

FROM GHETTOS TO GARDENS

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[In memory of Yankel Rosenbaum]

This paper briefly outlines the scope and nature of Jewish land settlements in Shepparton, and at Berwick, in the early twentieth-century. These two settlements provide examples in Victoria, that illuminate the processes of settlement in this country. Materials about them describe some of the social, political and economic factors and forces, which contributed to their establishment, operation and eventual demise, as coherent and cohesive communities. The fate of ethnic, cultural and formal *difference* in the context of the powerful homogeneity of the Australian way-of-life is illustrated. In Australia, cultural difference is engulfed by the values and mores of metropolitan suburbia.

The settlers at Shepparton and Berwick had been, but briefly, new arrivals to Melbourne. They had been welcomed and nurtured in that city by voluntary organisations, formed by Jews already living in Melbourne to provide comfort and assistance to new Jewish arrivals, whether immigrants or refugees. These organisations offered settlement on the land as a solution to the sudden increases in Melbourne of the numbers of refugees from Eastern Europe, mainly from villages, towns and cities of Russia. Some of these refugees came via Palestine; others fled Russia through Siberia and China, or through England and America.

The organisations raised funds from the Jewish community of Melbourne, which were used to support the establishment of two land settlement schemes, the first one begun from 1913, in Shepparton, and then another, from 1927, near Berwick. Before occupying their land at Berwick, in addition to the funds, the prospective settlers were given assistance in agricultural methods by the members of the Shepparton Jewish community. They provided the Berwick settlers with work-experience on their own farms and orchards, established fifteen years earlier. The Shepparton settlement, in fact, was to enjoy a more enduring community life than the short-lived settlement at Berwick.

Observation of the Melbourne metropolitan scene today suggests that every culturally distinct new wave of immigrants to this city, or any city in this continent, has usually tended to gather together to live in particular localities. This gathering force seems to be as though by a cultural predetermination and consent. The availability of land and building stock at the lowest cost is a determining factor in this apparent gathering. The choice of location is made however by individuals, who buy property offered in legally defined units on the open market, rather than being able to choose to settle upon land acquired in a prearranged purchase of a whole city area, for a legally determined occupation by an already constituted collective group. A culturally interactive and energetic ethnic community group is formed in a metropolitan area, it seems, when a number of individuals have in sequence chosen to live in a specific locality. One probable expectation of the individual settlers in that chosen locality is that social contact, mutual support and fraternisation will be enhanced amongst like-minded neighbours of the same cultural origins. That same culture and its values and expressions can be readily shared within a relatively close knit area. Yet advantages come to be perceived by most neighbours, for living elsewhere, as a free agent. The desire emerges, it would seem, to re-establish a home in a more affluent suburb, amongst other financially upward individuals, of any cultural origin or ethnicity. Many of the previously ethnically and culturally based newcomers eventually move away with some of their family, probably spouse and children, to live in a locality populated by other socially and culturally mobile nuclear families.

At the beginning of the twentieth century the locations that seem to have been favoured by Jews in Melbourne were Carlton and St Kilda, who were sharing these inner suburbs with similarly formed communities of new immigrants, of other ethnic and cultural origins. There was a synagogue on Bourke Street in the central city as well. In only recent times the last kosher butcher shop on Lygon Street, Carlton, has been sold to a developer, who has converted it now to the ubiquitous Lygon Street dress boutique. More recently still, one of the Jewish families from the 1927 wave of refugees from Russia, the Smorgon family, nostalgically bought back their original shop premises on Lygon Street, and reinstated it as a butcher shop. A newspaper story¹ features Victor Smorgon, who was 14 years of age in 1927. For a few months he attended the Faraday Street school, half a block away from the shop. Soon Victor, and his older brother and future partner, Eric, were working thirteen hours per day in their family's tiny butcher shop. The shop was sold in 1937. The Smorgons moved away, and were to no longer live in Carlton. Most Carlton Jewish families have moved away too, over the decades. Victor and Eric, with cousin David Smorgon, diversified their meat industry interests into steel, plastics and property.

During the latter half of 1913 the first steps occurred toward the establishment of the Shepparton settlement.² At a meeting on 21 July, a Trust was formed by communal leaders of Melbourne's Jewish community. Contributions were made to a fund to aid the settlement of more recent Jewish immigrants on the land. The Trustees appointed were Isaac Jacobs, Moise Schalit, and Abraham Kozminsky, the last being replaced after some time by his nephew, Dr J. Leon Jona,³ who was a research physiologist and a lecturer in medicine at the University of Melbourne. The money subscribed was used to purchase land at Orrvale, in the south-eastern outskirts of Shepparton, which is located about one hundred and ninety kilometres north-east of Melbourne. As most of the settlers were already experienced as orchardists from briefly living in what was then Palestine, the settlement in this Victorian irrigation area was destined for successful establishment. This happened despite the difficulties that are experienced while waiting some years for the trees to bear fruit, before viable incomes can be achieved from the annual fruitpicking. During this eight year interval, these settlers earned incomes from working for others, such as dairy farmers, and already established orchardists in the area.

The Shepparton settlement was the first time in Australia that Jews had settled on the land, rather than in the city.⁴ Primary produce in the Shepparton area had formerly been mutton, wool, and wheat. With an active Victorian government irrigation scheme, however, intense agriculture became possible. A network of water channels through the vast flat plains of the Goulburn River Valley was constructed. Lots were prepared for sale, approximately of 40 acres,⁵ but varying between 30 acres and 53 acres. Initially 8 Jewish families were able to buy their own properties in close neighbourly proximity. The land was bought with the aid of Trust monies. These purchasers could also borrow against reasonable terms of repayment to the government. The blocks offered were clear sites with two-roomed government-built houses on each block. The land and temporary houses were sold on very easy terms to allcomers. The Victorian Closer Settlement Act had been amended in 1912, and sought to assist rural settlement by a government controlled, low interest, long term, conditional purchase payment scheme.

Yankel Rosenbaum⁶ records that the Jewish Agricultural Settlement Fund was constituted on 6 March 1913, with donations by Kozminsky, Jacobs and Dr Schalit, and also by Joseph Kronheimer and Barnett H. Altson. This Fund was later secured by the Trust formed on 21 July 1913. This latter organisation petitioned the government's Closer Settlement Board, to enable the refugee settlers to purchase allotments. This petition was enthusiastically received. All applicants under this scheme were examined by a

board of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission. The Jewish applicants, with their lack of English skills, were greatly assisted by these friendly and supportive examiners.

The settlers arrived in Orrvale, on 14 April 1913, to occupy their new blocks. Their children attended the nearby State School, and in conjunction the community also taught the children about their own culture, in their own language. Meat for the families was sent from Melbourne until 1923, when a ritual slaughterer was brought in, who also participated in teaching Jewish traditions. Nearby a small piece of land was set aside, and on it a house was built to operate as a synagogue. Newman Rosenthal⁷ has described his memory of the settlers' synagogue at Orrvale, as a small wooden structure, with "bleak interiors amid the wildest surroundings of the Australian bush [which] contrasted so vividly with the warmth and friendly atmosphere within".

Yankel Rosenbaum, in his B.A. honours essay, includes an appendix listing the names of the families and their farm acreages in the Shepparton District from 1913 to 1938. The I Rubenstein and B Bendel families held 30 acres each in 1913; B Beresinsky held 41; Bere Feiglin and Moishe Feiglin held 40 and 45 acres respectively, and they later diversified into timber milling and fruit-case production; N Rosenbaum held 46; S Gorr and also J Moritz held 53 acres each. For 1915, the listing shows that B Sonkin had possession of the I Rubenstein block, and that additional proprietors were A Dabscheck, 16 acres, and J Dabscheck, 37 acres; the brothers C, R and L Rothberg, had 21, 37, and 41 acres respectively, upon which ostrich farming was briefly attempted; and R Wynn, 32 acres. There was a terrible drought in 1916, with the irrigation channels drying up. For the 1924 listing, a *Shul* [synagogue] on a one and a half acre allotment, D16, appears beside the name of A Feiglin, and consequently beside the name of M Feiglin, in 1929, 1934 and 1938. After 1915, no new families appear to have become settlers until 1929, when the families of M Schuster, I Wolkowicki [later shortened to Wolk], and P Zimmerman are listed, and so is a Jewish Hostel on a 5-acre lot. By 1938, the new names are A Hayat and son, and M and S Snider [from the Berwick settlement], U Greenblat, J Soafkin and S Kronenberg. [see Figure 1].

Thus these Russian immigrants, some with experience of orchard growing in Palestine, came to occupy land at Orrvale. In due course they made a great success of this Jewish Land Settlement enterprise. Newman Rosenthal records the testimony of one settler

There was a moving simplicity about her story and her manner of relating it ... "We can make good farmers and orchardists... For centuries we were forced to make our living in other ways, not because we liked them, but because we weren't allowed to live in any other. But we have shown in Shepparton, that if we are given the opportunity we will make good - even on the land.... And this is much better than a lot of things we might have done had we stayed in the city ..."⁸

Hilary Rubinstein⁹ claims that the success of the Shepparton Jewish settlement enabled their products to form the basis of the SPC canned fruit industry. As well, this success could then convince this scheme's detractors and the non-Jewish opponents to it, "that Jews could and would work the land and need not inevitably defect to urban centres".

The MLA for the Goulburn Valley, Mr W.J. Bouchier, wrote a letter to the *Australian Jewish Herald*, published on 29 March 1928, p.4, which praised the Shepparton settlers: "The fact is that these Settlers have become absorbed with Australians and other overseas British settlers to such an extent that, unless one spoke to them and detected their origin, one would take them for successful Australian orchardists". Cultural difference, Bouchier proposed, waned with the settler's economic and agricultural success, and they succumbed to the ideal of becoming singularly "Australians", so much

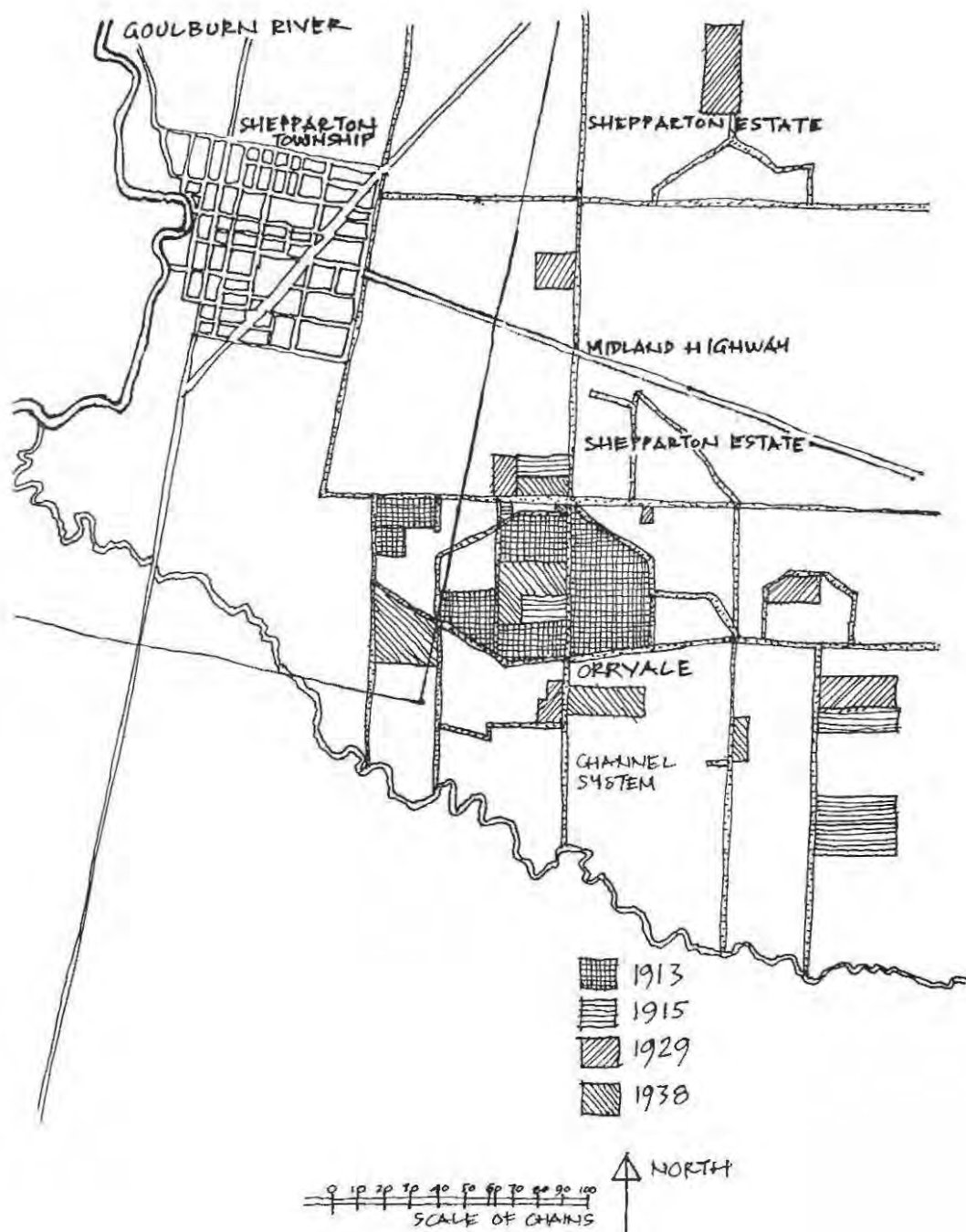


Figure 1: a diagram abstracted from Rosenbaum, "The Shepparton Jewish Community 1913-1939", showing the dispersed nature of the holdings of the Jewish settlers

so that their cultural origins could no longer be detected. Ought not there be cultural difference? "From my personal observations when visiting this Settlement on different occasions, the Jewish settlers seem to have done very well and are the possessors of some very fine orchards. They are good citizens ... their families being brought up on the land have the advantage of being better equipped with a practical knowledge of Agriculture than their fathers before them". Ironically, because they were good citizens, and because their children knew more, and therefore would leave the area, those qualities that Bouchier admired led ultimately to the loss of cultural identity during the 1930s, and the demise of this once recognisably cohesive community.

Following World War One, arrivals in Australia of Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe began to increase; 85% of all Jewish refugees landed in Melbourne. Shalom Slutzkin had created the Ukrainian Jewish Relief Fund, which sent abroad large sums of money for relief, and had a network enabling Melbourne Jews to communicate with and support relatives in Russia. This organisation became the Jewish Welcome Society, to aid those who had already escaped from Russia. The Society had to change its tactics for serving need by arranging to meet newcomers just as their ships berthed at the docks, rather than continue to send food parcels to distant ports. As well, the Victorian Jewish Advisory Board of the immediate past, became the Victorian Jewish Immigration Questions Committee [which, later still, emerged as the Australian Jewish Welfare Society]. These organisations agreed that the success of the land settlement at Shepparton could be repeated elsewhere, thereby providing newcomers with an opportunity to settle on the land. The Australian Jewish Land Settlement Trust was then formed, with Abraham Kozminsky, Archie Michaelis and Elcon Baevski Myer as provisional trustees, to give effect to this resolve: "On the advice of the closer settlement experts of the Victorian Government, land was purchased at Berwick, Victoria, upon which a number of migrants were settled".¹⁰

Samuel Wynn was a member of the very active executive of six for the Jewish Welcome Society, "whose function it was to meet ships, seek out Jewish immigrants and give help".¹¹ The Society grew out of the concerns essentially of Jews of European origin, recognising the plight of Eastern European Jewish newcomers. The Society sought to alleviate their suffering and bewilderment, and to give them comfort and a start, while the Anglo-Jews, who comprised the greater number within Melbourne's Jewish community, were not especially concerned. Alan Wynn claims this majority was not aroused enough to become involved with these pathetic, anxious, and destitute refugees. The new arrivals were often non English-speaking. The turmoil of post-war cities in Eastern Europe had deprived them of a good education, and from obtaining work skills and commercial experience. In the Society's first year sixty-seven ships were met. The 400 plus who were identified, were found temporary jobs and lodgings. Very soon 1000 had been visited at the ships, but the flow of refugees only increased.

An open meeting was held at the Montefiore Hall in Carlton on 3 August 1927. The meeting determined that the Australian Jewish Settlement Trust be formed. The purpose of the AJS Trust was "to solve the problem of the Jewish migration, through the creation of new settlers as poulterers, market gardeners, dairymen and fruitgrowers, and all sorts of other agricultural forms and means, both individually and in group partnerships".¹² Dr Albert E. Jones was elected chairman of this Trust, Levi Morris its treasurer, and Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky became the honorary director of the executive. Other members elected were Sydney Keith, Arthur Rose, Israel Sher, and Newman Rosenthal.¹³ Their task was to appoint an expert panel, chosen to interview applicants wishing to settle on the land, to ascertain their reliability and suitability, and their farming skill levels. This Trust executive was also charged to find suitable land to buy.

The first undertaking by the AJS Trust, however, was building a hostel on the 5-acre Orrvale lot mentioned previously. The hostel was to provide accommodation for newcomers, so that they could gain practical agricultural work experience in Shepparton. This block had a water channel running through it, and so it was capable of being cultivated. The Jewish Welcome Society assisted in the procurement of the hostel building. On 20 March 1928, the building committee, comprising Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky, Israel Sher, Sam Wynn, and A Mushin, took over the hostel from the contractor. They gave the hostel keys to its House Committee, consisting of the President of the Shepparton Jewish Settlers, Mr Beresinsky, the Secretary, Mr B Rosenbaum, and committee, Messrs Edelman, Perelman, and J Rosenbaum, and the manager-caterer, Mr Shapiro.¹⁴ Through its doors were soon to pass 1000 Jewish people, who all found work in the fields and orchards in the Shepparton district. Some were to successfully apply for land at Berwick, as purchased by the AJS Trust.

The hostel building contained 12 bedrooms, for 24 people. To make up a total of 50 persons, the sleep-out verandahs which had been insect-screened, could be closed in and occupied. The dining room could seat 75 to 100 diners. This room was also used as a reading and lecture room, and had a large fireplace in its centre. A separate adjoining building contained the bath rooms, showers, and the wash-house. This accommodation was quite splendid in the eyes of the Jewish orchardists, and compared more than favourably with the kind of quarters built to house seasonal fruitpickers on the local orchard properties. The hostel was able to act as a labour exchange during the harvest period.¹⁵

Berwick was chosen by the AJS Trust, firstly because the purchase of market garden land, in contrast to dairy farm land or orchard growing land, was going to allow the placement of the maximum number of settlers for the same amount of donations collected. Secondly, being only about 45 kilometres east from Melbourne, the AJS Trust executive could participate more readily in the establishment of the settlement, permitting greater management control and contact for advising the settlers. Thirdly, fruit growing had such a long lead time before its income earning capacity could be reached. Fruit was being sorely oversupplied at that time. Cropping greens was potentially quick and profitable, achieving a faster return of the invested capital. Water channel reticulation was in place, and piped water as well promised an endless supply. The Closer Settlement Scheme officers in nearby Melbourne, and Lands Department personnel working in the district, meant that experts were readily accessible for giving advice.

The research leading to the writing of this paper came about because the life of the prominent business identity, N.L. Kanevsky, was being investigated, for another purpose altogether.¹⁶ Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky was a significant client of the architects, Walter and Marion Griffin.¹⁷

Sydney Keith was also a significant client of the Griffins.¹⁸ It was James Weirick¹⁹ who had noted that Kanevsky's name appeared in the index of a recent publication by Hilary Rubinstein, *The Jews in Australia*.²⁰ Her book revealed that Kanevsky had been involved in both Jewish land settlements during the mid 1920s. Kanevsky's role at Shepparton was as described, as chairman of a committee providing a hostel for newly arrived Jewish refugees, some undergoing training in agrarian methods and animal husbandry skills before taking up land at Berwick. The Berwick land settlement, as an idea, was put with persuasive advocacy by Kanevsky at the Montefiore Hall meeting, 3 August 1927. Jews then fleeing from urban squalor in Europe, he maintained, could live by farming in the Victorian countryside, if given the same opportunities as had Jews at Orrvale.

Kanevsky's own story is useful in this chronicle, illuminating the kinds of forces and factors in this century that have affected newcomers in the processes of settlement in Australia. Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky was born in Kiev in 1888, a son of Joshua Kanevsky, merchant, and Rachel Leonard Novakovsky.²¹ A pogrom against the Jews in Kiev had already occurred in 1881. In 1891 Jews were arbitrarily subjected to intense interrogation and curfew controls in that city. A Jewish uprising occurred in Kiev on 18th October 1905, which triggered a large scale pogrom, when Jews were controlled and repressed by curfews, document searches, and random house raids. A major exodus of Jews from Kiev followed. Kanevsky, aged 19, was probably expelled, rather than voluntarily migrating from Kiev, in 1907. He made his escape through Siberia, arriving for the first time in Melbourne in 1908.²² He returned to Russia, however, to bring out his sister, Leah [or sometimes, Lena], and they wandered, to England, USA, New Zealand, then to Australia. As she preferred the USA, Kanevsky took her back there, where after some time she married a man surnamed Busch.



Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky

The likely date for Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky's second arrival in Australia was 1910, as he later talked of having obtained a construction worker's job on Flinders Street Railway Station, soon after he returned to Melbourne.²³ Some time later he established himself in business in Flinders Lane, such that when he was married to Vera Minerva Salome Douglas in April 1916, he was described as a "merchant" on his marriage certificate, which gave the Carlyone Hotel, Melbourne, as his address. His business address in 1919 was 241 Flinders Lane. Vera was the daughter of a Scot, Captain James Douglas, a Boer War veteran, and of Jane Minerva Bell. Nisson and Vera had two children, Gloria Rae [later, Mrs Alec Fraser] and Boris Dorian. Nisson had become a substantial success in the clothing trade, when in 1922 he commissioned the Griffins to design him "Leonard House", 44-46 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Nisson and Vera, and their son, Boris and his wife Marie and their son, Peter, lived at the Griffins' Castlecrag Estate, NSW, at various times in the 1930s, staying in the Fishwick House, designed by the Griffins in 1929. Marie was the sister of Marshall Fordham, the Griffins' principal draftsman in their Melbourne office in the 1930s. During that same decade Boris managed a Kanevsky branch office in Sydney. Nisson's business interests were diverse, indicative of his drive and energy. His changing financial fortunes collapsed a number of times, but he would endure and succeed again. After World War Two, he and

Vera raised Aberdeen Angus cattle on their property, "Fairview", at Lardner, via Warragul, Victoria. Nisson often slept overnight in his city office, but for his last three years, he had rooms at the Francis Hotel in central Melbourne. He died there on 12 May, 1954, aged 66 years. Vera died in Warragul, November 1972.

The question remains whether Kanevsky himself would have opted to join a Jewish group of newcomers establishing a community in the Victorian countryside, if such an opportunity had been available in 1908 or 1910? The assumption can be made that he might have done so, because he admired the Shepparton settlement so much. Kanevsky enthusiastically developed the idea that the Shepparton example could be beneficially followed in creating new Jewish communities on the land. He and Vera finally possessed their own farm.

Incomplete though a knowledge of his own personal history may be, the strongest impression is given of a person who was loyal to his culture and his kinfolk. Peter Leonard-Kanevsky recalls his grandfather was intensely proud of being Russian. But Nisson was also willing to engage with the Australian way-of-life, and that entailed risking a loss of a culturally different identity. He must knowingly have dared so, when he chose to break with custom in marriage. He became a devoted family man and a dynamic businessman, while he resisted conformity. He felt strongly and passionately to be Russian, and a Jew; yet he was an active citizen in another land. His empathy with the Griffins suggests he too could imagine being a new kind of individual, in a newly emerging democratic and heterogeneous society. The choices were difficult, his courage and zest for life so admirable.

Returning to the story of Berwick, the banner headline in the *Australian Jewish Herald*, 1 December 1927, tells of "Immigrants on the Land ... Jewish Market Gardeners Established at Berwick ... Only Numbers can make a Jewish life possible". The article that follows was written by that newspaper's editor at one time, Newman Rosenthal. The average size of the blocks were 19 acres for the first settlers in the Berwick area, being another irrigated subdivision scheme made by the Closer Settlement Board.²⁴ Initially blocks for four Jewish families were purchased on the usual easy terms, like those offered by the same Board at Orrvale. Rosenthal felt that the Berwick Jewish settlers were "of a very fine type. They have been through so much on the other side of the world, that the sunshine and freedom, stir by contrast. To see them—men, women and children—in a field as yet barren, in places wild and scrubby, still to be cleared, sent something of a thrill through one's veins ... There are four men to the one [one-horse] plough, for they do things in a happy spirit out there... Three children are thoroughly enjoying themselves. The freer life of the open air is obviously a luxury to these youngsters from Eastern Europe. Some day they will be strong, healthy, happy Australians. *V'chen y'hi rotzon!*"

Four months later four more Jewish settlers had been settled on their new blocks at Berwick. The area now enjoyed completed new government roadways. Many visitors were coming to see the "Jewish Colony" on Saturdays and Sundays!²⁵ ... "the place is fast taking shape, and already presents a picture ...". The settlers were often disrupted by Jewish families picnicking amongst the fields. "The newly-built [government] houses are becoming surrounded with green vegetables. Poultry pens, sheds, out-buildings, [government built] are springing up. The cackling songs of pedigreed poultry are becoming louder as their numbers increase. And the faces of the settlers are becoming brighter; the hope of soon making a living from the farm does not look so very distant now, as it did four months ago ... Mr N. Leonard-Kanevsky, one of the directors of the Land Settlement Trust, is becoming almost a resident of Berwick. One day last week he brought up a poultry expert, the second an orchardist, the third, a strawberry

grower, all giving advice and guidance to the settlers... Several Shepparton farmers have promised to come down themselves, and those who cannot do so, will send down the second generation to assist the settlers with the planting of the orchards".

The Berwick settlers held a weekly meeting, presided over by Kanevsky.²⁶ The eight initial Berwick settlers were A Hayat Snr, N Meshaloff, I Eizenberg, G Rovkin, A Sneid, H Ash, D Brown, and Hayat Jnr. At the late March meeting, in 1928, the settlers decided to form a Narre Warren and Berwick Progress Association. Kanevsky also urged them to form a Berwick Farmers' Association, which they did. In September 1928, Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky travelled with Rabbi Israel Brodie and Louis [Levi] Morris to Sydney, and spoke and answered questions at a meeting of the Jewish community.²⁷ Kanevsky reported that the new blocks at Berwick were 12 to 15 acres in area, where 5 acres was probably sufficient for one family to make a living. Jewish settlers were able to buy 11 blocks of the first 89 sold by the Closer Settlement Board, which had then been increased to 17 blocks with 63 inhabitants in all. "We are making application for another 10 or 12 blocks; the rest is occupied by other settlers. If we had more money we could take up other blocks as well".

The *Australian Jewish Herald* records that during 1929 the Berwick settlement began to fail.²⁸ In the Great Depression commodity prices rapidly plummeted. The settlers began to walk off their properties, and by 1937, only one Jewish farmer remained. In Newman Rosenthal's summary of what befell the Berwick community, he states that it was the depression which brought such grief to the enterprise: "the big misfortune [was] ... that they had funded their farms precisely at the time when the crisis, like a dark threatening cloud, descended upon economic life in Australia."²⁹ These settlers were too inexperienced to compensate their losses with greater and greater productivity, to cope with the lower and lower prices. The expert advice that was available seemed now inappropriate, the farmers feeling that they had been misled in the first instance. In despair, the farmers simply left their crops to rot in the ground, and left for the city. The sorry state of enormous debts, and even bankruptcy, experienced by the Jewish farmers of Berwick, was now symptomatic of the fortunes of farmers everywhere. The anguish of financial failure with no hope of negotiating new loans or funds, was a common occurrence among all Victorian farmers, and the Government did not escape the calamity either. The Jewish community of Berwick had to dissipate, and simply disappeared without physical trace. Kanevsky must have been bitterly disappointed.

As an irretrievable consequence of the cessation of farming activities at Berwick, the call for training Jewish newcomers at Orrvale fell away to nought. There could be little seasonal work either for fruitpickers, when it was a better economic strategy to leave the fruit on the trees. The hostel became deserted and fell into disrepair.

The committee of the Shepparton Settlers' Association, however, as conditions improved, organised the hostel to be moved to a position next to the *shul*, on lot D16. Now located in the centre of the original settlement, the hostel was enlarged and refurbished to provide sleeping accommodation for 100 people, together with a kitchen to suit, and also providing a communal hall to be used as a dining room by the hostel lodgers. As economic conditions became better, the hostel filled with young Jewish people and Jewish newcomers, who could earn very high wages during the fruitpicking season.

Although the original settled orchardists wished to expand the numbers of the Jewish community in Shepparton, for the sake of the community's survival, very few new settlers came to establish permanently. Of those that came for the seasonal work, the young were engaging in temporary work to finance their studies for the professions, and the newcomers were attempting to earn enough to return to the metropolitan area and

set up a business. "The workload and social disadvantages caused Shepparton to remain an unattractive option for the urbanised Jewish settler [and newcomer]." ³⁰ Fruitpicking meant hard work from sunrise to sundown every day [except the Sabbath], leaving no time for anything else, in the way of study or socialising. By 1939 it became clear to the Jewish orchardists, that no new settlers could be attracted to live in Shepparton. The Shepparton settlers' children, as adults, were moving away, preferring the life and work available in the city. The Jewish land settlement at Shepparton had become a great economic success, but its life as a viable cultural enclave was becoming limited. Rosenbaum thought the settlement was best described as "a congregation of Jewish individuals, rather than an individual Jewish congregation."³¹

The establishment, the rise and then the failure of these settlements to ultimately sustain a strong Jewish community life and identity, is evidence of the social and financial factors and forces in Australia, that come to bear hard upon the maintenance of cultural difference. Despite cultural tolerance and religious freedom, and of other expressions and conditions appropriate for a pluralistic society, pressures that make minorities conform will eventually come upon settlers from any land and culture. If not upon the settlers themselves, the gradual diminution of cultural difference will certainly come then upon their children and grandchildren.

The trend is ever toward assimilation and homogeneity within the community at large, rather than toward heterogeneity, from richly diverse origins and beginnings. The ways, means and forms, for planning and building settlements in Australia were largely set, wherever, during the first wave of colonisation. They were British ways, and similarly Australian institutions were based upon British models, all perhaps modified a little by American experience. Culturally different settlers arriving later do not effect major changes to that infrastructure and built environment and its management. The Jewish settlers of Shepparton and Berwick fitted into existing conditions. They did not create a discrete and lasting Jewish place. The Jewish settlers obtained their agricultural holdings on the open market, and not through any land grant or special reservation, and their housing and other structures were designed and built by the government bureaucracy, according to local technologies, planning and taste. The settlers' ethnicity and cultural difference was not expressed in the forms of the settlement and its architecture. Nowadays there is almost no evidence that these Jewish settlements ever happened, except for these wonderful stories.

Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky did make a mark on our built environment, profoundly, some might say. In 1927, Kanevsky became interested in an invention of a reverberatory incinerator by municipal engineer, John Boadle. RIECo [Reverberatory Incinerator Engineering Company] was formed, and this company, with building designs by the Griffins, successfully tendered for thirteen municipal garbage destructors, which were fitted with RIECo equipment. While some municipal politicians and bureaucracies have neglected, mutilated or destroyed this heritage of architectural difference in the mediocrity of homogeneously planned and built Australia, some of these spectacular municipal incinerators remain as an inheritance from the Griffins and Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky.

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NOTES

¹ The Age, Friday 29 October 1993, p.7, carries a picture of Mr Victor Smorgon standing in the re-acquired shop in Lygon Street, Carlton. There is an accompanying short article by Louise Martin. The photo shows that the Smorgon family had already reinstated it as a butcher's shop. Unhappily the family has had to close the shop again, in early 1995.

² Newman Rosenthal, *Look Back with Pride*, Nelson, Melbourne, 1971, p. 69. This book is an excellent account of the St Kilda Hebrew Congregation. After World War Two, Newman Rosenthal became a Professor at the University of Melbourne, utilising his knowledge and experience of the media and communications.

³ *Ibid*, p.70. Dr Jona's brother, Jacob Jona, was once president of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, and Jacob's son, Walter Jona, became a member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, and a Minister in a period of Liberal Party Government.

⁴ J. Trevaks, "The success of the Shepparton Jewish orchardists", *Australian Jewish Almanac*, Melbourne, 1937. Serge Liberman very kindly translated this article in December 1993, from Yiddish into English, for my use in this paper.

⁵ Yankel Rosenbaum, "The Shepparton Jewish Community 1913-1939", unpublished Bachelor of Arts honours essay, Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1984. Jacob Trevaks [spelt Triwax in the contents pages in English in the *Australian Jewish Almanac*, and changed here due to the advice of Dr Liberman] offers figures of 6 initial Jewish settlers buying 40-acre government prepared blocks, but Rosenbaum's figures come from documents rather than from newspaper articles.

⁶ Yankel Rosenbaum, having graduated from the University of Melbourne, was studying for a doctoral degree in New York in 1991. He was knifed in a Brooklyn street, when black youths rioted in retaliation to a fatal road accident, involving a Jewish driver. He died the next day of his untreated wounds in the Kings County Hospital. See Penelope DeBelle, "The Heights of Injustice", *Age*, Melbourne, Saturday 21 August 1993, p.15.

⁷ Rosenthal, *Look Back with Pride*, *loc cit*, p.69.

⁸ *Ibid*, p.70.

⁹ Hilary Rubinstein, *The Jews in Victoria 1835-1985*, Jewish Museum of Australia, Allen & Unwin, Melbourne, 1986, p.171.

¹⁰ Rosenthal, *Look Back with Pride*, *op cit*, p.71.

¹¹ Alan Wynn, *The Fortunes of Samuel Wynn*, Cassell, Australia, 1968, p.116.

¹² Newman Rosenthal, "An Unsuccessful Attempt to Settle Jews on the Land", *Australian Jewish Almanac*, Melbourne, 1937. Again I am most grateful to Serge Liberman for generously translating this article into English from Yiddish, December 1993.

¹³ *Australian Jewish Herald*, 1 December 1927, p.4.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 29 March 1928, p.4, "Australian Jewish Land Settlement Trust. Interesting Reports of Activities. Berwick. Shepparton." The citations of 'Mr' are repeated here.

¹⁵ The question of whether this hostel was designed by the Griffins was asked, for reasons that become apparent in this paper. No evidence has emerged, however, to confirm that the

hostel was designed by the Griffins.

¹⁶ Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky is of great interest to the Griffin Exchange Project, Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning, University of Melbourne, Parkville, Victoria 3052, tel (03) 344 6448, as are all the clients, builders, and engineers involved in projects designed by the architects, Walter Burley Griffin and Marion Lucy Mahony Griffin. The Griffins' professional colleagues and friends too, are being researched. The Griffins were also immigrants, from America, and as everyone knows, designed the most significant of all Australian country settlements: Canberra. The Griffin Exchange Project has been established between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and the University of Melbourne.

¹⁷ Kanevsky approached the Griffins in their Collins Street office, to design him an office building at 44-46 Elizabeth Street. Thus, the 8-storey "Leonard House" was built, 1922-24. Kanevsky occupied the 4th floor of the building, and the Griffins moved their Melbourne office to the 5th floor of this new building.

¹⁸ Sydney Keith was managing director of Holders Pty. Ltd. in Bourke Street, Melbourne, and the Griffins made additions to his store in 1926, and also made alterations to it in 1931. Keith's parents were born in New Zealand. When a Pacific war seemed imminent, he and his wife Beatrice migrated to USA. They lived in Bel Air in Los Angeles. He died there, aged 53 years, on 26 March 1944. This research on Keith is by Peter Navaretti.

¹⁹ Professor James Weirick, head of the Landscape Architecture Department, UofNSW, and Peter Navaretti, RMIT, are the two leading scholars in Australia on the Griffins' complete works in USA, Australia and India. They are directly involved with Jeff Turnbull in the production by the Griffin Exchange Project of a catalogue of the complete Australian and Indian buildings and projects of the Griffins. At Urbana-Champaign, Professors Paul Kruty and Paul Sprague are compiling a companion volume on the Griffins' American work.

²⁰ *The Jews in Australia: a thematic history*, 2 volumes, Heinemann, Port Melbourne, 1991. Volume I, 1788-1945, is written by Hilary L. Rubinstein, and Volume II, 1945 to the present, is written by W.D. [Bill] Rubinstein.

²¹ Peter Navaretti is the basic researcher of the labyrinth of public records of many kinds from many authorities, and I thank him for making available his documentation. Simon Reeves has been during recent months a most enthusiastic assistant to Peter and myself.

²² From a record of interview, by Peter Navaretti and Jeff Turnbull, with cousins Peter Leonard-Kanevsky and Di Betts, grandchildren of Nisson Leonard-Kanevsky, November 1993. Having located Kanevsky's living descendants, they proved to be very helpful, and provided invaluable facts and photos. I thank Di Betts and Peter Leonard-Kanevsky.

²³ "Flinders Street Station was built to the competition-winning design of Fawcett & Ashworth in 1905-10". Miles Lewis with Philip Goad and Alan Mayne, *Melbourne: The City's History and Development*, The City of Melbourne, 1994, p.96.

²⁴ Patricia Dale and Jan Bottcher from the City of Casey have kindly provided information upon one of the blocks in the area, bought by the AJS Trust in 1928. The Springfield Homestead and Cheese Factory property had been acquired by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, and had been divided into smaller allotments. Lot 9 Section 4, Hallam Valley, is recorded as having been purchased by the AJS Trust, and was rated at sixty pounds per annum between 1928 to 1931, when the rate was marked down to fifty four pounds per annum. Jacob Hearn of the Closer Settlement Board became the ratepayer in 1933.

²⁵ *The Australian Jewish Herald*, 3 May 1928, p.4.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 29 March 1928, p.4.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 6 September 1928, p.8, "Victorian Delegates in Sydney : Land Settlement Campaign Opened in NSW: Committee Appointed to Co-operate with Victorian Committee".

²⁸ *Ibid*, 20 February 1930, pp.4-5, and 19 March 1931, p.3.

²⁹ Newman Rosenthal, "An Unsuccessful Attempt to Settle Jews on the Land", *Australian Jewish Almanac*, 1937.

³⁰ Rosenbaum, *op cit*, p.50.

³¹ *Ibid*.

