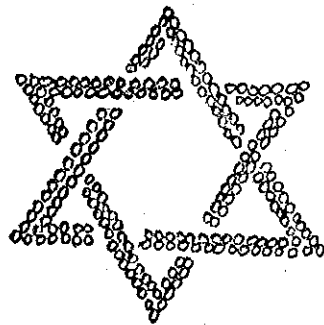


HISTORY OF THE
NORTH DAKOTA
JEWISH COMMUNITY



ISADORE PAPERMASTER

THIS IS A COPY OF A TYPESCRIPT RECEIVED SEPTEMBER 1, 1959, FROM
DAVID S. PAPERMASTER (NEPHEW OF I. PAPERMASTER)

Thief River Falls, Minnesota
November 28, 1956

During the past few years I had planned that sooner or later I must take time to record the origin and development of the various Jewish communities in North Dakota where I had spent most of my life. More principally, that of the Grand Forks Jewish community because of its being so closely bound up with the life of my father, the late Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster, who had served there continuously for 43 years. It was only after I had retired from private business that I believed that I could find time to do some research on the history of the North Dakota Jewish communities. Early in 1956, reading the Minneapolis Jewish Journal, I noted an item stating that Rabbi Gunther Plaut of St. Paul planned to write a history of the Jews of Minnesota and the Dakotas and this really aroused my interest. I wrote to Rabbi Plaut offering to supply some material which I believed would be of value to him. Rabbi Plaut graciously accepted my offer and indicated that he was particularly interested in the period and service rendered by my father of whom he had heard a great deal. This was his reply to my original letter:

St. Paul, Minnesota
January 26, 1956

Dear Mr. Papermaster:

I was delighted to get your note. Of course, I know about your family, but I am very happy that you are ready to give me

additional information.

Actually, I am very disappointed that the previously planned North Dakota Historical project seems to have stalled--but I am really in no position to include the Dakotas in my history except in some marginal fashion. There are certain aspects of the settlements in Devil's Lake and Painted Woods which are directly related to the Minnesota history, and they will be included. Also, where in some cases, like that of your father, there is a direct relationship to the entire area, I am most interested. Therefore, taking advantage of your kind offer, I would like your reply to the following specific questions:

In addition to Grand Forks, which area did your father serve? A short biographical note and full name of your father and when he came Northwest. Was he an ordained Rabbi? Did he perform other functions besides those strictly Rabbinical? How many families did he serve in his community? Do you have a good picture of your father or personal recollections, or stories told by him which recount some personal recollections, or stories told by him which recount some significant experiences in serving the community?

I am particularly interested in what type of Jewish life he found, in relationship to non-Jews, difficulties encountered, unusual incidents and the like. In your own recollection, are there outstanding incidents which would relate to the early life in that part of the country, especially before 1900. Do you have any interesting documents, clippings or other written or printed material which might be of interest to me?

With best regards and many thanks for your help.

(Signed) Sincerely,
W. Gunther Plaut
Rabbi

I replied to Rabbi Plaut on February 9, 1956, stating:

Dear Dr. Plaut:

I am pleased to have your letter of January 26th.

It is now 22 years since my father passed away and much of his accumulated material, correspondence, records, library has been distributed among members of the family, gone astray or destroyed. Members of the family have migrated to all parts of the country. I shall get in touch with them for whatever material there still may be in their possession but I know that I shall have to rely on my memories.

I am preparing notes covering some of the questions of interest to you.

Sincerely,

I. Papermaster

As I proceeded in this undertaking I am beginning to realize the difficulties in research. My two older brothers have already passed away. The oldest, Nathan, could have provided me with invaluable information covering our childhood days in Lithuania as he was only eight years old when we first arrived in Grand Forks. Our mother had passed away just before we left for the United States. With letter, correspondence records could add very little to what I was already familiar with from my own memories except for occasional experiences which may have taken place after my own marriage. Those together with

the fact that I consider myself only a poor amateur writer only added further to my difficulties. I decided to consult Rabbi Schwarzchild of Temple Beth El in Fargo where we lived until recently. The good Rabbi advised, in fact insisted, that I go on with the work to the best of my ability and to provide as much detail as possible. "Some day," he said, "what you record will be very useful in preparing a history of the Jews in North Dakota." I found as I proceeded that it will be necessary to include much of the history of the Grand Forks Jewish community, its personalities, its Jewish interests, development and, much to my deep regret, its present decline. Added also to my other difficulties in preparing this record is the fact of illness of both myself and my wife taking place shortly after my first correspondence with Dr. Plaut which later necessitated changing our residence to this city where we may have the medical attention we required from our first son-in-law, Dr. Milton D. Starekow, who heads a clinic and is highly regarded by the residents of this community.

I am indebted to my wife for much of the early history of my father's boyhood, since her grandmother who was also my paternal grandmother lived at their home and related much of her family's life to her as a child. These stories provided me with vivid background for those early days in Lithuania, where my father was born.

How and why a young man born, reared and trained for the Rabbinate in the most Orthodox Lithuanian Jewish community of Kovno under the guidance of the then famous Rabbi Yitzch Elchanan, was transported to the vast open prairies of North Dakota in 1890 and remained there approximately 45 years of his life in the service of his calling and his people, I shall try to relate to the best of my abilities.

Chapter 1

My father, Binyomin Papermeister, was born in the fall of 1860 in the village of Anolova in the vicinity of Kovno, Lithuania, then part of the Russian Empire. He was the seventh child of a family of nine children, four sons of which he was the youngest, and five daughters of Nissen and Etel Papermeister as the family name was then pronounced. Nissen Papermeister was a concessionaire of the creamery interests of the Polish nobelman, landowner of both the village and surrounding lands. The children received their first training in the rudiments of Judaism from their parents, particularly their father, who had himself been a student at the famous Slobodker Yeshiva in Kovno. Of the boys, only two had proceeded to study for the Rabbinate. An older brother, Shmuel, received his Smicha or ordination at sixteen years of age and was considered a masmid and in later years served as Chief Rabbi in Springfield, Mass. My father received his smicha at eighteen years of age. Neither he nor his older brother considered the matter of using their smicha as a means of earning their livelihood as a professional Rabbi. It was common among men of that generation to attend the Yeshiva, bright students received smicha or ordination as Rabbis some with the special distinction of Yodin, and rather than go into the Rabbinate professionally, to prefer other fields. Reading biographies of leading Jews who were born in Russia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who became known in the fields of science, law, medicine, literature, business, etc. is ample proof of that situation among Jewish men of that period. Neither my father nor my uncle considered using their Rabbinical knowledge and ordination until their decision to come to America.

Slobodker Yeshiva was at that period under the jurisdiction of the renowned Reb Yitzchok Elchanan, in whose memory the now famous Orthodox Yeshiva University in New York City is presently established. It was then famous for offering ultra Orthodox courses of study which were required of all students. The Russian government, however, required that certain hours be devoted to both the teaching and study of the Russian language, principally reading and writing, beyond which it was not concerned. This enabled my father to read and write Russian fluently. Besides Yiddish, he also spoke German, Lithuanian and Polish. As mentioned earlier, he received his earliest training at home from his father but at seven or eight years of age, he together with his older brothers were attending the Yeshiva at Kovno, the year round, except for the Passover period and the High Holy Days. At the time of my father's boyhood, the Haskallah movement had already commenced to penetrate the walls of the ultra-Orthodox Yeshiva where even the study of the Prophets were prohibited. My father often related how he and other students would keep their Tanach hidden within the Talmud volume from the prying eyes of their teachers in order to study this literature clandestinely. To read Isaiah or Jeremiah with the Malbim commentary was blasphemy. But my father loved it. I vividly recall his enthusiasm and the clearness of his interpretations of the Prophets when he taught my brothers and myself and Malbim was always his favorite commentary. The Congregation at Grand Forks would always love to come and hear him discourse the Book of Job during Shiva period in the mourners' home between Minha and Ma'ariv. But I'm ahead of my story. Students at the Yeshiva would forego many a meal, made available to them by generous

families to whom serving meals to Yeshiva students was considered a great privilege or mitzva, to take special lessons in modern Hebrew and grammar from dedicated young men. This was particularly prohibited. This must have gone on for several years as my father was quite proficient in the then modern Hebrew and grammar which he also in turn taught us in the early days in Grand Forks. Yet despite all of the difficulties and obstructions, he was able to master the knowledge required at the Yeshiva to obtain his smicha at eighteen years of age. It was also in that year that it was necessary for him to report for military service in the Russian army. The next two years he was chiefly occupied in keeping out of the hands of the gendarmerie who had orders for his arrest for his evasion of military service. If caught he doubtless would have spent a few years in Siberia. He had a few close calls but he somehow managed to stay clear of the police until the period of his military service had expired. In a country like Czarist Russia, I would suppose that this too was quite an accomplishment.

In 1880 he met and married Ethel Sudarsky at whose home he was then engaged as a teacher for the family's children. In that same year his father passed away and my oldest brother, born a year later, was named after him. The income from teaching was hardly sufficient to support himself after marriage, his older brother of whom I spoke above advised and urged him to take the specialized study of Schita and Milah which together with teaching would enable him to support his family. This appealed to him and he applied himself diligently to this specialized study and work and mastered this specialized field and received his Kabbalah from the Kovno Rabbinate in his

twenty-fourth year. He also was endowed with a beautiful and powerful tenor voice which even in his student days was sought after as a choir boy with some of the cantors in Kovno. He had also developed a talent for public sermonizing during his student days when together with other fellow students they would vie with one another in public discussions on the portion of the week or in Talmudical pros and cons. Yet despite these accomplishments and talents the matter of providing a livelihood for his growing family was still a serious problem. The thoughts about America, however, did not particularly enter his mind in that regard. It was only when he reminded himself about his experiences during his few years of evading military service in Czarist Russia. He vowed that his sons would never serve the Czar. He realized that his sons would never serve the Czar. He realized that his only answer to that problem was America.

The first ten years of his married life were rather uneventful during which time four sons were born to him adding to his responsibilities. With his abilities as teacher, sochet, mohel, and cantor he managed a meager existence. His natural gift of voice made him a much sought after cantor in the smaller communities and congregations around Kovno. I am certain that had he been able to make a study of music he would have made a great career as a professional cantor. I spoke to him about this at one time. He replied that in his day he had met several great cantors but they were forced to live a rather nomadic life, staying in one place only during the High Holidays but the rest of the year it was continuous travel from community to community from one Sabbath to another. He did not like this type of life.

It was in the late summer of 1890, just before the High Holidays,

during the month of Ellul of that year that a messenger arrived at our home in Alexote, in the province of Kovno, that my father was to report without delay to the office of the Chief Rabbinate in Kovno. The messenger bringing no details of the reason for that summons quite naturally created a good deal of excitement. All he could say was that the call came directly from the Chief Rabbi himself and that my father was to return with him. Fears of one sort or another were ever present among Jewish families in Czarist Russia, even in the case of a call from so eminent and honorable a place as the Chief Rabbinate, which in itself was also a government recognized institution. My mother, who was not in the best of health, was quite apprehensive of the situation. My father, who had his experiences with the government, was not quite that nervous about the call, but naturally enough, was very curious. But since the messenger could not enlighten him, he had to await his arrival at the Rabbinate. On his arrival there, he was introduced to the head of a family named Zurakov who were on their way to America from the Ukraine section of Russia, but had had instructions to stop at the Kovno Rabbinate for its recommendation of a man who would come with them to America to serve a community completely as a teacher, schochet, mohel, cantor and so forth. It was Rabbi Isaac Elchanan's opinion that my father was just the man who could fill the requirements of that community. He had, therefore, sent for him with the suggestion that he accept the offer this family made. My father was quite overcome with this sudden possibility and rather hesitatingly replied that he would have to consider the matter and to discuss it first with his wife and family. To my father, the prospect of going to America was quite exciting. He hated Czarism

vehemently and remembered his vow that his children would never serve the Czar and now with four sons he realized that he must not relinquish the opportunity now offered to save his sons from the hated Czarist government. He told me later that this was his one compelling reason for accepting the offer made to him. He did not think that this insistence could have resulted in his not going to America. He only regretted later that he did not insist that his family be taken along with him. The prospect of going to America was overwhelming. The fact that Fargo, North Dakota, was this family's destination and that it was two thousand miles west of New York where several members of my mother's family had already emigrated, or that North Dakota was then a very sparsely settled country generally did not even enter his mind. All that mattered was that it was America, the land of the free. My mother, who was then not in the best of health, was quite apprehensive about his leaving her and the family but she did not deter him from going, knowing that members of the family were already there and with the assurance that she and the family would be sent for as soon as he was settled. But alas, that was not to be for she passed away within a few months after he left. When he received a personal consultation with Rabbi Isaac Elchanan he was rather plainly told that not only must he consider this an opportunity for himself, but rather that it was his Jewish duty to go with these people who urgently required the services he had been trained to render, particularly to the scattered Jewish communities of America. This I believe had much to do not only with his decision to go with these people, but also to remain in North Dakota for the balance of his lifetime. He often repeated this statement which was used by community leaders later

when he had opportunities to go to larger Jewish communities. He had an awe-inspiring regard for the Chief Rabbi of Kovno. I recall a framed photograph of the famous Rabbi hanging in our living room in the home in Grand Forks.

Immediately after Chanuka of 1890 my father left our home for this adventurous trip to America, arriving in New York on January 2, 1891. He was met there by a married brother and a married sister, who objected to his continuing the trip to North Dakota. They used every available argument, the distance from New York, pleading with him that the country was wild, chiefly inhabited by Indians and even questioned the possibility of any Jews living there. They offered to compensate for the expenses of his voyage, but it was all to no avail. He had promised the Kovno Rabbi that he would go with these people to their destination, and go he must. After visiting the family and relatives, he proceeded on his way to Fargo, North Dakota, arriving there about the end of January, 1891.

Fargo, however, and to his great sorrow, proved to be a very keen disappointment. The family with whom he had travelled had quite innocently enough exaggerated the community conditions from information furnished them by their relatives in Fargo, who, perhaps for purely selfish reasons encouraged their bringing my father with them. They, too, were discouraged with Fargo, as they did not remain long in that community. There was not even a semblance of a Jewish community. There were a few Jewish families, most of whom were German-Jewish extraction and were not interested, and the remaining families were in themselves only recent arrivals from Eastern Europe who were too poor to even meet their own family requirements, let

alone the responsibility of maintaining a Rabbi. There were about fifteen Jewish families in all. The brothers Alex and Max Stern had already been in Fargo for several years and were all well known as prominent businessmen in the community. There were also Hugo and Herman Bachemheimer, I. Herbst, Maurice and Aaron Kaufman, Charles Barenstein, Jacob Ackerman, Wolf Rutz, Jacob Shcotch, the father-in-law of the Mr. Zurackov who had arranged to bring my father, William Shcotch, Nathan Horwitz, Samuel and Alex Zurackov. It was with the greatest difficulty that a minyon was gathered occasionally for a yahrzeit. A minyon for the Sabbath was unthinkable. My father, fortunately, had brought with him a Sefer Torah, a gift of my mother's family before he left for America. There was no other in Fargo at the time. Throughout his career he used this Sefer Torah on all of his trips throughout the northwest where he was called for various purposes in communities where there was no organized community. It is still in possession of the Congregation in Grand Forks. A short time after his arrival in Fargo he made the acquaintance of Mr. Alex Stern who was shocked to discover that he had been brought to Fargo directly from Lithuania to serve so few people. Mr. Stern was very angry with those people who had taken it upon themselves to break up a man's home and hopes for no good purpose, and he advised my father to seek a larger Jewish community where his services were in need, and would be appreciated. He offered to aid Father in this search. They struck up a personal friendship which lasted throughout the lifetime of both. The situation in Fargo was very disappointing to my Father. He realized that there was no future for him in Fargo, and he was too proud to write his family in New York about his

situation although they would have been most anxious to have him return there. But one thing he was certain of and that was that his future was bound up with this country to which he had just come and he began to look about for the possibility of making a change. Before taking any new step he resolved to become a citizen of the United States, and he filed for a Declaration of Intention in Cass County, North Dakota, on March 23, 1891.

At about this time, Mr. Nathan Horwitz, who had just returned from one of his trips in the country, advised Father that there was a thriving Jewish community at Grand Forks, about 75 miles to the North of Fargo, and that this community was seeking the services of a Rabbi. But Father, having had his experience in Fargo, was somewhat skeptical about there being a sizeable community there, but since he had nothing to lose he decided to make the trip to see for himself. At about this time he had also received the heartrending and saddening news of my mother's passing. She died on the 18th day of Adar which corresponded to March 28, 1891. It was in this despondent and saddened frame of mind that he arrived in Grand Forks just a week or ten days before the Feast of Passover. He was encouraged to find that there were approximately 60 Jewish families, most of whom were in need of services, and so he made arrangements to remain over the holiday period on a so-called trial basis. He was not too certain about the possibility of being successfully accepted there. He found that most of the families were originally from the Ukraine section of Russia, a few Roumanian families and Galician (now Polish) families. There were only five or six families of German origin. As is well known, Jews coming from southern Russia, Poland, and Roumania were

strongly influenced by their Chasidic background. Their Yiddish dialect was different, they pronounced the Hebrew differently than the Lithuanian pronunciation. The Rabbi felt that his pronunciation of the Hebrew in the prayers and the reading of the Torah would sound as strange to them as theirs sounded to him. He even had some difficulty in understanding their ordinary conversation, but he decided that if he were going to remain there he would have to adjust himself to their dialect and customs, although he drew the line on certain superstitions of which I may write later, that some of the families brought with them from the old country. He was the only Lithuanian in a community of "Russians" who prided themselves with the fact that they used the Nusach S'fard which to some extent is still in use in Grand Forks to this date. The community at that time consisted chiefly of younger men and women who were anxious to adjust themselves to a new life in this country, and when they discovered that in this young Rabbi they had one who had liberal views in the practice of Judaism, they were happy and enthusiastic. Among his most enthusiastic and ardent supporters were Mr. and Mrs. Max Rabinovich, a recently married couple, Nathan Greenberg and his family of grown sons and daughters, the Goldstein family of five sons and three married daughters, the Joseph Aronovitch family with a grown family of four sons and three daughters, the Schreiemann, later Sherman family of several married daughters, and the two Horwitch families, Joseph and David with grown sons and daughters, S. Linetzky and Samuel Grossman, Michael Fishman, Harry Pyes and family, Nathan Frandel family, Harris Ziskin family, Kieve Golden, Marcus Seliger, Joseph Silverman family, a number of single men whose families were still in

Europe and a number of unmarried single men such as Simon and Solomon Levy, George Schwam, Moshe Sprung, Jacob Goldberg, five Giller brothers, Jacob, Julius, Moses, Joseph and Samuel, Samuel Simon and others whose names I cannot recall. Among the German-Jewish families there were the Ephriam brothers, Fank and Harry; Aaron Apel, Joseph Isaacs, Isaac Isaacs, Max Stern, Max Wittelshofer, George Platkey, Jacob Wineman. Mr. and Mrs. Pyes were always referred to as the "Fetter and Mume" because they were the uncle and aunt to the Greenberg children, the leading and largest family of the new community. Mr. and Mrs. Seliger were known as the "Rebbe" and the "Rebbetzin" because Mr. Seliger had been teacher to the children of the community, and they carried this designation the rest of their lives. Mrs. Seliger, although she remained a widow for many years, was nevertheless called the "Rebbetzin" all of her life. It was amongst the younger men and women of the community, together with the moral and financial support of the German-Jewish families, that the new Rabbi received his support and influenced his decision to remain in Grand Forks.

During the first Passover service to the community, which was to be on a so-called trial basis, he was put to a rather severe test, religiously speaking. In later years he delighted in retelling this experience. As he had arrived only a few days before the Passover, his entire time was taken up with last minute preparations for the Holiday, providing Kosher meat, killing of fowl, providing Matzo and other Passover necessities and he also attended meetings of community leaders. The day prior to Passover, as it was a traditional fast day in behalf of the first born, Father was both tired and hungry by the time of the Seder service at the home of his hosts, the Greenberg

family, with whom he had made his home and to which all had gathered. The services at an improvised Synagogue in a downtown hall, had been rather lengthy, as everyone had wanted to meet the new Rabbi and Cantor. Upon arriving at the Greenbergs, Father quite naturally expected the host, Mr. Greenberg, to conduct the Seder service. Some time passed, and Father noticed that groups were whispering to one another, and finally losing patience, Father inquired of the host why he did not proceed with the Seder service. "Well," he replied, "we are waiting for you, as the Rabbi, to conduct the Seder service." "In that case," Father replied, "let us go to the table." Pulling up an ordinary chair, he waited for everyone to be seated, and proceeded with the Kiddish and the orderly ceremonial of the Seder as recorded in the Haggadah, much to the delight of his host and all of the younger people present. Having been accustomed to Chassidic ceremonials they anticipated that the Rabbi would expect to be provided with a special couch, white robe, hose, streimel and so forth. However, I must add here that I do not recall any Seder at our home when my father did not don the traditional white robe, but always used his regular dining room arm chair with a small pillow used chiefly under which to hide the Affikomen. Before the Seder service was over it had already spread by grapevine throughout the community just what had happened at the Greenberg home, about how the new Rabbi had conducted the Seder service. The younger people were delighted, while the older men and more orthodox members either grumbled or openly denounced him for so wanton a disrespect for tradition. At services the following morning an extra large congregation was in attendance and a buzz of excitement prevailed. Taking advantage of the situation and the

attendance that morning, he decided to make his position clear and understandable in his sermon to the congregation. He repeated to them the promise that he had given Rabbi Isaac Elchanan to bring Judaism that he had been taught at the Yeshiva to the community where he settled, and that he would never deviate from the laws as expounded by authorities in Biblical, Talmudic and Rabbinic interpretations, but in addition to laws there were also customs in Jewish life. But throughout Jewish history customs in Jewish life had varied according to conditions and circumstances in localities, communities, and countries from which all of them had come. In Russia, the government interfered with the Jewish way of life; in this country, we have the liberty to conduct ourselves according to our religious laws which can also guide us to be good citizens. He promised to do his utmost to adjust himself to their ways and practices as was consistent with his knowledge, training and views, that he will do his utmost to reach and preach the Jewish way of life as he understood it and to make available to all Jews who shall come under his jurisdiction and guidance the services that are necessary for them to lead that kind of life. I may say without fear of contradiction that this principle was the guiding spirit of his entire career. He had his detractors, fault finders and critics, some with malice, other with honorable intentions. Some of his critics at the time expressed the opinion that "this Litvak will destroy Judaism in this community." I recall at one congregation meeting, a member criticized him for his supposed laxity in maintaining kashruths in all of the homes of the community. He replied, "I'm sure that the Lord did not send me to Grand Forks to spy on the members and to make sure that they do not mix meat with

milk. People must remember that this is a free country and what they do in their kitchens is their private business."

Up to the time my father arrived in Grand Forks there had not been a regularly organized congregation. But during the week of that first Passover, the Jewish people, at a public meeting decided to organize a Congregation and steps were taken to incorporate. They adopted the official name "The Congregation of the Children of Israel." The incorporators chosen were Max Rabinovich, Harry Goldstein and George Schwam, who were also elected as President, Vice-President and Secretary respectively. My father was selected unanimously as Rabbi of the new congregation. A committee was also chosen to consider ways and means to erect a synagogue. The site selected for the synagogue was at the corner of what is now known as Second Avenue South and Girard Street. The site was donated by a non-Jew, Mr. Budge, and was part of the Budge and Eshelman's addition to Grand Forks. Second Avenue South was almost entirely occupied by Jewish home owners for several blocks as well as its adjoining side streets. I may also add that land on which the Jewish Cemetery is located was also donated by Mr. Budge. The first burial in that cemetery was in 1888. The cumbersome name chosen for the Congregation always indicated to me the anxiety with which the community then wanted to acclimate itself to the American way of life. It can readily be recognized that it was a translation of what they should have called it Congregation B'Nai Israel. The new Synagogue built by an Americanized generation in 1935 renamed it "B'Nai Israel", in a non-Jewish neighborhood. My father, too, being anxious to go along with the congregation in the matter of Americanization, did not use the term or title of Rabbi,

but rather that of Reverend, the term used extensively by Protestant ministers. Only a few orthodox rabbis in the large Eastern cities called themselves Rabbi. Reform Rabbis were always referred to as Doctor so and so. It was later when the term Rabbi, which literally means "Teacher," that he preferred to be called Rabbi.

With his position in Grand Forks now assured, he was faced with the very urgent personal problem of bringing over his family of four motherless children, the oldest, Nathan, about eight, and the youngest just past one year of age. Then there was the matter of remarriage, which of course was obligatory and which was mentioned as one of the objections to his acceptance as Rabbi by a portion of the congregation. By correspondence with his older brother who was able to interest a sister-in-law to accept a proposal of marriage including the responsibility of assuming charge of an already large family of small children without a doubt of great sacrifice on her part, arrangements were completed with some aid from members of the congregation to have the children brought to this country. My mother's brother, our uncle, brought us as far as New York. Another uncle, my father's brother-in-law, Moses Lifshitz, who was coming over to America, accompanied the bride-to-be, Chaya Levanton, met us and continued on to Grand Forks. We four boys had our first meal in Grand Forks at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Max Rabinovitch. The marriage of my father and Chaya Levanton took place on the 15th day of Shebat, well known as a Jewish half-holiday, at the home of Max Rabinovitch, and was performed by a Reverend K. Fagenson, whose name is filed with the Marriage License Bureau in Grand Forks County Court House and dated February 11, 1892. Other early marriage licenses issued to Jewish couples in the early

years were to Adolph Goldstein and Toby Rubensky on February 27, 1893; to Wolf Sherowitz and Bertha Frankel on February 1, 1894; to Abe Goldstein and Sarah Goldstein on April 12, 1894; to Abraham Horwitz and Ana Schein on August 17, 1894; to John Goldstein and Thea Aronovitch on October 8, 1894; to Samuel Giller and Anna Black on November 6, 1894.

I believe that Reverend Fagenson was a resident of Minneapolis and came to Grand Forks to perform the marriage, the witnesses were J. W. Hartstein, the father of Mrs. Rabinovitch and Mr. J. Pyes.

A home was built for us at 105 Girard Street, just for one-half block from the site of the new synagogue, which was being constructed at the time of our arrival in Grand Forks. I believe that the first services in the new synagogue were held for Rosh Hashona on 1892. Although the date on the old synagogue had 1891 on it, I took that to mean the date when the Congregation was first established. Doubtless that construction began in 1891. Financing this structure must have been quite a problem as my father recounted many times that most of the Jews having been peddlers at the time had to mortgage their houses and wagons to make cash available to meet the down payment required on the mortgage. I do know, however, that it was as late as 1910 when the final balance on the mortgage was paid off. When inquiry was made as to the reason why paying off the mortgage was so long delayed, we of the younger generation were told that the contractor who built the synagogue had absconded with the money paid him and left unpaid bills for labor and material which necessitated refinancing. The plans for the building were modeled after the first Kneseth Israel Synagogue in Minneapolis which was located on North

Fifth Street. In 1908 when I first visited Minneapolis, I attended services there on my mother's Yahrzeit and the similarity of the building was most striking. The stained glass window on the sides with a half-circle top and a large circular stained glass window high above the Holy Ark, the position of the Bima and Amud were identical. The original lighting in our synagogue was in the form of several hanging clustered kerosene lamps, one in the center had about twenty lamps in it. It also contained a chain arrangement so that it could be lowered and raised. It was quite an ornate affair. There were several other such lamps throughout the synagogue, but with fewer lamps in each for adequate lighting both for the main auditorium as well as the women's balcony. It was quite a chore to care for all of those lamps for each Sabbath, requiring the attention of one man and several helpers, chiefly recruited from among the boys in the Hebrew school. Modernization later changed this set-up with gas lamps and still later with electric lights. My father was evidently quite enthusiastic about America and particularly the opportunities offered by the continued influx of population in North Dakota. North Dakota was at that time an open prairie country, but it was far from the wild state his relatives in New York had pictured to him. I doubt if he ever saw a real Indian until he had made his first trip to the Devil's Lake area, where a colony of from 50 to 60 Jewish families had settled. And what Indians he may have seen were confined to a restricted reservation that is still in existence. His enthusiasm for North Dakota was evidenced by the enthusiastic letters he wrote to his family in Lithuania, which resulted in his bringing over one after another of family relations. One brother-in-law, Moses Lifshitz,

came over when we, the four sons, were brought to this country; another brother-in-law, Simon Heller, soon followed, then several nephews, Aaron Horwitz, Morris Papermaster, who each in turn later brought additional members of the family. The last of his brothers-in-law who was induced to make North Dakota his future home was Israel Paletz, who came to North Dakota in 1903. His letters to them about North Dakota must have been most enthusiastic. As each of these families had closer family relationships in New York who were most anxious to have them remain in New York, but could not induce them to stay in New York, but rather preferred to go to North Dakota. Doubtless that must have been the attitude of other early pioneers in Grand Forks, as each in turn continued to bring additional members of their families. There is no question in my mind that the "Go West, Young Man" spirit that prevailed in the eastern part of this country in those years must have induced many of our people to venture to this new state (North Dakota was proclaimed a state in 1889) and Grand Forks in particular was considered a boom town because of the activity of the Great Northern Railway and its promoter, the Empire Builder, James J. Hill, familiarly known as "Jim" Hill. Much eastern capital flowed into Grand Forks in those years and some of our people were among the first to take advantage of this situation. Platky's Department Store was the largest in the community, as was Max Wittelshofer's the largest jewelry store, Aaron Apel and Frank Ephriam, the leading men's clothiers. It was through these that many of the new immigrants received their beginning supplies with which to start out as second-hand stores, peddlers and initial credit for grocery supplies, and so forth. These in turn assisted their new arrivals in similar fashion.

Doubtless this was the familiar pattern that was practiced in every Jewish community throughout this great land. I do know, however, that it often happened that the immediate family of the arrival did not have the means with which to start the new arrival off with a small stock of merchandise, and then there was the inevitable collection that began with the Rabbi, who would call in the leading personalities of the community, Max Rabinovich, Nathan Greenberg, Michael Fishman, Harris Ziskin, and before long the new immigrant was on his way to a new life.

I was never able to discover when the first Jewish settler arrived in Grand Forks. I mentioned earlier that there is a marked grave in the Grand Forks cemetery dated in 1888, but there are also several unmarked graves there, which no one could be able to identify. Mr. Michael Fishman told me that he and Nathan Greenberg came to Grand Forks in 1886, and he could not identify those buried in those graves. The colonists, Mr. Fishman told me, that had settled in the Devil's Lake area were a group of about 80 families that were brought to that settlement in 1883, through the influence of the Jewish Colonization Association which had its headquarters in Vienna, doubtless financed by the Jewish philanthropist, Baron de Hirsch. This settlement was located at about thirty miles northwest of Devil's Lake in an area known as Starkweather. There was a post office there known as Ben Zion Post Office in Ramsey County and the postmaster was Ben Zion Greenberg, whose family later moved to Grand Forks, and then on to New York, while Mr. Greenberg himself stayed on the remainder of his life. He was a colorful figure around Ramsey County and Devil's Lake. He was known as a strick vegetarian and in the later

years of his life was a Justice of the Peace and familiarly known throughout that area as Judge Greenberg, highly respected and venerated. Some of the Grand Forks pioneers originated in that colony. Mr. Fishman, Mr. Nathan Greenberg, whose names I already mentioned, as were J. Aronovitch, Moses Goldstein, Joseph Horwitz, Pincus Schrieerman, S. Linetzky, Nathan Frankel, Sam Levy, Moshe Sprung and others who after a few crops failed in that colony left and joined up with the railroad construction crews then working eastwards towards Grand Forks, which was to be the end of the line. Mr. Fishman also told me that at Lakota, North Dakota, he found a Jewish settler by the name of Jacob Thal who had been farming there for several years. There are descendants of Mr. Thal at present living in Bismarck, North Dakota.

By 1900, more than half of the original settlers had already left the colony, settling in Grand Forks, Fargo, Minneapolis and St. Paul. Among the remaining families were two Greenberg families, two Meels, one Kronick, and I am sure there were others but I cannot recall the names. Mr. father took me along on one of his trips there and I clearly recall that trip. There was not room enough for me on the silky seat, so I sat in front. The ox switched more flies off of me than he did himself. One can only imagine a thirty-mile ride over a country road by ox power. I'll never forget it. My father made his first trip to that colony in the fall of 1892. He spent several weeks there as each one of the colonists wanted to put in his supply of kosher meat and fowl for the winter. He made regular trips there each fall and spring, besides the occasional trip for a bris or a wedding. The fall trip always required his bringing along

supplies of vegetables, such as potatoes, cabbages, beets, carrots and other supplies that the colonist either could not or would not raise on their own land. These vegetables grew in super abundance in the Red River Valley, particularly on the Minnesota side. At the turn of the century, Jews had commenced to settle in all parts of North Dakota and western Minnesota, and up to then Father was the only Rabbi in that entire area. Rabbi David Lesk came to Fargo in 1900, which by that time had developed to a community of approximately 40 families that he served. Rabbi Julian Hess was established as a Rabbi in Wishek, North Dakota, where another settlement of Jews had been established through the Jewish Colonization Association and also provided for the Rabbi who served all the settlers in and around the towns of Wishek, Ashley to the southeast of Bismarck, as well as to some of the requirements of Jewish people who lived in Bismarck. Rabbi Hess later made his home at Aberdeen, South Dakota.

The 1896 exodus from Roumania brought a new flood of immigrants to North Dakota and its share to Grand Forks as did also the pogroms in Russia. The Kishinex Pogrom which brought about the Galveston project promoted by the well known Jewish philanthropist, Mr. Jacob H. Schiff, and the activities of Mr. Israel Zangwill brought its echo to Grand Forks and North Dakota. I remember well the arrival of a representative of this movement in Grand Forks to set up a committee to assist arrivals in getting established in the community. Up to 1906 Grand Forks had the only synagogue in the entire territory. The original seating capacity of about 300 was hardly sufficient to house all of the Jews who would come to Grand Forks for the High Holidays. Extra seats always had to be provided for in the aisles and other

vacant floor spaces in the front and rear of the synagogue. Kol Nidre night was an especially crowded one since practically all of the German-Jewish families would also attend on that evening. It was not uncommon that non-Jews would appear for an opportunity to see how Jews worship. In the earlier years we of the family and a few others were being trained during the summer months to assist in the service as part of the choir. Many of the melodies and tunes are still familiar to me. My father never wanted to refer to himself as a Chazan or Cantor, but rather as a Ba'l T'Sibur of pleader for the Congregation which he took very seriously. His Hebrew diction was perfect and clear. Anyone who was even the least familiar with the order of prayer knew just exactly what page to turn to upon hearing his diction. In teaching us to read Hebrew he always stressed the importance of clear and proper pronunciation of the words. It was not long before the children of the community discarded the variety of Hebrew pronunciations prevailing among the residents. All were reading their Hebrew according to the accepted standards adopted by the Maskilim in Russia. There were two favorite prayers my father always made of great importance to himself and those were the "Hineni" and the "He'ye im piphiyot". By that I do not mean to say that he minimized the importance of all of the other special portions of the Piyutim. There were times when the Congregation could not afford to engage another individual for the Shachitso; it was necessary for the Rabbi to conduct the Shachtir, the Torah Reading in addition to the Musaph. To do that on Yom Kippur Day, which he did many times, was a most fatiguing experience to say the least. I recall his having done that several times in his early years and a few times when he

was already past 50 years of age. However, despite the tiring experience, he went into the Ne'ilah service with a fresh reserve power and strength that the congregation always marvelled at. He knew and they believed that the year ahead would be a good one and at the close of the service, happiness showed on every face.

It was not before the various peddlers had made sufficient acquaintances and friends among farmers and settlers in the surrounding territories so that they felt they could hazard opening a small store in such towns and villages. If a man did not have sufficient funds and needed credit the Rabbi was always a resort for either signing or endorsing a note at the bank or guaranteeing credit with a wholesaler. Even before the end of the last century we find Jews established in many towns on both sides of the Red River of the North such as Hillsboro, Mayville, Larimore, Minton, Grafton, Cavalier, Hamilton, Pembina, and Neche in North Dakota and Crookston, St. Hillaire, Red Lake Falls, Thief River Falls and further east as far as Bemidji in Minnesota. And as the Great Northern Railway was building its branch lines towards the Canadian border, it was not surprising to find one or two Jewish families establishing themselves at every point along those lines. Most of those had their beginning in Grand Forks and looked to the Rabbi to supply their Jewish needs. Kosher meat and fowl, supplies for the Passover, prayer books for the children, t'fillin for the boys. These families did not always prosper. Their beginning years were always difficult years. On many a trip my father made to such families for the special occasion of a bris, it was not only that the family could not pay his expense but in addition, he had to provide bedding and other necessities for the mother and child.

This was not an uncommon occurrence. While most such families were everlastingly grateful and eventually made up for such expenses, it did occur that some did forget that part of their indebtedness. But his service had to continue nevertheless. Whether a family paid or not, Matzos and other Passover necessities had to be sent them. Passover was always a busy season around our home. Those supplies usually arrived around Purim time and since this was one of the sources of the Rabbi's income, it grew to be the family's job to take orders to deliver on foot, by wagon or wheelbarrow locally. Boxes were packed for shipping by freight or express to the outlying communities, or to individual families, some as far away as Montana. I never did know why, but everyone came to our house for Charoseth for their Seders, despite the fact that the recipe for this delicacy was quite simple, but we children had to make enough to supply the entire community.

Saturday evenings were always evenings of pleasure at our home in the early days. The men would gather after their evening meal to sing the Chasidic songs and dance their Chasidic dances, each one would vie with the one another in performing their special Rabbi's favorite song and dance. Songs would vary from the Friday night Zmiroths to High Holiday tunes. Boiled and dried peas or peanuts were served, also someone managed to see that there was a small keg of beer on hand for the refreshments. Succoths, another occasion for public enjoyment that required preparations at our home, was another outstanding holiday. I believe that my father had the first portable Succah. He had a carpenter make up three walls that could be joined together with large hooks and screw eyes which were in turn attached to our house. This was topped by a latticed roof over which a

thatching cover of corn stalks or willow branches was placed. These branches were brought in from near-by farms. Of course, there was the inside decoration of fruit, brightly colored pictures on the walls, also brightly colored hollow eggs. All of this was the children's job as we enjoyed it thoroughly. Inside the Succah the entire congregation would gather, particularly on the first two days. The Kiddush was said, and a few neighbors would come over with their dinners, so that the men folk could eat their meals in the Succah.

Simchas Torah was of course the most hilarious holiday. Early in the afternoon of Shmini Atzereths the fun would begin. At the Rabbi's house, wine and cakes would be served. Then the whole group would move on to the house of the President of the congregation, from there to the other officer's homes, until evening, when the entire congregation of men, women and children would proceed to the synagogue. There the bidding would commence for the various honors, beginning with the Ma'ariv service, seven Ato Horaithos to be followed by the Hakofoths in which all men and boys of the Bar Mitzvoh age were allowed to participate. It would be almost midnight before the ceremonies would be concluded. But the next day was the day of days. Men would congregate early in the synagogue. When the Torah reading period arrived, every man and boy in the synagogue would be called for a portion of reading, and as each stepped down from the altar he was privileged to receive a glass of schnapps and a piece of cake at a special table presided over by the president of the congregation. After the services were concluded, the house to house calls that had started the day before were continued with even more enthusiasm. Each home visited contained plenty to eat and drink, and it would happen

occasionally that a few members would imbibe a little to freely, which added additional zest to the occasion. In my later years as I look back to the Grand Forks Jewish community as it lived its Jewish life, it reminded me of the description of Jewish life in East European countries as pictured by such Yiddish writers as Sholom Aleichem, Peretz Mendele the Book Seller, and so forth. Second Avenue was known as the Jewish street. The odor of fresh baked loaves of bread permeated the street on Fridays. On summer days with the windows open, one could hear the voices of the children singing in the Cheder the Shir Hashirim, the Maftir or the portion of the week.

The first Cheder teacher who served in Grand Forks after my father's arrival was S. Yoffee, who doubled as sexton or Shamas, as well as Ba'al Shachrit for the High Holidays. I believe he came to Grand Forks about 1894 or 1895. He stayed about five years. The Grand Forks community continued to engage a separate teacher all of the years of my father's activity in that community. In all, I believe that about fifteen different men were so engaged during that period, ranging all the way from the "old-fashioned" Rebbe to the modern Hebrew teacher.

The establishment of a modern Hebrew School or Talmud Torah in Grand Forks, I believe, preceded the one established in Minneapolis. This was due to the initiative of Mr. Harris Ziskin, who had for some time before that stated that American Jews must be given Jewish education along lines prevailing in this country. He even insisted that physical education was also an important adjunct to education. I recall that he furnished one room in his home as a gymnasium, and provided two sets of boxing gloves where the boys could gather and

try their progress in the manly art of self defense. A vacant lot located about one block west of the synagogue was purchased, and Mr. Ziskin with the help of the children planted the entire block with trees. It had previously been an open lot used as a baseball field by the neighborhood children. A small building was put up and fitted with modern school desks and seats. There was a blackboard and a teacher's desk. This I believe took place in 1901 or 1902. Later Mr. Ziskin and family moved from Grand Forks and made their home in Minneapolis where he and a few other public-spirited men, such as the late Dr. George Gordon, were instrumental in establishing the Minneapolis Talmud Torah, which became a model for similar institutions in this country. I was present in Minneapolis in 1908 when the first Talmud Torah building was dedicated in 1908, on Basset Place. Immediately after the organization of the Congregation in Grand Forks, a Ladies' Aid Society was organized in Grand Forks. These ladies were active in fund raising to assist that newly organized congregation and also provided a means for social contact amongst the families, an element that had been lacking before. Shortly, thereafter, a Chevra Kadisha was organized along lines of similar organizations in the old country with its officers called Gabbai Rishon and Gabba Sheni; my father was its secretary all of his life. The first Gabbai was Mr. Ziskin. The aristocracy of the organization were centered in the Misaskim, next in line were the Shamisim. The Misaskim had to attend weekly instructions courses to familiarize themselves with the details of burial duties and the mystical tying of knots, or rather knots that must not be tied, but must still be made secure. There was also an annual Chevra Kadisha Se'ydah which, as

is known, depicts the passing of Jacob of Israel. The first such dinners was held at our home. There was a feast fit for a king, followed by a learned discourse by my father, then followed by others, too, who were learned in the Talmud, such as Mr. Ziskin. Chasidic songs and dances were always part of the entertainment that followed. This was an annual affair, and is still being held in Grand Forks, although in more recent years it has become a very modern banquet. From the modest beginning, held in officers' homes, it has developed into a large affair, held in the Elks Club Rooms, with prominent speakers, such as Rabbi Albert G. Minda as the principal speaker. I do not know if the Rabbi recalls that particular event in his life, but it was unique in that it was the only time in his long and honorable career that he was called upon to address such an organization. But we must honor our pioneers; they were a hardy race. Despite the weather, rain, snow, or sleet, unbearable heat or freezing cold, and there was plenty of the latter in this area, none shirked their duty, even if they had to plow through three or four feet of snow to reach their destination. Some of the older men who had been members of such groups in the old country would relate the most gruesome stories of their experiences. There were some comic situations also. One such affair that I must relate took place in Grand Forks. It was in the first years of the organization when Mr. Ziskin was Gabbai. A young man had been hospitalized with an ailment from which he did not recover. The burial had to be arranged for, and there was some discussion between the officers of the Chevra Kadisha and a cousin, the sole survivor. It was rumored that the young man had some means from which the burial expense could be paid. The cousin denied that there

were any funds, and that he would himself have to take care of the hospital bill. But the young man had friends who insisted that there was money to pay all expenses. The cousin denied all of this. My father did not approve of this unnecessary delay and wanted to proceed with the burial. My. Ziskin, however, insisted that the cousin must disclose the inheritance, and proceeded to handle the matter in his own way. As is known, when a person passes away at a hospital, the arms are always folded over the chest. At that time, there was a special room in the synagogue where the Chevra Kaddisha would prepare the body for burial. As the misaskim gathered around the body, Mr. Ziskin approached, and in a loud voice commanded, "Nem arop de hant fun hartzen", Yiddish for "Remove your hand from your heart." Of course there was no movement. He repeated his command in an even louder tone, but again no reaction. The cousin observed that the body refused to remove the hands from the chest, and again Mr. Ziskin commanded the corpse to move the hands from the chest. The cousin broke down, and admitted that there was money left with which to pay burial expenses. The modern reader will probably consider this individual superstitious. But many people in those days really believed that the dead are able to hear until the casket is lowered into the grave. Some still believe that. I recall that on many occasions, my father approached the casket before it was lowered into the grave and asked its forgiveness for any misdeeds performed by anyone, and particularly for the Chevra Kadish if it did not perform its rites properly. A special women's group was selected to perform these rited, in the case of the burial of a woman.

The pioneer community had it's tragedies as well as it's joyous

occasions. I recall two such tragedies. One was the drowning of one of the young men. Michel Sherman had gone swimming with several friends in what was known as the "Coolie" now a part of the University campus. It was a much deeper body of water then and in diving his head struck a rock and he never came up. By the time he was rescued he had drowned. The news spread through the community rapidly and all were saddened by this sudden and tragic death.

Another was a victim of typhoid fever when an epidemic struck the city. A young girl of the Pyes family. I recall only a few divorce actions, one in which the husband demanded a certain sum of money before he would consent to grant his wife the divorce to which she was entitled. However, even today, Orthodoxy has never established a method whereby a woman may obtain a divorce from her husband without his consent. I recall a particular case of a Get which was to be a conditional Get. It involved a recently married couple in which the husband had taken seriously ill and which required surgery of a type in which the surgeon could not be certain of the success of the operation. My father would not take on the responsibility of this matter without consulting at least one other Rabbi. After consulting with a Rabbi located in Minneapolis, it was decided that a conditional Get could be issued to the wife so that should her husband not survive, the wife would be spared the ceremony of Halitza. Fortunately, the husband did survive and the couple enjoyed several happy years together. Despite it's limitations in certain areas, Orthodoxy does find a way in certain matters of circumventing the law. It is a great wonder that it's great scholars, particularly in America, have so far failed to liberalize the divorce laws so as to prevent a wife from

living in fear and at the mercy of an unrelenting husband.

My father's first disagreement with a Reform Rabbi came as the result of a disagreement between himself, his Congregation officers and his own organized Chevra Kadisha. A member of the German Jewish families passed away and the family wanted him buried in civilian clothing rather than the traditional white shrouds. While tradition is not mandatory under Jewish law and since it was not serious abuse of tradition, he could see no reason not to allow the family this permission. The congregation, however, insisted that my father was out of order in relaxing this rule and they refused to allow my father to officiate at the funeral. As a result, the family together with several others, purchased an adjoining piece of property to the already existing cemetery and brought Rabbi Ryppins of St. Paul to officiate and conduct the funeral services. This resulted in a cleavage in the community with its accompanying ill feeling between the two elements. My father attended the funeral and later that evening, calling at the home of the deceased, he met Rabbi Ryppins and each carried away a feeling of mutual respect. It was many years later, 1927, in fact, that the two cemetery properties were joined under the name of Montifiore Cemetery.

That experience taught my father that he must not allow himself to be dictated to by a narrow-minded officialdom. He decided then that he would prefer to earn his livelihood through the medium of fees for services rendered by individuals and when he served the congregation it would also be on a fee basis. He refused to accept a salary as compensation. He argued that if he accepted a salary the congregation would have the right to dictate his service to some, and also to deny

his service to such as would displease the officers without regard to Jewish law and reason. He decided to reserve that right for himself. And so it remained for the rest of his life.

Among the early pioneers there were a few ex-Yeshiva students who were interested in having a study club for the study of the Talmud and to relive again the student days of their boyhood. Naturally enough, they were considered the elite or rather the intellectuals of the community. During the summer months their study period was held immediately after the morning service, which was usually held early enough so that they could spend about an hour each day studying. In winter it was the long evening hours that were devoted to this purpose. Rank and file, however, did not wish to be left out of such opportunities for their educational improvement, and desired something similar, so my father organized them into a Chevra Chey Ahdam, which membership was open to all and sundry. This work is a popular edition of the Schulchan Ahruch which is a complete compilation to the minutest detail of the daily practices of the 613 Do's and Don'ts required of a completely observant Jew. One evening a week was devoted to this study and it was surprising the number that participated in this study.

Surprising as it may seem, the community was not lacking in other talents. I recall the production of one of Abraham Goldfaden's Yiddish operas at the Metropolitan Opera House, produced by local talent with the exception of the lead character, who was a professional. I can recall the incident because I was one of the shepherd boys used as extras in the play. A troupe of Jewish actors had become stranded in Winnipeg. One of that troupe stopped in Grand Forks and decided to attempt this play to earn some money to enable him and his family to

return to New York. The play selected was "Joseph and his Brethern". My father was cast in the part of Jacob, a young man by the name of Abe Fisher was Judah; the professional handled the lead part of Joseph. It was all in Yiddish and played before a full house, chiefly non-Jewish. The parts of Pharoah, Joseph's brothers, were selected from the community. Mr. Ziskin was stage manager. Rehearsals took place during the winter and the play was produced in the spring. Several years later another Yiddish opera was attempted, this time it was all amateur. The play was "The Sacrifice of Isaac", also a Goldfaden opera. The leading man was a local shoemaker, a Mr. Jaugust, who knew the complete score, words and music for all parts by heart. Mr. Ziskin again was the producer and stage manager. Rehearsals all took place in his home every evening. Mr. Jaugust was the only adult, the rest of the characters were selected from among the Hebrew School boys. Mr. Jaugust had the lead part of Abraham, I was both Sarah and Isaac, my brother Bert was the Angel, Louis Spiegel was Satan, Wm. Ziskin was Eliezer. Costumes had all been made and we were ready for production when out of a clear sky we were shocked to be told that Mr. Jaugust had sold his shoe shop and left town. We were certainly a disappointed lot of boys as were Mr. Ziskin and the rest of the people who were looking forward to a great treat. I still remember some of the melodies and words of my parts.

The years of 1893 and 1894 were trying and difficult years for the country at large and the small Jewish community of Grand Forks was certainly no exception. The country at large was in a bad depression, then referred to as "a panic". The immediate causes in the Grand Forks area, largely and as it still is, dependent upon

agriculture, were crop failures. That, coupled with other depressive effects upon the economy of a community a crippling railroad strike throwing many local laboring people out of work, worked havoc with the local Jewish community who largely depended upon the farming people of the area and small shop keepers of the town for their livelihood. To make ends meet was a daily worry of practically all of the members of the community. The circumstances in our own household reached a critical stage. One of the daily chores of the children of each household was to scour the nearby railroad yards for the daily requirements of coal with which to heat homes and there was plenty of competition for what little of that commodity there was scattered about. It was such conditions that forced my father to conclude that perhaps the Grand Forks Jewish community was too small to enable him to make a respectable livelihood. On several previous occasions, he had been offered opportunities in larger Jewish communities such as Winnipeg, Minneapolis and St. Paul, where large numbers of his Lithuanian landsleit had settled. He had been called to these on several occasions for Brith Milahs and was urged to accept positions that were open there then. But he always refused to leave Grand Forks. But the economic circumstances described above convinced him that he must try to seek a larger community. It was during the winter of 1895-1896 that such an opportunity presented itself at Sioux City, Iowa. Upon being called there and consulting with leaders of that community, he returned to Grand Forks and announced that he had accepted the terms offered there and commenced to make preparations to leave Grand Forks. Our household goods were being disposed of and we, the children, were highly elated at the prospect of going to a new and

larger city. But our elation was short lived. A series of negotiations with community leaders which resulted in an improved economic status for my father caused him to change his mind about leaving. In later years I came to suspect that it was not so much the improved economic status that caused my father to change his mind as was the promise he had made to Rabbi Isaac Elchanan of Kovno, doubtless made use of by one or two members of the community who were aware of that promise. I confirmed that suspicion many years later when I put that question to one of the men who had himself left Grand Forks. There could have not been much of an improvement in his economic status then or later as I never knew my father to have been completely out of debt. Yet, despite that personal situation, banks, wholesale houses and other credit granting agencies never refused to accept my father's note, endorsement or guarantee for credit whenever some one in the community required his help to get a start in business, meeting a merchandise payment of for the purchase of household needs or for transportation expense for bringing a family. However, at no time since that experience to make a change to Sioux City did he even think of making any further changes, despite the fact that he could have made changes for his personal benefit. Between the period of 1896 and the turn of the century and later the economic conditions of the territory were considerable improved. The Republican victory on a campaign of "A Full Dinner Pail" seemed to have a beneficial effect on the country and the local area as well. My father had become a full citizen in 1896, just a few weeks prior to the national election of that year. The record on file in the Grand Forks County Court House reads that he was admitted to citizenship on October 9, 1896, before Judge Charles

F. Templeton, L. Hassell, Clerk of Court, Witness Max Rabinovich and J. W. Coss. Recorded in Book 5, Naturalization Record, Page 215. Doubtless due to the campaign slogan of the Republican Party promise of "A Full Dinner Pail" which everyone was very much in need of at the time, my father voted the Republican ticket and as a result of which he undoubtedly voted the Republican ticket most the remaining elections since North Dakota interests seemed to be tied to the Republican Party administration. I doubt very much that he ever seriously considered actual political differences between the Republican and Democratic party differences. To him it was chiefly the knowledge of the individuals involved and since in North Dakota the Republican party was chiefly in evidence, he had gotten to know the men personally connected with that party and it was his acquaintance and faith he had in such men that he continued to vote the Republican ticket in both state and national elections. Yet in spite of this I know that he supported men in the Democratic party whom he knew, such as Governor John Burke, a Democrat, whom he met on several occasions in Devils Lake, Governor Burke's home town. He knew well and supported a local prominent Democrat, Mr. Michael Murphy, as Mayor of Grand Forks and through Mr. Murphy other Democrats for public office. I am sure that he was quite independent in his political thinking and was swayed chiefly by his knowledge of the men involved and his faith in their honorable purposes. It was during one of Mr. Murphy's campaigns for Mayor that my father called his attention to the very bad conditions under which cattle slaughtering was being done in Grand Forks. After election, Mr. Murphy's first order of business was his successful efforts to have a city-owned abattoir. One was constructed with a

special department for the slaughtering of Kosher beef. Many years a locally organized packing company in which the local members of the Chamber of Commerce were interested sought to take over this city owned abattoir, the then Mayor who was also a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board replied that the City Council would favor the transaction but to use his own words "you will have to clear with Rabbi Papermaster first" when inquiry was made as to the reason for that, he said, "We owe it to Rabbi Papermaster for the sanitary meat slaughtering and meat inspection that we have had in this city for many years and it should be up to the Packing Company to grant Rabbi Papermaster the same facilities that he has for Kosher beef slaughtering that he now has at the abattoir." I happened to be on that Board at the time and I was appointed a committee of one to discuss the matter with my father which eventually was favorably concluded to his satisfaction. The facilities proved even better than they were at the abattoir with the addition that a better grade of cattle were offered for kosher slaughtering than had previously.

With the return of more prosperous conditions at the turn of the century, immigration of more Jewish families increased, men were bringing their families, others seeking opportunities for business and livelihood were commencing to spread into the surrounding territories. One of the basis for his new arrangements with the Congregation officials was that he was free to travel wherever he would be called to serve anyone regardless of whims or orders of congregations officials. In lieu of a regular salary a schedule of fees was agreed upon which he was to receive for the various services he rendered to the community. In the matter of such personal service as bris milah, weddings

or funerals he always left it to the good will or the ability of the family concerned to pay what they could afford. He never departed from that arrangement although I know that in many, many cases he not only had to pay his expense of travel to such families that called him but in addition also provided food and clothing for needy families as well as fuel in winter. He never kept a record of such expenditures. Some of such families paid him when their economic conditions improved; others did not and he never reminded them. I suppose such people just took it for granted that being a Rabbi he was in duty bound to do just what he did without their being indebted to him for such services.

As I stated above in that period, Jewish families began to settle in the towns and villages in the immediate areas and beyond. The town of Devils Lake had in that period a settlement of about fifteen families. By 1910 and 1915, Minot and Williston had about 30 to 40 families in Minot and about fifteen families in Williston and in each one of such so-called centers one would find individual Jewish families in the smaller towns and villages in their immediate neighborhoods. Each one of such families had their individual Jewish problems to solve with Rabbi Papermaster in Grand Forks the only one to help solve them. Travel was slow in those days and often hazardous. An elderly man walked into my store in Fargo a few years ago to inquire if I was related to a man he knew many years ago, who had the same name as I. "He was a Rabbi", he said. Naturally I acknowledged the relationship. "Well," he said, "I saved your father's life." I thanked him and wanted to know the details. He related the following story. In a gathering snow storm on a cold winter's day, he had gone out into his field to get his cattle in before the storm really broke. Off at some

distance from his home he saw a man who seemed to be lost, as he was going around in a circle. He called to him but the man did not answer and was floundering in the already deepening snow. As he got closer he shouted for the man to stay where he was and reaching him he took Father to his home. My father told him that he had gotten off at the station about one half mile and finding no conveyance there to meet him, he decided to walk the distance to a near-by Jewish family where he was to perform a bris for a new-born son. After starting out, the storm came up and he lost his way. This farmer later hitched a team and drove him to this Jewish family who lived about a mile up that very road. "It was a lucky thing for your father that I had to go out for my cattle that day because by the time I got back after taking your father to that Jew's house it sure was a real Dakota blizzard." "Well," I replied, "you are a religious man, are you not?" "Yes, I am," he assured me. "Then," I said, "you surely do believe that perhaps God had something to do with your going out there so that you could save his life." "I sure do," he answered, "and a man like your father certainly deserved to be saved." My father never told me of this incident. But he did tell of another rather amusing incident. In traveling to another Jewish farmer in the early days he found it necessary to stay over night at a non-Jewish farmer's home because of the distance from the railroad station. On this particular occasion when he came down from his bedroom in the morning he was shocked to see the farmer's wife wearing a set of phylacteries on her arm. "Where did you get these?" he almost shouted at her. "I bought them from a Jewish peddler." He offered to buy them back. "Oh no", she said, "I paid twenty-five dollars for them and I'll never sell them. I saw the

the Jewish peddler wear them one day and when I asked him what he was wearing them for he said he wears them for his rheumatism. I was troubled with rheumatism myself so I bought them from him, and when I wear them my rheumatism does not bother me." Regardless of what my father offered this women, she would not part with them.

Modern educational systems were unknown in the early days, but each parent was able to teach his sons how to read the prayer book and the intricacies of the proper use of the phylacteries and in the larger towns there was someone who was able to teach the reading and intonations of the Maftir, so the preparations for the Bar Mitzvoh was not so difficult and the celebration was not the elaborate affair that modern Jewish life has made of the ceremonial. Mothers were able to teach their daughters the principal usages of Kashruths and children were not so concerned of the whys and wherefores of everything Jewish, so all of these practices were taken for granted as the Jewish way of life. Rabbi Papermaster was always available for special and particular needs, to supply prayer books, t'fillin, talesin, and other religious paraphernalia, since Jewish people had settled in almost all of the towns along the main line of the Great Northern Railroad and its branches. It can easily be imagined how continuous his services to these people could have been. As an illustration of this service I would like to quote from a letter I received from a member of the first family who lived in Minot, North Dakota, perhaps only one of the few now living who has any personal recollection of that period. Mr. Sol Gordon, now living in Topeka, Kansas writes: "Dear Isadore, It was a good feeling to see a letter from a Papermaster. When I first received your letter I was in the hospital so

could not give it more prompt attention. I cannot give you any dates or details, but I think that I first met your father when Minot was in need of a Rabbi. I was from the Yeshiva and I wanted Minot to have a good shochet and Rabbi. My sister-in-law, Helen, spoke of Rabbi Papermaster of Grand Forks as the chief of the State of North Dakota. I wrote to him for help. He wasted no time and came personally to Minot to tell us that there is a teacher in Grand Forks who is a good shochet and on his recommendation we engaged Mr. Diamond. I believe that the next time we met was at a bris for the first of Mr. Diamond's children. Your father brought me a set of Talmud and told me, "You are next to my heart. Study and do not forget our Torah. Spend much time on it." The next time was when he organized the Chevra Kadisha for us in January, 1918. Another experience I can recall with your father was in Butte, North Dakota. About 1924, I wrote him that a Jewish boy was born there and they required a Mohel, but the people were poor and could not pay. I offered to pay his expense but he wrote back by special delivery, "I serve the Jewish people and do not want pay." He felt bad about my letter, he came on his own expense and also brought roast chicken not only for himself but also for all of us and the family. It was then I found out that he always served his people in that part of the country in the horse and buggy days. You must remember that he was the Rabbi when my brother Herman and his wife Helen were married, and he was also the Rabbi when Zelda (Herman's daughter) and Jay were married. I am sorry that I cannot give you more details of the things your father and I had planned for the benefit of the Minot Jewish community. It was Rabbi Papermaster who kept the Minot Jews as Jews for many years. My best regards to

your family. Sincerely, Sol Gordon.

As near as I can recall, the first Jewish settlers in and around Minot occurred in the period between 1900 and 1905. The period referred to in Mr. Gordon's letter was about 1915 and 1916. In World War I period, Minot already boasted a community of approximately 40 or 50 families. They established their synagogue at about that time, in which dedication my father took part. Williston at about the same period had grown to approximately 20 families and to a large extent attached itself Jewishly to the community at Minot. Devil's Lake commenced to have Jewish settlers at about the turn of the century. A few of the original colonists established earlier northeast of Devil's Lake had tired of life on the farm and took to peddling in the area and then started small business establishments at Devil's Lake, which had already become a center for railroad laborers. By the time of World War I, a community of about 25 to 30 Jewish families had established themselves. For a time they even attempted to maintain their own schochet and teacher, but they gave up after a few years of struggle with the problem. During that period, however, they did attempt to hold High Holidays services through my father's assistance, arranging for someone to conduct services for them and a Sefer Tora and the necessary prayer books and other religious requirements. This was also true at Crookston, Minnesota, where a sufficient number of Jewish families had settled so that they could have their own minyon for the High Holidays which would usually include individual families who had settled in nearby towns and hamlets.

In the period between 1900 and 1915, numbers of Grand Forks residents began to spread into the interior of North Dakota, settling

in towns on the branch lines to the north and the south of the Great Northern main line. It was during this same period that the Jewish community at Fargo had grown into a sizeable quantity and while the Fargo Hebrew Congregation had officially organized in 1896, it was not until about ten years later that they were able to finance their first synagogue. As I stated earlier, there was a colony established in McIntosh County to the southeast of Bismarck settled chiefly by Jewish people fleeing the Roumanian exodus and many of those in turn seeking opportunities to tide over difficult crop years, resorted to peddling and later established small businesses in the area and in this manner one would find one to two Jewish families in almost every town and hamlet along the Northern Pacific main line, and its branches to the south and north. While many of these families had no direct contacts with the Grand Forks Jewish community they, nevertheless, had knowledge of Rabbi Papermaster at that point who could be called upon when necessary to serve them. Calls for his service came often from points in eastern Montana, from strangers who had gotten his name from travelers or neighbors who knew my father.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 caused a flurry of excitement during the short period that it lasted. Mr. Harris Ziskin, the principle protagonist of everything that was modern in Jewish thinking said that participating in that was a demonstration of our patriotism to the country of our adoption as well as, what he termed, that special score that we as Jews have to settle with Spain. Making use of the military training he had acquired in the Russian army he induced a number of young men to commence training for enlistment in the U. S. Army. An empty lot across from the synagogue used by the children

for a baseball field, was used for daily military drilling. But the war was over all too soon much to the disappointment of Mr. Ziskin and his trainee. Among those who volunteered to the training program were Arthur Greenberg, Arthur Seliger, David Aronvich, Emil Pyes, Charles Horwitch, Abe Horwitch and others whose names I cannot recall. I discovered later that a Jewish man from Grand Forks did serve in that war. Joseph Isaacs, whose father, Isaac Isaacs was a veteran of the Civil War. I recall here also another of Mr. Ziskin's ideas in modernizing Jewish life. He was first to abolish corporal punishment for children's offenses in the Cheder. Prior to that the Rebi's strap was freely used. Under Mr. Ziskin's influence a court of inquiry was set up. I particularly recall an offense involving several of us boys. We were found guilty and we were sentenced to four hours confinement, of all places, in Mr. Rabinoviche's chicken coop. We realized then and there that while he opposed capital punishment, he was nevertheless a strict disciplinarian and there was not too much tomfoolery after that experience.

It will be noteworthy to relate here of an experience my father had with a group of young Jewish radicals. It was in the early 1900s that a local industrialist, non-Jewish, had established a woolen mill in the city as the farmers in the area were producing a large amount of wool on their farms. He later conceived the idea of manufacturing the material in woolen garments, such as mackinaws, coats, heavy trousers, and so forth. To get this idea into production he brought in from New York a complete manufacturing unit of cutters, operators, pressers, including shop foremen, all Jews. The few married men with families were more or less like the average Jewish family in the

community, but the young single men who were much the majority in the group were imbued with radical Marxian philosophy of the injustice of the capitalistic system as against the oppression of the working classes. There were amongst them men of musical talents, instrumental and vocal. It was not long that the young people of the community were attracted to them because of their entertainment abilities. In arranging these entertainments there would always follow their usual harangue of their philosophy. I doubt very much that they convinced very many in that field as these fellows lived better, dressed better and earned more than the average Jewish family in Grand Forks at that time. My father paid little attention to them in the beginning until some of the older members of the community began to complain that these young men were also preaching heresy and atheism. This was quite annoying but believing that in a free country one could not be stopped from speaking his mind on any subject, Father did little to stop them. But on a certain Yom Kippur it was reported to him that these young men had arranged a meeting that day to keep the young people from attending services despite the fact that they had gotten the day off from work because of the holiday. Father decided then and there that he was going to do something about that. In his before Ne'Ilah sermon that day he dealt at length on the activities of these young men and particularly stressed two points, the hypocrisy of these radicals and their attack on their citizenship in this country. They claim, he said, that they are for the working classes who are being oppressed by the capitalists. I do not see here where they are being oppressed. They live better, they dress better and earn more than most of you, he told his Congregation. They defraud their employer by taking the day off

on account of it being a Jewish religious holiday in which they do not believe, then denounce that very religion they are using for their personal benefit. They denounce this country as though it were the same as Czarist Russia, the very country which gave them opportunities they could only dream of in Russia. Is that the way to show our appreciation of the freedom this country gives us? By the time he was through, these fellows' goose was cooked. There was no more socialist propaganda or Marxism preached in the Jewish community after that. As a rule he never used the High Holidays as a means of denouncing so-called sinners. He thoroughly abhorred the idea of being a Katagor against his fellow Jews. Those days, he argued, are days when all Jews, high or low, rich or poor, learned and the unlearned, stand before the Maker in Judgment. How then can any mortal take it upon himself to act as Katagor against his people. I have known Rabbis who have abused that very principle on more than one occasion. But in the case related above he felt that he had a duty to perform and much as it was against his principles, he just had to perform it. Modern political Zionism came to Grand Forks as early as 1905 or 1906. By that I mean an organization known as the Ahavath Zion Society, affiliated with the then existing Knights of Zion in Chicago. There had been some Zionist propaganda through the medium of speakers representing Yiddish dailies who were usually pretty good orators and could easily gather a good attendance at the synagogue. This started off at a Herzl memorial meeting held some time during the latter part of summer of 1904. I believe that the principal speaker at that occasion was a travelling representative of one of the New York Yiddish dailies who was quite usually a well

qualified public speaker, in those days. It was again Mr. Harris Ziskin who was primarily responsible for the formation of a Zionist group in Grand Forks under the name of the Ahavath Zion Society and was first affiliated with the Knights of Zion in Chicago and it was probably organized in 1905. As near as I can establish it from an old record in my possession, the first officers were H. Ziskin, President; Sam Marquisee, Vice-President; S. Weisman, Secretary; and M. Fishman, Treasurer. The record lists 96 members which included 22 women. While I am listed as a member, I know that when Mr. Ziskin insisted that I accept the secretaryship because of the necessity of having someone who could correspond in both Yiddish and English, and I have been more or less active in the movement ever since. The Society was then affiliated with the Federation of American Zionists. Among the old correspondence there are letters from Judah Magnes who was Federation Secretary at the time, and from Louis Lipsky who was acting as a secretary. My father, while he was a member of the organization was not too kindly disposed towards the modern political movement. He had been a member of the Chovevei Zion movement in the old country, but he was somehow misled into the idea that the modern movement was anti-religious and because of the could not lend it his whole-hearted support. However, he never objected to have Mr. Ziskin accompany him to a bris or a wedding where Mr. Ziskin could made an appeal for the Jewish National Fund, which was Mr. Ziskin's pet hobby. During the years of 1909-1910 and 1911, there was a Hebrew Literary Society, consisting chiefly of young people of from 15 to 18 years of age whose objectives were the encouragement of the study of Jewish history, creation of a Jewish library and collection of Jewish

periodicals. It flourished for a period of five or six years. A B'Nai Brith Lodge was first established in Grand Forks in 1913 under the name of Dacotah Lodge. It's first officers were Sigmund Wolf, President; Benjamin Cooperman, Vice-President; George Papermaster, Secretary; and Max Rabinovich, Treasurer. My father had been invited to become a member of B'Nai Brith several years earlier when he with a few others from Grand Forks had joined John Hay Lodge at Fargo. Dacotah Lodge had one distinction that differed from every other B'Nai Brith Lodge in that its degree team wore decorated skull caps when it conducted its initiations of new members. This was done in deference to my father's wishes and respect. The decoration of the skull caps consisted of the Menorah emblem of B'Nai Brith with the words "Dacotah Lodge" above and "B'Nai Brith" below the emblem. This lodge lasted until World War I when most of the membership was called into the service and the lodge disbanded. B'Nai was reactivated later in 1925 under the name of Red River Valley Lodge and is still in existence. Not to be outdone by the group that made up the original B'Nai Brith Lodge, another group joined to establish a branch of the Independent Order of Brith Abraham. This organization managed to maintain itself for approximately 15 years. Its membership was gradually reduced through migrations and other causes and ceased to exist in the early 1930s.

While the beginning of World War I only indirectly affected the American people and much less so those areas in the middle west, but for the Jewish people and more particularly those coming from Eastern Europe, it was one of immediate alarm and worry over the fate of their families. Nearly all of the Grand Forks families had migrated from

the part of Eastern Europe in the war zone, many of whose families, wives, children not to say anything of parents who were left in the old homes awaiting the possibility of being brought over. The scenes around the Rabbi's home were often pitiful to behold but there was not much that could be done excepting corresponding, or telegraphing officials. The problems of direct aid were most acute, although it was soon discovered that personal and direct aid to their families was impossible. It became the Rabbi's responsibility to organize in the best way possible for some aid to reach out through the medium of larger Jewish agencies in the East. He travelled first in Grand Forks, then into the smaller Jewish communities, and wherever he travelled he made it his business to organize a group for the collection of funds for the larger groups aiding the stricken in Europe. In the beginning, funds raised by the Rabbi's efforts and the Grand Forks Committee were transmitted through the Central Relief Committee of New York. Later a state-wide organization was established under the auspices of the American-Jewish Relief Committee with headquarters at Fargo and operated under the title of the American Jewish Relief Committee for North Dakota which served consistently throughout the war years until 1925 or 1926. This committee was first established by a conference at Fargo attended by all of the leading Jewish personalities in the state. Under its auspices three non-sectarian campaigns were conducted in North Dakota during the years of 1918-1920 and 1922. In each case the leading clergymen participated actively. The following were the officers and members of the State Committee: David M. Naftalin of Fargo, State Chairman; Max Rabinovich, Grand Forks, Vice-President and Chairman; Alexander Stern, Fargo State Treasurer; Hugo

Stern, Fargo, Financial Secretary; and I, Isadore Papermaster, was chosen as Recording Secretary and in the campaign of 1920 was also Campaign Director. The State Committee was as follows: from Fargo, Alex Stern, Herman Wilk, M. A. Wilk, Hugo Stern, Max Goldberg, Jack H. Goldberg, William Stern, Matt Siegel, H. Panimon, Mr. Rosen, Sam Stenn, Mrs. Herman Wilk, Mrs. Matt Siegel and Mrs. I. Horwitz. From Grand Forks: Max Rabinovich, Rabbi Benjamin Papermaster, Samuel Panovitz, Michael Panovitz, M. Fishman, Mrs. Max Rabinovich and Mrs. Sam Friedman. From Devil's Lake: Jack Goldberg, Herman Shark, M. Glickson, and J. Glickson. From Minot: I. Diamond, Harry Sorsky, M. Koppald and A. Baker. From Williston: Sam Greengard. From Valley City: Herman Stern, Jay Kata, Bert Stern and Art Stern. From Jamestown: Morris Beck, P. Becker, and J. Friedman. From Bismarck: Alexander Rosen, Charles Rosen, Charles Rigler and Louis Rubin. From other communities: Nathan Greengard, Mandan; Joseph Halpern, Glen Ulen; Sol Jompolsky and Sol Helporn, Hebron; H. A. Jackoff and O. Schwartz, Dickinson; Charles Losk, Watford City; Aaron and Hugo Stern, Wahpeton; M. Katz, Casselton; Henry and Jacob Kremenetzky, Tuttle; Louis Falk, Heaton; I. Turney, Chaseley; M. Waxman and I. Heffter, Denhoff; William Fishman, Henry Singer, McKlusky; Alle Dukovna, A. Weinbert, Mercer; D. Schwartz, Golden Valley, I. Bernstein, B. Shack, New Rockford; I. Kulberg, Hankinson; M. L. Bentson, Lidgerwood; Morris Stern, Hillsboro; Jake Thal, Lakota; F. Rigler, D. Silver and I. Dorfman, Vishek; Dr. J. Littman, Hope; S. B. Sgutt, Dagden; Ben Greenberg, Gustave Baer, Grafton; I. Margulies, Mott; Charles Halpern, New England; Julius Sgutt, Harvey; W. S. Ribler, Flasher; Noah Schoesinger, Jacob Silverman, Streeter; Louis Feinstein, Joe Graufman,

Linton; Nathan Auerbach, Sam Reich, Asheley; Joe Schiavich, Bowman; J. Silberstein, Edgeley. I listed these principally to demonstrate how widespread at that time the Jewish population had already developed. As campaign director for the 1920 non-sectarian campaign it was my responsibility to visit all of the counties in the State and particularly those towns and villages having Jewish families. In all there was a committee established in almost 300 towns where there was at least one Jewish family. North Dakota's Jewish population reached its maximum between 1925 and 1930. At the present time I daresay that the Jewish population of North Dakota had dwindled to a possible maximum of 300 families, with Fargo having the largest community of approximately 150 families.

Aside from the general contribution to the war effort of World War I, such as the purchase of Liberty Bonds, United Service campaigns, and so forth the Jewish Community provided the following in enlisted men and draftees: William Greenberg, Harry and Louis Schwam, George Papermaster, Joseph Rabinovich, Dr. H. O. Cooperman, Samuel Paletz, Elias Meblin, Sam and David Garber, Paul Pollman, Abe Seizer, Abraham Heller, Max and David Leipsic, David Grossman, William Fishman, Herman Fishman, John Avrich, Ben Greenberg, Edward Grossman, and possibly a few others whose names I cannot recall.

I have read at various times that during World War I the Jews of this country were pro-German. I can say positively that this was not so. It can be said that the Jewish people of my father's generation were anti-Czarist Russia, which is a far cry from having been pro-German. They had good reason for being anti-Czarist Russian. A regime that had purposely settled its Jewish population at the border-

line between itself and Germany so that if war was to come between those two countries the Jewish people there would have to bear the brunt of that clash in addition to the general oppression carried on by that government against the Jews for over 50 years prior to that war. The younger or native generation, however, were fully as patriotic and perhaps even more so than the general population. I shall never forget a certain Rosh Hashona service of 1917 when on the morrow of that Holy Day a number of Jewish boys, among them my brother, George, were to leave for camp. I know that for several weeks prior to that my father as well as other families of the boys that were to leave were in a depressed mood. I could know my father's feelings from the manner in which he conducted services. The evening before, the entire congregation were in a depressed mood. For the following day, the congregation officers decided to distribute the Alioths among the men that were leaving, and my brother, George, was given the honor of reciting the Maftir. He was also selected by the draftees to speak in their behalf to the Congregation at the conclusion of the Maftir. He chose for his text that portion of the Amidah, "U'Vhen Tsadkikim" which ends with the phrase (translated) "And Thou shalt remove the dominion of wickedness from the earth." He compared this phrase to the declared desire of President Wilson in his address before Congress on the declaration of war "to put an end to the iniquities of the German powers and as a war to end all wars" and as Jews appreciative of the privileges and liberties we have gained as citizens in this country, we should go into this war without any reservations whatsoever. While there was not a dry eye in the synagogue prior to and during my brother's address, I knew from

the manner in which my father conducted the remaining portion of the service that his feeling of depression had left him. At the conclusion of the service, he spoke to the congregation that in parting with their sons they should do so with the positive feeling that they will all return in safety and that he was certain that God had heard their prayers. In truth, that was actually the case. All of the Grand Forks boys who served in World War I returned safely, several of whom had seen front-line service.

The education of the youth in the community was always my father's chief concern. From the very beginning of his service in Grand Forks, the community was never without a Hebrew teacher, as near as I can recall at least 12 men served in that capacity during my father's lifetime. In the beginning, it was natural that the European Cheder type of teacher was engaged, but as the community progressed, a more modernized method of teaching was adopted, for a time even the Ivrit B'ivrit method was tried but had to give way later to an English translated form of teaching the language. My father always went along with those changes only that he wanted to make certain that the children could read their Hebrew well and understand what they were reading. In my own day as a parent, he even encouraged a Sunday School conducted entirely in the method of the Extension Division of the Union of the American Hebrew Congregations.

As is to be expected, Father had a wide acquaintance with the Orthodox Rabbinate in this country, many of whom he had known as students at the Yeshiva he had attended, and others whom he had met at the Chief Rabbinate's office in Kovno and had later come to America. Among those were such well known Rabbis as Rabbi Hoffenberg of Hartford,

Connecticut; Rabbi M. Z. Margolis of New York, Rabbi Levinthal of Philadelphia; Rabbi Ashinsky of Pittsburgh, and others with whom he carried on an extensive correspondence. He had met many of these Rabbis at conventions of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis that he attended in company with his brother, Rabbi Samuel Rappaport of Springfield, Massachusetts. He quite often visited and consulted the Rabbis of this immediate area such as Rabbi Silber of Minneapolis, Rabbi Simon of St. Paul, Rabbi Kaganovitz of Winnipeg, and Rabbi Scheinfeld of Milwaukee. I believe that the Orthodox Rabbis of his generation were much more liberal in their interpretation of Jewish law than are the Orthodox Rabbis of this generation. He always taught us that in all of the controversies recorded in the Talmud between the house of Hillel and the house of Shamai, "we" he would say, "must follow the interpretation according to the more liberal views of the house of Hillel in America." The strict interpretations of the House of Shamai will not be accepted by American Jews, he had said, and I believe that this was the general opinion that prevailed among the Orthodox Rabbinate of his day. His acquaintances among the Reformed and Conservative Rabbinate were naturally more limited. I earlier related of his first meeting with Rabbi Pyppins of St. Paul. It may surprise many to know that Rabbi Samuel Deinard of Minneapolis was among the first group of children taught by my Father in Kovno. It was many years later that he had a special occasion to be in Minneapolis for a Sabbath weekend and he decided to visit Temple Israel services which then was located at Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street. He walked the distance from the Minneapolis North side home with whom he was staying to the Temple. After services, Rabbi Deinard came over to

say how surprised he was to recognize him among the worshippers. Rabbi Deinard visited Grand Forks on many occasions in later years and always visited my father's home. Other Reform Rabbis who came to Grand Forks for various purposes such as Relief Campaigns, B'Nai Brith speakers and so forth, were, Rabbi Sternhaim of Sioux City, Iowa; Rabbi Lefkowitz of Duluth and later of Minneapolis, Rabbi Margolis of St. Paul, and all always found a warm welcome in his home. His acquaintance among the Conservative Rabbinate was limited to those in nearby cities, and were Rabbi Cohen of St. Paul, Rabbi Aronson and Rabbi Matt of Minneapolis, and Rabbi Frank of Winnipeg. Of Rabbi Cohen who came to Grand Forks to address a general public gathering, Father remarked to me later, "If Rabbis in America will all be like Rabbi Cohen, then Judaism in America will be safe." To Father, the Reform Rabbinate of his day seemed radical in their religious beliefs and observances, and Father was worried lest their influence could lead Judaism into strange paths and perhaps was his reason for his favorable opinion of the men of the Conservative group. However, in later years of his life he met a Rabbi Jaffa, a field representative of the Hebrew Union College who came to Grand Forks on a week-end and conducted services in the Synagogue, and in his sermon surprised my father with his vast knowledge of the Talmud and quotations from various Mishnas which caused him to remark to me that "if the Hebrew Union College can prepare Rabbis with the knowledge of Rabbi Jaffa, then perhaps Reform Judaism may exert a better influence on Jewish life in this country than I formerly believed." This happened about a year before he passed away. His relations with the Christian clergy of all denominations were of the best. He was very highly regarded

by all who knew him. Many of the leading clergymen of the city would often come to our home to discuss religion with him. One Lutheran minister, Reverend Jorgenson, even took Hebrew lessons with my father. Father's first acquaintance with the Catholic priest of the city, a Father Conaty, came as a result of a rather unusual circumstance. It was during the first years of the new synagogue that a member of the congregation rushed into the synagogue during the midnight service of S'Lihos before the High Holidays, and excitedly announced that the Catholic Church was on fire. Though located several blocks to the north of the Synagogue, the flames could easily be seen and before the services were over that structure was in almost complete ruin. My father called the congregation's attention to the fact that if such a thing happened in the old country it could be cause for a pogrom. Knowing that such a thing could not have happened here he would like to suggest that whoever could afford it should send in a contribution to the priest of the church to help rebuild it. The priest later called on my father to personally thank him for this very fine token of friendship by the Jewish people of the community. This in no way affected his relationship with the Protestant element in the city as he numbered among his close friends such leaders of the Protestant churches as Reverend Hulteng of the Lutheran Church, Reverend Mathews of the Presbyterian Church, Reverend Snyder of the Methodist Church, Dr. Robertson, Dr. Wallace and Dr. Henry of Wesley College, a Methodist Institution located at Grand Forks. As Rabbi, he came in early contact with educational leaders of the city, Superintendent of Schools, J. Nelson Kelly, Prof. John C. West, who later became President of the University of North Dakota. There, too, he had intimately

known Dr. Merrifield, D. McVey, as well as Dr. West. During his lifetime, only a few Jewish men served on the faculty of the University. Dr. Jacobstein who came from Rochester, New York, taught in the Political Science Department. Later Dr. Pearlman from Wisconsin also taught in that Department, and still later Dr. Ervin Layine was instrumental in organizing the first Jewish fraternity on the campus during which time the University of North Dakota had its largest Jewish enrollment. Most of those students were non-resident, many coming from eastern sections of the country which added additional responsibilities upon the Rabbi who was naturally concerned about their welfare.

It is probably good to record here that the friendships established by the Rabbi and the Jewish people generally throughout North Dakota among the Christian leaders of the community came into good stead during the advent of the Ku Klux Klan organization when it had reached alarming proportions. I do not intend to go into details of that organizations' activity in Grand Forks. The situation was particularly distressing because the leader of that organization was a Protestant minister of the most prominent church of the city, which in itself was cause of some nervousness among the Jewish residents. While that organization directed its attack primarily against the Catholic people and church and there were occasional reports of disturbances against individual Jews in the state, there was no time during the entire period of the Ku Klux Klan activity in the state when the Jews of Grand Forks were disturbed in any way whatsoever despite the known and public activity of the Rabbi. The Jewish population together with their Catholic friends who together

with the combined strength of the more liberal elements of the Protestant people in Grand Forks and North Dakota, ultimately destroyed completely all KKK influence of the political, commercial and social life of the community and the state.

B'nai Israel Synagogue

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