the active older people in our community.”283 By the early 1970s, Rabbi Ginsberg and many of his elderly congregants had passed on. As a result, Joshua Checov, a past president and surviving member of the original quorum, in 1972 invited a group of Sephardic friends who needed a spiritual home to use the synagogue.

The Sephardim (Spanish Jews) are derived from the half of the world’s Jewish people who settled in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain or Portugal) after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. After the Spanish Expulsion Edict of 1492 and 1497 in Portugal, they spread to other lands around the Mediterranean basin. Their ritual is Orthodox, using melodies and Hebrew pronunciation different from the Ashkenazim. Their mother tongue was Ladino or Judeo-Spanish, a medieval Spanish dialect.
Canada was virtually closed to Jewish immigration in the Great Depression and the Second World War years of the 1930s and 1940s. There were very few Sephardim in British Columbia until the post-war period when Canada opened its doors to refugees. In 1948, under the Canadian Jewish Congress Orphan's Project, forty-eight children arrived from Europe and were placed in foster homes. Next fifty so-called tailors arrived and were offered employment after initial confusion as to their actual talents. These were the first of the post-war immigration waves to arrive in Vancouver that included Sephardic Jews.

In 1966, the first Sephardic High Holy Day services in Vancouver were held in the new Jewish Community Centre on 41st Avenue at Oak Street. Micha Peled (later a rabbi), then director of Habonim Camp Miriam, was the first chazzan. A Sephardic Rabbi, Solomon Maimon of Seattle, provided two Sifrei Torah. Also circa 1966, Magen David Synagogue in Bombay, India donated a Scroll of the Law in traditional Sephardic style to the Vancouver congregation.

A Sephardic congregation was formed with Edward Shawn as its first president, and started using the old Beth Hamidrash Synagogue for their meetings and services. They also began their own Jewish school to promote Sephardic culture and traditions. As well, a Sisterhood was formed, led by Eliza Shawn. Nazem Aboody, the second president, serving from 1973 to 1980, led the transition of Beth Hamidrash to a Sephardic synagogue. Rabbi David Arzouane, a teacher at the Talmud Torah, was
the first part-time spiritual leader. Finally, the original Ashkenazic congregation was officially fused into the Sephardic one. On March 18, 1979, that event was marked by carrying their Torah scrolls from Schara Tzedeck to the remodelled synagogue for the ribbon-cutting ceremony and to affix the mezuzah to the doorpost. On Sunday, June 20, 2004, a new Beth Hamidrash Synagogue was dedicated on the same site, designed by architect Michael Katz. Today, the congregation, led by Rabbi Ilan Acoca, welcomes Sephardic and Ashkenazic members.

Conservative Judaism

With the demise of the semi-Reform congregation in 1917, there was still a great desire in the Jewish community, especially among the Canadian-born and educated generation, to bridge the gap between Orthodox and Reform Judaism with a congregation that retained the essence of traditional religious and ethical Judaism, yet would be
compatible with the modern North-American lifestyle. They would find their answer in Conservative Judaism.

There were pockets of traditionalists in the United States who favoured historical Judaism and were deeply devoted to the Hebrew language in the liturgy. Beginning in the 1880s, waves of Russian Jews were arriving with their own brand of Orthodoxy; however, they were quickly assimilating into American society. The founders of Conservative Judaism realistically faced the contemporary age and the inevitable Westernization of Jewish culture, education and religious life. While they believed that the traditional forms and precepts of Judaism were valid, they confirmed that changes could be made in the light of Biblical and rabbinic precedents. Nevertheless, such changes in practice were to be made only with reluctance and after “concentration of many ideas and ideals.”

The leading architect of Conservative Judaism in America was Solomon Schechter (1847-1915). Born in Romania, he was educated at the Berlin Hochschule fuer die Wissenschaft des Judentums and the University of Berlin. In 1890, he was appointed lecturer in Talmudics and in 1892 reader in Rabbinics at Cambridge University. In 1899, he also became professor of Hebrew at University College, London. He developed the central notion of the community of Israel as decisive for Jewish living and thinking; he would call it “Catholic Israel.”

In 1902, Schechter was invited by a number of leading American Jews to take the post of president of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, which he held until his death. He attracted a distinguished faculty of younger men to this Conservative seminary, which became one of the most important centres of Jewish learning and intellectual thought, and indeed of national Jewish revival in America. In February 1913, Schechter founded the United Synagogue of America, the association of Conservative synagogues in the United States and Canada.

In the second half of the twentieth century, Conservative Judaism became the most prevalent form of Jewish religious practice in British
Columbia. Today this includes mixed seating, participation of women in the services, Bat Mitzvahs for girls and women clergy.

Founding of Beth Israel – Conservative Congregation in Vancouver, 1925-32

The seed of Congregation Beth Israel (House of Israel) was planted on September 30, 1925 at the Vancouver Hebrew Athletic Club room (above the United Cigar Store on 680 Robson Street at Granville), where a meeting was held to organize a new congregation “with an English-speaking Rabbi.” Moses (Moe) H. Brotman was in the chair. The report stated that “after a thorough discussion, the congregation was organized and a canvas of the community will be made for members.” It is said that the earliest Conservative services took place in the club room. Nevertheless, six long years elapsed before concrete action was taken to establish a synagogue.

On October 9, 1931, a news item and editorial appeared in the Jewish Western Bulletin, then the official organ of the Vancouver Jewish Community Centre. Albert O. Koch, who became a prime founder and long-time president of the Beth Israel congregation, chaired the editorial committee. A meeting was held at the Centre at which a large attendance of communal leaders was present to discuss the formation of a new congregation. The editorial commended the idea:

There can be no doubt in the minds of anyone that there is a distinct need for a Conservative or semi-reform Congregation in Vancouver. There are hundreds of Jews and Jewesses and their children who are so far removed by environment and training from the strictly orthodox service, that they have no inclination or desire to attend the synagogue now in existence here. The absence of [such a] Synagogue carrying the services at least partly in English, has created a void in the religious life of many of our Jewish people . . . . The consensus of opinion in the community is . . . that a new congregation will be welcomed.

The organizers of the new congregation considered themselves the logical heirs of the old semi-Reform congregation. The editorial stated
“on reliable information, that efforts will be made to interest the trustees of the Temple Emanu-El [by then inactive] in lending financial aid to the new project.” It was known that some $7,500 remained in a trust fund from the sale of that congregation’s Melville Street property on which they had intended to build their synagogue. “Leaders of the proposed new congregation state that if the financial aid looked for from the Trustees of the Temple Fund, is forthcoming, they will be able to have services within the next six weeks.”

The remaining trustees of the Temple Fund still living in Vancouver were Jacob Izen and Dr. Samuel Petersky. They quickly responded:

At the annual meeting in 1931, the question of the disposal of the assets of the congregation came up for discussion. Some were in favour of distributing the money among the original donors or handing same over to some Jewish institution now in existence, but objections were taken to this, on the grounds that such donations were given for a specific purpose, namely the erection of a Semi-reform Synagogue. After considerable discussion, it was decided to place the matter in Court, so as to get advice on the legal disposition of the funds in hand. Hence the application was made.

Finis was written to the early history of Liberal Judaism in Vancouver on January 22, 1932, in a judgment by Chief Justice Morrison of the Supreme Court of British Columbia, as reported:

After . . . counsel cited numerous cases setting out the law on trusts that failed in their purpose, his Lordship directed the return to the original donors or their representatives, of a pro rata share of their contributions, out of the trust fund. [The major donors surviving were Izen, and in California, A.D. Goldstein and A. Grossman.] He also gave the trustees liberty to pass their accounts and be discharged.

Nevertheless, organization of the new congregation proceeded. On August 2, 1932 a founding meeting was held at the Jewish Community Centre led by pro-tem officers, Chairman Nathan Bell and Secretary
M.H. Brotman. After Rev. Samuel Cohen and Dr. Elias Margolius, representing the United Synagogue of America, visited Vancouver, a decision was made to affiliate with this Conservative umbrella organization.294

A Placement Committee of the parent college, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, selected the candidate, Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, a 1931 graduate “summa cum laude” of the college, as rabbi of the newly named Beth Israel Congregation (affectionately known as the B.I.). Rabbi Bokser arrived in Vancouver on September 21 in time to conduct the High Holy Day services of 1932.295 The public welcomed him at a meeting at the Jewish Community Centre on Sunday, September 25.296 The first lay cantor was Jacob H. Narod. The congregation was incorporated under the Societies Act on October 23, 1932. Signatories were Dr. A. Hirschberg, E. Sugarman, N. Bell, W. Genser and Dr. G. Plant.297

In his editorial of October 9, 1931, Albert Koch stated the reasons for the choice of the Jewish Community Centre as the initial venue of the congregation for its meetings and services:

That in view of the present financial extremities, it would be ill-advised and untimely to build a new House of Worship. That the Community Centre, situated, as it is, convenient to all residential districts, would be the ideal place in which to set up the new congregation until such time as there are sufficient funds available, for the erection of a separate building. . . . In all other cities the community Centres are built around the popular house of worship where the young people would naturally attend.298

Notwithstanding, as the congregation quickly grew in numbers, other venues such as the Peter Pan Ballroom and the Park Theatre were used for High Holy Days and for simchas (happy events) such as Bar Mitzvahs, confirmations and weddings.

Throughout October, Rabbi Bokser and the volunteer committees
quickly worked out and implemented details of regular Friday night services, a choral group, an *Oneg Shabbat*, a children’s Sunday school up to sixteen years of age (including Bible, Jewish history, customs, ceremonies and ethics), adult study groups and a Hebrew class.²⁹⁹

At a well-attended meeting at the Community Centre in the week of October 16, officers of Beth Israel Congregation were elected, with a slate headed by President Nat Bell and First Vice-President A.O. Koch.³⁰⁰

**The Beth Israel Sisterhood, October 1932**

Indicative of the strong force that they were becoming in the community, on October 18, 1932, concurrent with the election of congregation officers, the Sisterhood of Beth Israel was formally organized.³⁰¹ The majority of these women were more socially and economically mobile than the women of the pioneer congregations. They were better educated, moved easily in Anglo society, lived in comfortable homes and often employed outside domestic help. The early 1930s was also the advent of the “General Electric Kitchen,” when home appliances were heavily promoted to ease the burden of the housewife. These mostly upper middle class women were not required to be wage earners so could volunteer their spare time to community social, cultural, educational and philanthropic endeavours. This they did with gusto and their activities were self-funded through such means as luncheons, teas, bazaars and the sale of crafts.

**An Impressive Inaugural, November 30, 1932**

A celebration of great importance to the Jewish Community of Vancouver, in which [some 200 people] took part, was held at the Hotel Vancouver, Oval Room, Wednesday evening, November 30th, [1932], when Congregation Beth Israel was formally inaugurated, Officers installed and Rabbi Bokser inducted.

Rabbi Bokser said grace and the gathering then enjoyed “a sumptuous feast.”
Albert O. Koch, Vice-President elect, acting as chairman, offered a toast to the King then introduced guests, Rabbi Philip Laugh of Herzl Congregation, Seattle, and Rabbi Myer Rubin of Portland, leading Conservative rabbis in the Pacific North West. Both stressed the “vital necessity” of Conservative Judaism and the hope that Congregation Beth Israel would fulfill this need. Rabbi Laugh claimed that the lack of knowledge of Judaism in the younger generation was “distressing and alarming” and that the only cure was what this new congregation aimed to do.

Ephraim R. Sugarman was then called upon and, touching upon the factors that culminated in the realization of this congregation as an “established and recognized” institution, presented the Charter to which the signatures were placed during the course of the banquet.

The visiting rabbis were then appointed to act as Installing Officers of the duly elected Officers of Congregation Beth Israel as follows:

Officers:
President: Nathan Bell
1st Vice-Pres.: A.O. Koch
2nd Vice-Pres.: B. Margolius
Treasurer: A.G. Hirschberg
Secretary: M.H. Brotman
Financial Sec.: H.I. Boyaner

Sisterhood:
President: Mrs. M. Koenigsberg
1st Vice-Pres.: Mrs. Charles Swartz
2nd Vice-Pres.: Mrs. E.M. Goldsmith
Secretary: Mrs. Norman Brown
Treasurer: Mrs. W. Morris
Directors: Mrs. S. Alberts, Mrs. N. Bell, Mrs. H. Evans, Mrs. A.O. Koch, Mrs. C. Korsch, Mrs. W. Steiner.

The congregation’s officers were among the most affluent and influential Jewish citizens in Vancouver at that time. By the 1930s, many Jews were moving up economically to wholesaling, clothing manufacturing, light industry and, increasingly, to a variety of professions.

The Charter was then presented to the president, Nathan Bell, who now took the chair. In his address, President Bell expressed the hope that, with his brother officers and members, Congregation Beth Israel would be instrumental in becoming “the outstanding factor towards the perpetuation of Judaism in Vancouver.”

M.H. Brotman then proposed a toast to the Sisterhood, paying high compliments for “the active part they have taken in the congregation.” In response, Mrs. Koenigsberg pledged the “loyal support” of the entire Sisterhood to the congregation.

President J.B. Jaffe and Rev. N. Pastinsky of Schara Tzedeck congregation were present and conveyed their “good wishes” for the future welfare of the new congregation.
The visiting rabbis then concluded the ceremony with the induction of the congregation’s rabbi. Rabbi Bokser, in his address, concluded that the leadership of Congregation Beth Israel “must furnish in our community . . . the great spiritual treasures inherent in Judaism, a leadership that shall be progressive and modern, and yet sacrificing nothing of our past.”

The *Jewish Western Bulletin* editorialized:

[This] will always be remembered as a red letter day in the history of Vancouver Jewry, as it marked a new epoch . . . . It was unique, inasmuch as it was full of enthusiasm, for it seemed that something that Vancouver Jewry had been waiting [for] was now within their reach. It was unique, because it brought together all classes of the community, Orthodox, Conservative and Reform, eager to congratulate those who were responsible for the birth of the new congregation.

**Nathan Bell, 1921-43**

Nat Bell was born in 1877 in Russia and came to America at age twenty-one to take part in the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. After the rush he settled in Calgary, then in 1921 came to reside in Vancouver. He was the secretary-treasurer of United Distillers Ltd. and associated companies of Vancouver. In addition to his role as founding president of Beth Israel Congregation, Bell was an active Mason and a member of the Point Grey Golf Club. He died in Vancouver on January 31, 1943 at the age of sixty-six.

**Moses H. Brotman, 1922-36**

Moe Brotman was born in 1891 on a farm in the Wapella Colony,
North West Territories (later Saskatchewan). A son of the Orthodox rabbi of the colony, he spent his first fifteen years on the family farm. In the First World War, Moe joined the British Royal Flying Corps, attaining the rank of lieutenant. After the war, he became a businessman, moved to Vancouver, and in 1922 married Eva Goldbloom, daughter of a pioneer Vancouver family. Eva became a founding member of the Council of Jewish Women and chaired their Well Baby Clinic.

In Vancouver, Brotman was active in the principal Jewish organizations of the day: B'nai Brith; advisor to AZA, its youth organization; the Zionist Organization; Jewish Community Centre; Jewish Administrative Council; and first secretary of Beth Israel Congregation. Illustrative of the generational change, an older European-born brother, Phil Brotman, had been president of the Orthodox Schara Tzedeck in 1926-27.

In 1936, Moe Brotman moved to San Francisco to head Seagram’s Pacific Division. After the Second World War, he lived in Tokyo, Japan as an exporter, then later moved to Sausalito, California, running an import gift shop. Brotman died there in March 1966 at the age of seventy-five.

Albert O. Koch, “Father” of Beth Israel, 1925-69

Albert Koch was born in Rhode Island, USA, on May 1, 1894. He moved to Vancouver in 1925, where he established his business career as founder of the National Dress Company and Laurie’s Limited. In
the early years, he was active in the first Jewish Community Centre, the Centre Bulletin and the Jewish Western Bulletin weekly newspaper.

Beth Israel Congregation is regarded as the “child” of Albert Koch. Following Nathan Bell, he became the second president and served for fifteen years, 1935-36, 1941-51, and again in 1963-65, encompassing the crucial periods before, during and after erection of the synagogue.

His zeal, leadership qualities and financial acumen welded together a group with diverse interests having the common goal of a Vancouver congregation built upon the principles of Conservative Judaism. In the 1940s, he was also instrumental in the procurement and development, along with Harry Evans, of Beth Israel Cemetery. In 1961, Koch was made Honorary Life President of the congregation.

Albert Koch died suddenly on April 16, 1969 enroute to visit Israel. He was seventy-four years of age.308 His descendants are still active in the Vancouver community today.

Resignation of Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, 1933

Unfortunately, on July 31, 1933, Rabbi Bokser resigned as the first spiritual leader of Beth Israel owing to family illness and returned home to New York. He had served the congregation for less than a year. The rabbi was given a farewell luncheon, attended by a hundred persons at the Georgian Restaurant in the Hudson’s Bay Company store. He was presented with an address on vellum by E.R. Sugarman, lauded for his scholarly lectures and sermons, and credited during his incumbency for founding the Beth Israel Sisterhood, the Men’s Club and the Young Peoples’ League.309
Rabbi Samuel Cass, 1933-41

Rabbi Samuel Cass succeeded Rabbi Bokser in September 1933. Born in Toronto in 1907, he became the first Canadian-born congregational rabbi in Vancouver. Rabbi Cass was a graduate of McGill College, Montreal and the College of the City of New York. He was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. Rabbi Cass would go on to serve Beth Israel Congregation for eight years during its formative period. An eloquent speaker, a fine Jewish scholar and an energetic worker, Rabbi Cass became prominent in all the local Jewish community organizations including: president of the Zionist Organization; president of Vancouver Lodge, B’nai Brith; and vice-president of Canadian Jewish Congress, Western Region. The first Jewish member of the Vancouver General Ministerial Association, he was active in fostering inter-faith understanding.

During the Second World War, Captain Cass became the Senior
Jewish Chaplain of the Canadian Armed Forces, serving on the Western Front. Rabbi Cass assisted in the reorganization of Jewish communities in Belgium and the Netherlands as they were liberated by the Canadian forces and worked with survivors of the Concentration Camps there. After the war, the Montreal Jewish community engaged him in various capacities. Tragically, on September 8, 1975, Rabbi Cass, his wife and son were killed in a traffic accident on the way to Toronto to visit the gravesite of his family.

**Beth Israel Cemetery, 1946**

On Sunday July 28, 1946, another milestone in the congregation was reached with the consecration of its own denominational cemetery, located on Willingdon Avenue in the neighbouring municipality of Burnaby. The entire community was invited to attend the ceremony, officiated by Rabbi Ginsberg and Cantor Stolnitz. Albert Koch, then president, and Harry Evans were responsible for creating the cemetery. Many a day Evans could be seen with his horse and plough preparing the land. On September 26, 1982, the Albert and Bella Koch Memorial Chapel was dedicated at B.I. Cemetery.
Harry Evans, 1899-1951

Texan Harry Evans, as a young man, was an 1898 veteran of the Klondike gold rush over the Chilkoot Pass to Dawson City, Yukon. On returning from the rush, he landed in Vancouver, where in 1899 he founded the B.C. Collateral Loan Co. Ltd. It is still operating today and advertises as “Gastown’s oldest business.” Evans was a devoted outdoorsman who trekked through British Columbia by foot with a packsack and was well-known to miners, loggers, ranchers and farmers. An amateur geologist and prospector, he identified deposits of copper, silver and molybdenum ores, which were eventually exploited after his time. In later years, he operated a ranch in West Vancouver. A vice-president of Beth Israel, around 1936 Evans started the daily minyan for which he bought tefillin (phylacteries) for every man.319 Harry Evans died on New Year’s Eve 1951 at the age of seventy-five.320

Building Beth Israel Synagogue, 1947-49

With the end of the war, the beginning of large-scale immigration and looming prosperity, it was time for the congregation to build. In 1947, a large property was purchased with frontage along Oak Street between 27th and 28th Avenues, eight blocks south of the Schara Tzedeck Synagogue near the focus of the post-war Jewish residential district. When the first ground was broken in January 1948, membership had reached 218 families. By February, the contractor, Dominion Construction Co. of Vancouver, had driven the foundation piles and poured the first concrete.321 The structural engineer, Hy Golden of Toronto, designed a solid, monolithic concrete structure with steel roof trusses that sixty years later still serves the congregation.322 A sleek modernist building with a classically symmetrical composition – described at the time as
“Canada’s most beautiful Synagogue” – it has a commanding presence on Oak Street.\(^{323}\)

Harold Kaplan of Toronto, who had experience in theatre and synagogue architecture, was engaged as the project architect. He designed a multi-use building to meet the present and future needs of a growing congregation.\(^{324}\) (By the time of the building’s completion for the High Holy Days in September 1949, the membership had reached 265 families.)

The facilities consisted of: a sanctuary seating 500 people; an adjoining auditorium seating 600, which could be combined for High Holy Day services to seat 1,100; a small chapel for daily services and weddings; meeting and board rooms; classrooms and teachers’ rooms; an arts and crafts room; library; rabbi’s and cantor’s studies; and choir lofts. The building, not fully completed, was used for Rosh Hashanah services in the fall of 1948.\(^{325}\)

Beth Israel Synagogue’s official dedication service was held on Sunday, September 11, 1949, conducted by the incumbent clergymen, Rabbi David C. Kogen and Cantor Fred S. Gartner, with the assistance of the Beth Israel Choir. Included in the ceremony was a procession of the Scrolls of the Torah, the dedication prayer and address, the presentation of the key to the synagogue by the Building Committee chairman,

94. Beth Israel Synagogue, 4350 Oak Street, Vancouver, B.C.; dedicated September 11, 1949; [April 4, 1971]
Sam W. Chess, to the president, Albert O. Koch, and the lighting of the ner tamid.\textsuperscript{326}

**Rabbi David C. Kogen, 1946-55**

Rabbi Kogen arrived in time to preside at the High Holy Days and was installed as rabbi of Beth Israel at the Annual Dinner of the congregation, held at the Hotel Vancouver on November 18, 1946. That September, at the commencement exercises of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York, he had been ordained with merit as rabbi, teacher and preacher. Kogen, who received his Bachelor of Arts degree majoring in psychology from the University of Chicago in 1942, served as assistant-director of the seminary’s School of Jewish Studies as well as president of the student organization of the rabbinical school. In 1945, he was awarded the Morris Greenberg Prize in Modern Hebrew Literature.\textsuperscript{327}

In addition to his congregational duties, Rabbi Kogen served in the capacity of principal of the Beth Israel Religious School, which he reorganized and modernized. He ministered through the synagogue’s critical building period and beyond. He also served as director of the B’nai Brith Hillel Foundation and was instrumental in acquiring Hillel House on the University of British Columbia campus. Kogen also found time to earn the first M.A. degree awarded in Sociology at UBC. The rabbi followed his interest in Adult Education by lecturing under the auspices of the Extension Department of the university. Rabbi Kogen resigned in July 1955 to take a national post in New York, having served as spiritual leader of Beth Israel for nine years. During his incumbency, membership in the congregation had doubled.\textsuperscript{328}

**Cantor Fred S. Gartner, 1948-82**

Cantor Gartner arrived in Vancouver in September 1948 in time to
perform the first High Holy Day services of the new Beth Israel Synagogue. He was born in Russian Poland, but from early childhood he received his musical education at the Vienna Conservatory of Music. In Palestine, Cantor Gartner was leading baritone with the Hebrew Opera Company. Coming to America in 1939, he served as synagogue cantor in Atlantic City, Jersey City, and Jackson Heights, New York. He also appeared on the concert stage and radio in Europe, Palestine and the United States.

He completed his career as *chazzan* and teacher at Beth Israel Synagogue in Bellingham, Washington, whose congregants included some families from the Fraser Valley in British Columbia. Cantor Gartner retired in April 1982 and was honoured at a retirement dinner held at the Bellingham Country Club at which the Beth Israel Choir of Vancouver performed. He had faithfully served the Canadian and American North West for thirty-five years.\(^\text{329}\)

**Samuel W. Chess, 1909-69**

Sam Chess was born in Russia and immigrated to the United States as a very young boy. He lived in New York and in Fall River, Mass., then moved to Winnipeg. In December 1909, he took up residence in Vancouver where, together with his brother, Israel W. Chess, founded Chess Brothers Ltd., a major produce wholesaler.

S.W. Chess was active in community affairs. A founder of both Schara Tzedeck and Beth Israel synagogues, one of the early members of B’nai Brith and a president of the Jewish Community Council (1939), he was also affiliated with Masonic Vancouver Lodge No. 68 and the Elks. His brother, I.W. Chess, was the third president of Beth Israel in 1937-38 and Sam took on the task of chairing the Building Committee. He died on January 21, 1969, shortly after being honoured at the synagogue on his eightieth birthday.\(^\text{330}\)
Beth Israel in Retrospect

When Beth Israel held its Inaugural Dinner at the Hotel Vancouver on November 30, 1932, this was a rather pretentious event. It was held in Vancouver’s most prestigious venue in the midst of the Great Depression by a fledgling congregation, fifteen years before it managed to occupy its own building. Yet, the aspirations of its founders were fulfilled in the post-Second World War period when Beth Israel became British Columbia’s largest Jewish congregation. Its substantial, modernistic new synagogue, its elitist image and relative liberalism attracted many young professionals and businessmen, who were flocking to British Columbia in numbers from the Prairies and Eastern Canada. By the time of its fiftieth anniversary in 1982, Beth Israel’s membership had peaked at 770 families. In 2007, Beth Israel marked the seventy-fifth anniversary of its congregation.

Congregations Today

This brief period 1947-49 – ninety years after the first Jewish people arrived in British Columbia – saw the building of the new Orthodox
Schara Tzedeck and the Conservative Beth Israel synagogues along the Oak Street corridor, which was fast becoming the focus of Jewish life in the province. The Sephardic Beth Hamidrash, Reform Temple Sholom, Chabad-Lubavitch Centre, new Jewish Community Centre and the Louis Brier Home and Hospital would follow in future years. Thus in the aftermath of the Second World War, the Vancouver Jewish community would become equipped to accommodate a new influx of people derived from an international migration as well as a westward movement within Canada.

VI. CONCLUSION

Judaism is a religion developed among the ancient Hebrews, characterized by the belief in one transcendent God who revealed Himself to man through Abraham, Moses and the Prophets, and a life lived in accordance with the Laws as recorded in the Five Books of Moses and the rabbinic writings. The Jewish people are: an ethnic unit; a nationality; a people into which a person is born and belongs or into which he/she is formally converted; a conformity to cultural, social, linguistic and religious rites and traditions; or simply a way of life. Judaism embraces all of these things, however well a person lives up to these definitions.

The majority population of British Columbia, certainly in its first century, derived from a British Christian background. The influence of Judaism on Christian civilization has been profound. The Chief Rabbi of the British Empire, on his visit to Victoria and Vancouver in 1921, reminded his Christian audiences that Judaism is the mother religion. Indeed, their common heritage – the Old Testament, Sabbath, Psalms, Prophetic readings and sermons – all come via Judaism. The assiduous reporting of Jewish religious and festival ceremonies by the early general press in both Victoria and Vancouver attests to an insatiable curiosity to learn more about “God’s Peculiar People.” It may be rightly claimed that Judaism’s emphasis on peace, justice, righteousness, the sacredness of life and the brotherhood of humankind, founded on the centrality of God, has contributed to western democracy and social reform.
Jewish people first came to Vancouver Island, British Columbia’s mainland and the Pacific North West 150 years ago during a succession of gold rushes and subsequent, permanent non-Native settlement of these regions. The Jewish newcomers were as far away as one could be on the North American continent from the vital centres of Jewish culture, religion and practice in the United States and Europe. Moreover they came in small numbers, often to remote and impermanent resource and supply towns; or in wartime to strategic military centres where a quorum for religious services could be raised only sporadically at peak periods.

The two cities in British Columbia where a reasonable semblance of a Jewish lifestyle could be conducted for a protracted length of time were Victoria, the capital and principal city in the 19th century, and in the 20th century, Vancouver, the mainland terminus of the transcontinental railways and chief population centre. Even so, the Jewish population of the province has been traditionally minuscule compared to the total population, ranging from 104 members or 0.2 per cent in 1881 to 29,875 or 0.8 per cent in 2001. It is 136 years since Louis Gold, the first Jew to settle in Vancouver, arrived at the village of Granville. Metro Vancouver is now home to some 25,000 or 80 per cent of the Jewish residents of B.C. In hindsight, it seems remarkable that a viable Jewish community could organize, persist and even flourish in Vancouver over a span of five generations amongst the forces of assimilation, secularization, multiculturalism and, in current times, soaring intermarriage rates.

Dispersed over the world from their motherland for two millennia, the Jewish people arrived in British Columbia from many countries and many traditions. While as a whole they believed in the basic tenets of Judaism, as we have seen, their style of worship and synagogue practice varied. Our fully committed Orthodox forefathers followed the Torah (the Sacred Scriptures) and the complex logic and reasoning of the Talmud. To them secular learning was necessary for little more than earning a living.

Their protagonist was Reform Judaism, which caught on widely in
the United States in an attempt to modify Judaism to conform to the American culture, economy and lifestyle. In British Columbia and in Canada as a whole, Reform practices were slow to develop until the second half of the 20th century. Today a Vancouver moderate-Reform congregation is challenging the other denominations to become the largest Jewish congregation in the Lower Mainland.

Backed by the learned Jewish Theological Seminary in New York and a strong organization in the United Synagogue of America (including Canada), Conservative Judaism came forth in the 20th century to bridge the gap between traditionalism and modernism. The Conservative platform has been described as “the unity of the Jewish people and its diversity.” This form of Judaism has attracted a large following in Canada. Today in British Colombia the principal Conservative synagogues are in Vancouver, Richmond, West Vancouver and Victoria.

Since the Second World War, international demographics have multiplied the number and diversity of religious practices in Canada. At last count, there are twenty-six Jewish congregations in British Columbia, twenty-one of them in Metro Vancouver, four in Victoria and one in Kelowna. These congregations encompass such divisions and subdivisions as Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Sephardic, Chabad, Traditional, Progressive, Egalitarian and Renewal, as well as a Centre for Secular Jewish Culture. In addition, there are a number of informal Jewish communities in small towns throughout B.C.

This paper has concentrated on the practice of Judaism and its key personalities in British Columbia from its small beginnings in 1858 to the end of the Second World War. The exponential post-war growth will require the study of a future historian.
VII. GLOSSARY

**Aron Kodesh**: Holy Ark; cabinet containing Scrolls of the Law.

**Ashkenazic, Ashkenazim**: originally German-Jewish; later applied to all Eastern European Jews.

**Bar Mitzvah**: Son of the Commandment; the age of thirteen, at which a male Jew assumes full religious obligations.

**Bat Mitzvah**: Daughter of the Commandment; the age of twelve or thirteen, at which a female Jew assumes full religious obligations, in non-Orthodox congregations.

**Bimah**: altar; an elevated platform in the synagogue on which stands a desk from where the Torah is read; there may also be a pulpit for the rabbi to deliver his or her sermon.

**B'nai Brith**: Sons of the Covenant; world's oldest and largest Jewish service organization.

**Bris Milah, Brit Milah**: Covenant; the act and ceremony of circumcision.

**Chabad, Habad**: a trend in the Hasidic movement; a charismatic communal religious movement, which arose in Eastern Europe in the second half of the 18th century.

**Chanukah**: see Hanukah.

**Chasidic**: see Hasidim.

**Chag Hamatzoth**: Holiday of the matzos; Passover.

**Chazzan**: cantor; person who leads the singing or religious services in the synagogue.

**Cheder**: a religious elementary school.

**Chevra Kadisha**: Holy Friends; Hebrew burial society.

**Chofetz Chaim**: he who desires life; pseudonym of Israel Meir Kahan, 19th century Talmudist of Vilna, Poland, after the title of one of his ethical works.

**Decalogue**: the Ten Sayings; the Ten Commandments.

**Diaspora**: the expulsion and dispersion of the Jews from Israel; life outside of Israel.

**Emancipation**: abolition of inequities imposed on Jews in various countries; their recognition as equals; and the formal granting of the rights and duties of citizenship.

**Emanu-El**: God is with us.
Feast of Av: traditional day of mourning on the 9th of Av (generally in August), commemorating the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem.

Gabbai: a lay official who assists with the synagogue service.

Gaon: outstanding scholar; title given to the head of a rabbinical academy.

Hachnosas, Hachnasat Orchim: “the welcoming of guests” or hospitality; commandment to provide poor transients with shelter and food.

Haggadah: book containing the Passover Seder service.

Halakha: to go; a generic term for the whole legal system of Judaism embracing all the detailed laws and observances.

Hanukkah: Festival of Lights; an eight-day celebration commemorating the victory of Judah Maccabee over the Syrian king Antiochus Epiphanes and rededication of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Hasidim, Chasidic: pietists who maintain a high standard in observing the religious and moral standards of Orthodox Judaism.

Haskalah: enlightenment; a philosophical and sociocultural trend starting in Germany in the 1770s, promoting the secularization of Jewish life.

High Holy Days, High Holidays: the two days of the Jewish New Year, and the Day of Atonement eight days later, are regarded as the holiest days of the year and are devoted to prayer.

Jehovah Shekina: a Christian expression for God’s divine presence on earth.

Kapotteh: a surcoat worn by clerics.

Knights of Pythias: a benevolent and fraternal order devoted to peace.

Kol Nidre: solemn opening prayer at the service on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Kosher, Kashrut: ritually fit to consume; food prepared according to the dietary laws.

Lantzman: person from the same town, country or district.

Matzos, Matzoth: unleavened bread consumed on Passover; symbolic of the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt without waiting for the bread to rise.

Melamed: learned person; a teacher.

Mezuzah: portions from the Pentateuch in a small box attached to the doorpost of a Jewish home.
Mikvah: a pool used for ritual immersion.

Minyan: the quorum of ten adult male Jews required for Orthodox religious service; in non-Orthodox congregations, any ten adult Jews.

Mizrachi: east; a Middle Eastern Jew; religious Zionism.

Mohel: a man who performs circumcisions according to Jewish religious law.

Musaf: additional prayers recited on the Sabbath and festivals following Shachrit, the first of the three daily prayer services.

Ner Tamid: the eternal light placed over the aron kodesh or bimah.

Oneg Shabbat: delight of the Sabbath; refreshments served at the end of the Sabbath service.

Pentateuch: the five Books of Moses.

Pesach, Passover: the eight-day spring holiday which commemorates Israel’s deliverance from enslavement in Egypt over 3,200 years ago, as recounted in the Book of Exodus.

Pogrom: Russian word denoting an attack accompanied by destruction, looting, murder and rape carried out by the Christian population against the Jews.

Purim: festival commemorating the delivery of the Jews of Persia from Haman’s plot to kill them, as recounted in the Book of Esther.

Rabbi: master, teacher; a Jew trained and qualified to interpret the Halakhah or Jewish Law; official spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation.

Rebbe: Yiddish for rabbi; title generally applied to a Hasidic rabbi who is head of a yeshiva.

Rebbetzin: a rabbi’s wife.

Rosh Hashanah: head of the year; the Jewish New Year according to the lunar calendar; a two-day celebration in the fall where Jews gather together for synagogue service and prayers in preparation for Yom Kippur.

Seder, Sedorim (pl): order; the Passover home service.

Sefer Torah, Sifrei Torah (pl): The Hebrew Scrolls of the Law containing the Five Books of Moses handwritten by a scribe on parchment.

Sephardic, Sephardim, Sephardi (pl): Spanish or Oriental Jewry.

Shammas: synagogue servant or sexton.

Shavuot: Feast of Weeks; the harvest festival; commemorating the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai.
**Shochet**: a man trained to slaughter animals or fowl in conformance with kosher requirements.

**Shofar**: a ram’s horn blown in the service for the New Year and to mark the end of the Day of Atonement.

**Shtetl**: a village or small town in Eastern Europe.

**Sidur, Sidurim (pl)**: the daily prayer book.

**Simcha**: happiness; joy; a festive celebration.

**Smicha**: rabbinic ordination

**Tallis, Tallisim, Tallit, Tallitot (pl)**: shawls worn during synagogue prayers; in Orthodox congregations, only males.

**Talmud, Talmudic, Talmudics**: Rabbinic explication of the Law, ethics, customs and history ranking next to the Hebrew Bible in significance. It was completed in the 5th century C.E., one version in Jerusalem and the other in Babylon.

**Talmud Torah**: an elementary educational institution to study the Talmud and the Torah.

**Tefillin**: phylacteries; leather cases containing quotations from the Pentateuch, worn on the forehead and on the left arm during morning prayers; in Orthodox congregations, only males.

**Torah**: teaching, instruction; the scrolls containing the Five Books of Moses.

**Yeshiva, Yeshivot (pl)**: religious school; a rabbinical seminary.

**Yiddish**: Jewish language; vernacular spoken by European Jews, using the Hebrew alphabet but comprised largely of German words, with a sprinkling of Hebrew and other tongues.

**Yom Kippur**: Holy Day; Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year in which Jews stand in judgment before God; a day of fasting, praying, atoning and asking for forgiveness from God and humankind.

**YMHA**: Young Men’s Hebrew Association, patterned after the YMCA, Young Men’s Christian Association.

**Zionism, Zionist**: a national political movement and its adherents, begun in the late nineteenth century for the re-establishment of a Jewish national home in the ancient homeland of Israel.
VIII. SUMMARY OF SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Under the auspices of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia since its inception in 1970-71, I have made a sometimes “needle in the haystack,” yet surprisingly fruitful effort to search out the beginnings of Jewish life in the province of British Columbia.

The Jewish community and people of Victoria did leave written and pictorial records in the British Columbia Archives. From its inauguration on August 15, 1862 through to 1931, Congregation Emanu-El kept minutes of its board and general meetings, handwritten in English. As well, the daily newspapers, the *Colonist* and *Times*, amply covered Jewish business, social and community events through the years.

In Vancouver, the task of researching this history has been an arduous one because most of our Yiddish-speaking-and-writing pioneer forebears from Eastern Europe had the basics of the English language still to learn on their arrival. They had little knowledge of the rules of order in conducting or recording a meeting and consequently left us with few records. No congregational minutes have been discovered until the inauguration of Beth Israel Congregation in 1932.

A number of the secular Jewish organizations, B’nai Brith, Vancouver Jewish Community Chest, Aid Societies, Vancouver Council of Jewish Women, Hadassah, Canadian Jewish Congress and others did keep early records of their activities.

Items on remote British Columbia Jewry appeared sporadically in the Eastern-based *Canadian Jewish News. The Jew in Canada* (A.D. Hart, ed.), published in Toronto and Montreal in 1926, was the first biographical-pictorial volume to cover prominent Jewish men and a few women of the time, as well as sketches of early congregations and community organizations, but included only a small number of entries from British Columbia. A smaller biographical volume, *Canadian Jewry* (Zvi Cohen, ed.), appeared in 1933. Notwithstanding the small coverage given to British Columbia in these publications, through surviving documents, newspaper searches, oral histories and photographs, I was able to
reconstruct a reasonably accurate panorama of the development of Jewish religious and educational institutions in Vancouver during its formative years.

While there were a few sporadic forerunners in the 1920s, such as the Vancouver Jewish Bulletin published in the print shop of Isidor Director, and the mimeographed Community Centre News, no regular weekly Jewish press appeared in Vancouver until 1930. However, I am indebted to the Vancouver daily newspapers of the time, the World, News-Advertiser, Province and Sun, which had sufficient curiosity and interest to send out gentile reporters (however unknowledgeable of Jewish customs), to record key events in the formation of the Jewish community of Vancouver.

In particular the Daily World, Vancouver’s first evening newspaper, contains articles on the beginnings of both the first Orthodox and Reform congregations in the city. It was a liberal paper, co-founded in 1888 by J.C. McLagan, a veteran journalist from Ontario, and his wife Sara Maclure, the British Columbia-raised daughter of a Royal Engineer, and a telegrapher by trade. When her husband died in 1902, the formidable Sara carried on as the first woman to own a daily newspaper in Canada. In 1905, she sold the paper to Louis D. Taylor, an anti-establishment maverick who would become a multi-term mayor of Vancouver. In 1911, he participated in the dedication of Vancouver’s first synagogue.

Since its inception seventy-eight years ago in February 1930, the Jewish Western Bulletin has been the encyclopedia of Jewish community events in Vancouver. For thirty-two years, this weekly newspaper was community-owned. In December 1962, under long-time editors and publishers Samuel and Mona Kaplan (1960-95, 1998-99) and their successors, it became and remains independently edited and published. In July 2005, the name was changed to the Jewish Independent.

An article of this magnitude requires the support of many people. Ann Krieger and Irene Dodek conducted taped interviews of the recollections of many early pioneers. Diane Rodgers, the Jewish Historical
Society archivist for twelve years, meticulously arranged and curated the community records. In the later stages of the project, Lindsay Williams, a history student, and Janine Johnston, the current archivist, researched and filled in several gaps in this record. Janine also tracked down the photographs used in this production. My editor, Ronnie Tessler, with her grammatical skills and profound knowledge of Yiddishkeit (the language, customs and manners of these European-derived people), added a fluency and flavour to the manuscript that otherwise would be missing. Any errors, omissions or misinterpretations that may remain are solely the responsibility of the author.

Cyril E. Leonoff
July 2008
IX. END NOTES

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The Author

Cyril Edel Leonoff was born in Winnipeg, Man., in 1925. He is the grandson of Edel Brotman, a homesteader and rabbi of the Wapella, Sask., farm colony, 1889-1906. Over a period of sixty years, Cyril has been a resident of three West Coast cities, New Westminster, Seattle and Vancouver.

A civil engineer by profession, Leonoff is also a graduate of the Public History Program at Simon Fraser University. He has authored and edited a number of books and papers on engineering and historical topics.

In 1970-74, Leonoff was the founding president of the Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia. For his work, The Jewish Farmers of Western Canada, in 1985 he was awarded the Margaret McWilliams Medal of the Manitoba Historical Society. In 2007, he received the Distinguished Service Award of the Association for Canadian Jewish Studies. He is currently the Historian Emeritus of the JHSBC.

Cyril Leonoff, with his wife Faye and family, lives in the Southlands equestrian neighbourhood of Vancouver.
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