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GEORGE MOSS AN EARLY WORKER OF THE SYDNEY JEWISH COMMUNITY

by
G. F. J. Bergman, D.Ec., LL.B.

Many years ago, D. J. Benjamin wrote in a footnote to his article "Australia and The Voice of Jacob" in which he sketched a very short biography of George Moss:¹

"George Moss was one of the most important of the early communal workers. He deserves a paper to himself."

This is indeed true. Moss was an outstanding personality but his life was a turbulent one with great successes and failures. And he met with a tragic end.

The actual date of his arrival in the colony cannot be ascertained. It appears that he arrived in 1831, probably as a steerage passenger whose name was not noted in the passenger list. He was therefore among the early free immigrants.² As his subsequent career showed he must have received a thorough secular and religious education. Although aged only 21, he was, when the first Jewish congregation was instituted at the first General Meeting of Sydney Jews on 30 September, 1833, elected the Honorary Secretary of the new congregation.³ It is not known how he made his living during the first years of his stay in Sydney. He was never a good businessman and was inclined to take casual jobs.

The name George Moss is mentioned in the newspaper in 1833 when, for a short time, he took over the Rose Inn at Maitland,⁴ but there is no certainty that this was George Moses Moss, or a namesake who was later known as a wine merchant, but otherwise played no role in the Jewish community. There is evidence of George Moses Moss as Secretary of Barnett Levey's Theatre Royal in the mid-thirties. He wrote on 15th October, 1835 to the "Sydney Gazette":

"I am directed by the acting lessees of the Theatre to inform you that the free admission granted to your establishment is suspended."⁵

Newspaper advertisements of the time showed that Moss acted also as ticket seller for the Theatre. Shipping reports indicate that a George Moss spent, in 1836, three and a half months — from June to October — in Van Diemen's Land. If George Moses Moss was the one who went to Van Diemen's Land, he must, on his return, have suffered a deep shock, because on 30 August 1836 his father, Marcus Warshauer, alias

D. J. Benjamin remarked in relation to this passage:¹⁸

“None of these plans came to fruition, except that the Deed of Grant of the second Burial Ground was published. If only Moss had been able to do as he hoped, much early history would have been preserved. As one example, we may cite the Philanthropic Society. Nothing is known of its early years and a recent search, kindly undertaken by the Honorary Secretary of the Sir Moses Montefiore Home, its successor, failed to discover its early minutes. If only Moss had been supported, so that he could do what he planned . . .”

And as the early minutes of the Sydney Synagogue, from 1832 to 1837, are lost, too, we know practically nothing of these early years of Sydney Jewry, years during which Moss was the Honorary Secretary of the congregation.

P. J. Marks in “The Jewish Press in Australia”, a lecture which he delivered to the Jewish Literary and Debating Society of Sydney in 1913, published subsequently in the *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*,¹⁹ has traced the history of the contents of the three issues of the *Sydney Voice of Jacob*. The second issue appeared on 24 June and contained drawings of the front and back of the York Street Synagogue under construction. The third appeared on 5 September, 1842. In it the text of the Deed of Grant of the Burial Ground, dated 4 July, 1835, was published, whilst the greater part of the issue was taken up with an account of the quarrel caused by the secession of a number of leading London Jews from the orthodox congregations to form a Reform Synagogue, called “The West London Synagogue of British Jews”.

It was, unfortunately, to be the last issue. In its leading article, Moss deplored the lack of support he had received, “the former numbers have been, as the present will be, gratuitously and extensively distributed”. As already mentioned, Moss was an idealist and not a good businessman. “The compiler”, he wrote in his last article, “would be guilty of neglect and injustice towards his domestic and social relations if he risked his means and wasted his zeal and enthusiasm to any greater extent than he has done, without an efficient support from his brethren.” Moss could not have chosen a less appropriate time for this venture, because the country was in the grip of one of its most severe economic depressions,²⁰ and a large majority of the Jewish businessmen was bankrupt. This was the end of a dream and of a venture far in advance of the times, because Australia had to wait another 29 years, until Solomon Joseph founded in 1871 *The Australian Israelite*, Australia’s second Jewish newspaper. Moss could not have continued with his paper. Because of the depression, the situation of *The Australian* became more and more difficult, and by July 1843, his partnership with the Reverend Hesketh was dissolved and he left the office of that newspaper.²¹

What did he do now? It is difficult to say if it was George Moses Moss or his namesake who, in January 1844, applied for the licence of an hotel at the corner of George and Hunter Streets;²² in April, 1844, for a publican’s licence;²³ in July, 1844, obtained a night licence,²⁴ and in October, 1844, was proprietor of the City Hotel,²⁵ which was transferred two months later to George Howell.²⁶ This erratic venture might well fit into the picture of

the life of George Moses Moss. The entire state of his affairs might have got on his nerves: Moss was twice fined for non-attendance as juror.²⁷ He had to move out of the house in Bridge Street and was now living in Jamison Street.²⁸ An advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 2 August, 1844, shows that together with many other Jewish businessmen, he signed a petition to the Mayor to call a public meeting to discuss a petition to the Governor not to place upon the Estimates any sum to defray the expense of the prosecution as voted by the Legislative Council and to elicit public opinion on the power of the Council in relation to the Privilege Question. By October 1845, he had found a small job. The Sydney City Council appointed him as rate collector for the Cook and Macquarie Wards, after two of his Jewish friends, Moses Joseph, President of the Synagogue, and Lewis Lyons, had come to his help and acted as his sureties.²⁹ Half a year later he established himself as a Customs House agent and shipping broker with an office in Macquarie Place.³⁰ It is more than doubtful that he would have made a success in this profession, because, when in November 1846, Emanuel Crabb, the paid secretary of the York Street Synagogue, resigned from his office, George Moss applied on 26 November for this position and was duly appointed. During his whole life in Sydney, Moss was devoted to the Synagogue.

Moss and the Sydney Synagogue³¹

As already mentioned, Moss was the first Honorary Secretary of the Sydney Synagogue when the congregation was founded in 1832, and had remained in this position when they moved in 1837 from the temporary George Street Synagogue to the Bridge Street Synagogue. The Minutes of the Committee show Moss as a very active Committee member, constantly moving or seconding resolutions. On 7 November 1838, Moss proposed to form a Finance Committee and that "fit and correct copies of Sepher Torahs be procured from England as the present ones were useless". Decision on this proposal was, however, postponed until taken up a year later by Isaac Simmons and Moses Joseph, when new Scrolls were ordered in England.

On 8 December, 1837, Moss initiated an address to the retiring Governor Sir Richard Bourke. In 1837, J. Macle hose in his book "The Pictures of Sydney and Strangers' Guide to New South Wales", published in Sydney in 1838, wrote about the development of the Jewish community in the colony, that "a commitia was formed, and a few gentlemen who were well acquainted with the Judaical belief, volunteered their services to act on all occasions, and among others Mr. George Moss, who acted as Honorary Secretary, which office he discharged with zeal and integrity, and for the benefit of his brethren in faith . . ." From this report it appears that, by 1837, George Moss had already become well-known in the general community of Sydney. Early in 1838, however, at a meeting, the date of which is not stated in the minutes — and not written in his handwriting — disagreement seems to have developed between Moss and the other members of the Committee. At this meeting, Moss was fined 10/6d. for "irregularities", the books of the Synagogue not being available at the

meeting; and the treasurer was also fined 10/- because the Finance Committee had not prepared its report. And at this same meeting, which was probably held in January 1838, Phillip Joseph Cohen, who had come down from Maitland, in all probability because he regarded the matter he was to bring up of great importance, proposed that "for the future a paid Secretary be engaged". This resolution was adopted and it was decided to submit it to the next General Meeting. Moss was present at the meeting at which he had proposed that Michael Rose, the Minister of the congregation, should also act as collector.

The resolution to appoint a paid secretary was a clear vote of censure against Moss. It had most certainly something to do with the latter's irregular domestic life. P. J. Cohen was known to have very strong ideas regarding such matters, and the fact that Moss had by then already three illegitimate children by his de facto wife and, took no steps to regularise the situation, appears to have influenced Cohen to attack Moss. One can only read between the lines of the minutes of this meeting. Cohen probably believed that, in view of his domestic irregularities, Moss was not worthy to be the Secretary of the congregation. And Moss took it as an affront and censure. On 15 February, Abraham Cohen, the President, had to inform the Committee that he had received a letter from Moss in which he tendered his resignation, not only as Honorary Secretary, but also as member of the Committee. The resignation was unanimously accepted and a letter was sent to Moss expressing the regret of the Committee. Yet, Moss had been a driving force and it appears that the Committee could not do without him.

On 6 November, 1839, at a meeting at which P. J. Cohen, who had returned to Maitland, and was now deeply involved in Maitland's local affairs was not present, the Committee, after a long debate, decided that Moss be asked to attend a meeting of a Committee which had been formed to formulate a "Code of laws for a better management of the Synagogue". The decision was confirmed at a meeting of the Synagogue's Committee on 29 January, 1840. It had probably been necessary to invite Moss to attend the "Law Committee". Moss's interest in the affairs of the community had not ceased. He agreed, and on 2 February, 1840, he attended the Law Committee's meeting.

The Minutes, now written by Emanuel Crabb, a publican who had an inn at Brickfield Hill, whom the Committee had engaged as Secretary, recorded that on 19 February, Moss attended another meeting, not connected with the "Law Committee", yet was not present at the Synagogue's Committee meetings until 30 August 1840, when it appears that he was again a regular member of the Committee. The fact that on 22 March, 1840, he was married in the Synagogue to his de facto wife, who had been converted to Judaism, might have had something to do with his re-acceptance to the Committee. By the coming of the High Holy days of 1840, he had been forgiven. When in September 1840, a new President was to be elected, Moss was among the candidates for the presidency. On 9 September, Moses Joseph, who for many years was to lead the congregation, was elected President.

Moss was at this time, proprietor of *The Australian* and at the height of

his career. In April 1840, the balance sheet of the Synagogue shows that he had been paid £10 for printing. Even when he was no longer on the Synagogue's Committee, he was still working for the Community. After he had heard from London, that in the Colony of Jamaica, which had a large Sephardic population of very high living standards, assistance had been given by the Government to the Jews in building and repairing their synagogues, the question of State Aid to the Australian Jewish Community occupied Moss's mind. At the Committee Meeting of 1 March, 1840, the President told the members that he had received a letter from Moss in which he informed him that he had taken steps to approach the Government in the matter of State Aid. "I have," wrote Moss, "communicated with Mr. Poole" relative to the Government, and trust that we shall be able to report the progress in a week's time, and that I have also an idea for some time past how advisable it would be to get a Bill passed in the Council to manage our financial affairs. I had occasion to mention the fact, yesterday, to one of the Crown officers with a promise to lend him a copy of the Jamaica Bill, which I hold, and he expressed his willingness to give us his opinion and some consideration, and further, promised his willingness in forwarding it. The result, I am almost certain, will be favourable." Moss now urged the leaders of the congregation to emulate their brethren in Jamaica, and apply for State Aid for their institutions. But he had been too optimistic.

Nothing was done by the Synagogue's Committee in this direction. They were at last shaken out of their complacency in 1844, when a State supported non-denominational, but "Christian" system of education was recommended to the Legislative Council by a Sub-Committee. The Jewish Community had to take a stand, because the recommended system of general education disregarded their very existence. The stand they eventually took shows, as Getzler writes,³³ "that they regarded the education issue above all as an opportunity to put forward a claim to equal rights". On 17 September, 1844, a well attended meeting of the Jews protested against their exclusion from the benefits of State assisted education and, adopted resolutions which constituted their first public claim to equal civil, political and religious rights. Opinions on the matter were, however, divided. Most of the speakers, men like John Joel Cohen and Philip Joseph Cohen, favoured "general education", despite its disadvantage, but Moss disagreed with them. "For his own part, he was bound to state, though it was generally disapproved by his co-religionists, that he himself was far more disposed towards the denominational system than that of the general . . . as that would give them the opportunity of teaching their children agreeably to their own views." Moss favoured the foundation of a Jewish Day School. "If he proposed the Petition, nonetheless," he said, "he did so rather with a view to establish a right as a British born subject." Moss then suggested that W. C. Wentworth should be asked to present their petition to the Legislative Council, as he could be relied upon to do his best to secure the rights of all. Dissenting about education, Moss still agreed with the rest of the community that the real issue on this occasion was Jewish equality.³⁴ The petition was duly

presented on 2 October, 1844, by Wentworth to the Legislative Council. Although the Legislative Council approved, the Governor, Sir George Gipps, influenced by the Colonial Office, refused his assent.³³

Moss, in the London *Voice of Jacob*, then exhorted the Board of Deputies of British Jews to fulfil its duty to "a distant remnant of the scattered flock", and he also appealed to the editor to lend his support. In Sydney, he appealed successfully for the help of the liberal minded press. Publishing the original text of the Jamaica Votes of Assembly of 1836 and 1849, supplied to the paper "by an intelligent member of the community", who was, of course, nobody else than George Moss, on 4 October, 1845, the *Sydney Examiner* wrote: "We have repeatedly suggested to the heads of the Synagogue the propriety of petitioning the Local Legislature to be permitted to partake in the benefits of our Church Act. "Ask, and it shall be given," says Holy Writ . . . "We must express our surprise and regret that they attaching odium to their cause by senseless bickerings among themselves, in lieu of taking the legitimate and proper step to retrieve their Synagogue from its financial difficulties." There were, indeed, financial difficulties, because the community which had built their Synagogue during the times of depression, still owed £1,100.14.6d. for the building.³⁵

With regard to this debt, the Jews were successful, because disregarding the Colonial Secretary's wrath, the new conciliatory Governor, Sir Charles FitzRoy, was inclined to comply as far as he could with the Legislative Council and place £1,000 on the estimates for the Jewish Synagogue in Sydney. He wrote to Gladstone, "The members of the Jewish religion being a numerous, respectable and influential class in this community, contributing largely to the Public Revenue."³³ Yet, the annual stipend for the Jewish Minister which the Jews had claimed, remained in abeyance because of the Colonial Office's refusal.

George Moss was, shortly before his death, to see his plea for equality for the Jews realised. It was not until 1854 that a Bill was moved by the Hon. George Robert Nichols, the grandson of Esther Abrahams. He was born of a Jewish mother (Rosanna Nichols, nee Abrahams).³⁶ The Bill provided for a stipend for a Jewish Minister, and it received the approval of all authorities, thanks to the new Colonial Secretary, Lord Russell, the chief champion of Jewish emancipation in England.³³ Moss, in his constant endeavours for the community, appears to have also been instrumental in securing a Minister for the congregation, after Michael Rose had left Sydney in 1838. It was Moss who, on 6 May 1840, informed the Committee of the arrival of Jacob Myer Isaacs who, as he said, "was capable for the situation of Mohel and Reader", and recommended his engagement. Isaacs was to serve the community faithfully for fifteen years. Moss's mind was constantly alert to look for amelioration in the status of the Jews in the colony. On 28 January, 1844, he moved that a petition be prepared for the "Naturalisation of all British born Jews resident in the colony of New South Wales", and that city members be solicited to bring the matter before the Assembly. The controversy over the naturalisation of Jews had raged in England from 1609, when legislation, although directed originally against Catholics, at the same time excluded Jews from the privilege of

naturalisation. The Naturalisation Act of 1740 (10 Geo.I c.4), confirmed in 1753 (26 Geo.II c.26), allowed naturalisation by Act of Parliament. The Jews of Jamaica had taken advantage of the Act and had become British citizens.¹⁷ Moss seemed to have been of the opinion that a special Bill was necessary. His proposal was on 24 March, 1844, accepted and it was decided to prepare a petition. Nothing, however, was heard about this matter.

It was in 1844 that Sydney Jewry could proudly consecrate its first permanent Synagogue. Moss was, of course, enthusiastic about the project to build a large Synagogue, after Moses Joseph had purchased land in York Street for this purpose. On 7 November, 1841, the Committee decided to ask David Poole to prepare the deed of conveyance for the Synagogue of which Abraham Elias, John Isaacs, Moses Joseph, George Moss and Samuel Barnett were to act as trustees. Moss's name, however, was later deleted from the list of trustees. A financial sub-committee, consisting of Moses Joseph, Isaac Simmons and, inevitably, George Moss, was formed and worked very efficiently. By November 1842 they had secured the money necessary for the building from the Bank of New South Wales. Moss was also a member and the Secretary of the Building Committee. By 1843, the Committee was planning for the consecration. Again, it was Moss who did the main work. The Minutes of the Committee of 18 July, 1843, record that "after George Moss had presented several "Orders of Service" performed at the consecration of Synagogues in London, "it was, after a long discussion, decided to adopt a consecration service based upon the one used at the opening of the new Synagogue at Great St. Helen's Court, Crosley Square, London". And when the Synagogue was consecrated on 2 April, 1844, *The Australian* wrote on the next day in its report on the opening of the York Street Synagogue that "the Order of the Service was arranged by the Hon. Secretary, Mr. George Moss". The paper seems then, curiously enough, not aware that Moss was no longer the Honorary Secretary of the Congregation. Moss, who had originally pledged £15 for the Building Fund, was not in a good financial position, and was therefore only able to contribute £5." On 23 May, 1845, he presented the Synagogue with a framed Board with the "Prayer for the Royal Family", painted in gold letters. A Committee was in due course appointed to draw up a report on the history and development of the congregation. It consisted of the President, Moses Joseph, the Treasurer, Israel Solomon, the hon. member, Philip Joseph Cohen, Lewis Barnett and George Moss. Jewish historians unanimously attribute this "Report of the Committee of the York Street (Sydney) Synagogue 1845-5605" to Moss. This "Report", which contains the earliest Jewish source of Australian Jewish history, was exactly what Moss had originally planned. With great pleasure, Moss must have written the preamble to the "Report", which reads:

"Your Committee considering it would be interesting to the Jewish Community, to have a brief statement of the rise and progress of the Hebrew religion in this antipodean colony, have . . . thought they could not devote their attention to a better object, than to lay before you a short history which has led to the establishment of our ancient

religion in this remote part of the world, creditable to those of the Hebrew faith who reside there.”³⁵

He had to confess that the Committee “in what may be termed the early age of the Hebrew religion in this colony, have not found any very authentic records”, and that they had to make enquiries from which it “appears that in 1817 there were about 20 Hebrews in the colony”. The missing records — by then already the Synagogal records from 1832 to 1837 appear to have been lost — and certain reservations by the authors of this “Report” concerning the past of the congregations, might account for the many errors and omissions in the “Report”.

There were in 1817, more than 200 Jews in the colony, but they were convicts. How could Moss, whose own father — by 1845 mentioned in the “Report” as “Shammas and Collector” as well as the President of the congregation, had been a prisoner of the Crown, write about the convict past of the congregation? The only allusion that before the arrival of the free settlers, the social status of the Jews was not good, is hidden in the sentence: “In the years 1827 and 1828 the world condition of the Hebrews in this colony had considerably improved from various causes . . .” Moss had not been in the colony when, in the early twenties, Joseph Marcus³⁸ held the first service, neither, when in 1828, Abraham Polack asked in vain of Sir Ralph Darling for a house of worship. But P. J. Cohen most certainly knew about these matters. By 1845, the convict Marcus was dead and Polack, although in 1836 he had replaced J. B. Montefiore in the presidency, was bankrupt.³⁹ Was this the reason why they are not mentioned in the “Report”, which also does not report the quarrel which led to J. B. Montefiore relinquishing the presidency in 1835?⁴⁰ With all its errors and omissions, the “Report” nevertheless is a valuable historical document and most of the items mentioned in it were proved to be correct when checked with the Minutes or other contemporary sources. The “Report” further said that, “your Committee also recommends that a Hebrew Library should be formed to consist of such works as are recently published in England, which will tend to promote morality and religion.” Again, Moss acted. In 1846 he founded and became Chairman of the “Jewish Library and Hebraic Institution” and he also founded a Jewish Reading Society. The printed catalogue of the Library, with a list of 419 works is equally ascribed by P. J. Marks and Rabbi Falk as the work of Moss,⁴¹ whom Falk described as a “man of superior education” and “an indefatigable worker”.⁴²

In October 1846, the Synagogue’s Secretary, Emanuel Crabb, told the Committee that he had to attend to his business at his inn on Saturdays. He was aware that this did not agree with his position as Secretary of the Synagogue, but was ready to desist from it if his salary would be raised. When the Committee would not agree to his demand, Crabb resigned as Secretary and the position became vacant, and was advertised in the newspapers. Moss applied for it and on 22 November, 1846, he was confirmed by a General Meeting as paid Secretary of the Synagogue. He prepared the 1846/7 Report, unaware that, although the Legislative Assembly had secured equality for the Jews, the Governor, under the

influence of the Colonial Secretary, would refuse to ratify the Bill. In the 1846 Report of the Synagogue, Moss "praised the enlightened policy of the British Government which had set so noble an example to the world in raising the Jew (the true worshipper of ONE eternal God) to his proper place in society — that of a rational, intelligent being, invested with all the political and national privileges that belong to his fellow countrymen and British-born subjects." Commenting on this "Report", Getzler has written³ that "both the language and the aspirations are unmistakably that of the "Haskalah", the Jewish enlightenment movement of the nineteenth century, and its prose that of the congregation's talented, dedicated and impecunious (honorary) Secretary, George Moss." He was the colony's untiring "Maskil" or worker, as founder and Chairman of the Jewish Library and Hebraic Association, as editor of the ephemeral Sydney *Voice of Jacob*, and Sydney correspondent of its London edition. He certainly was the moving spirit behind Sydney Jews struggle for equality.

Moss not only wrote in the above terms, but he even sometimes occupied the pulpit and delivered a discourse, a proceeding which, as Marks wrote,⁴ "at the time was deemed by many a gross violation of orthodoxy". He may also have been the author of the Annual Reports from 1847/8 to 1853/4. No trace remains of these printed reports, if there had been any. Yet ever since Moss had become the paid Secretary of the Synagogue, we read very little of him in the Minutes. He was no longer a member of the governing body of the Synagogue, for he was only their employee. There was now no opportunity to move motions, to try to influence the policies of the Committee.

When in March 1849 a Jewish convict died at Cockatoo Island in Sydney Harbour, which served as a prison, and it became known that he was buried in the Catholic Cemetery, Moss went to see the Catholic Dean — as the Minutes recorded — and arranged that an order be given to disinter the body and for a funeral in the Jewish section to take place. For the period of the next five years, Moss's name is not mentioned in the Minutes of the Synagogue. In March 1850 his wife died at the early age of 31 years, and left him with a teenage daughter and three young children. Why, however, had he applied for the position of Secretary? Was it only for financial reasons, because his customs agency and ships broker business was not earning him enough to support a large family? Did he, as one who was so attached to the Synagogue, hope that in the position of Secretary he would retain some influence? He should have known better. Emanuel Crabb, during the long years of service as Secretary, is never mentioned in the Minutes.

After the death of his wife Moss became a lonely man. The mediocrity of the men who then governed the Synagogue exasperated him. Sooner or later there was to come a clash with these men who were good businessmen, but without any cultural or literary aspirations, and who now did not treat Moss as their equal.

HUMILIATION AND TRAGIC DEATH

Historians have a great responsibility and should check carefully their

the Sydney Synagogue. But, the shameful treatment which Moss had received, proved to be too much for this sensitive man. Shortly after this Meeting, on 21 April, Moss's 17 year old daughter, Miriam, his eldest child, died, and he was left with three young children, in financial straits. Probably, to justify the Committee's action, on 5 November, the new President, former Committee Member, Abraham Cohen, found it necessary to criticise Moss's activities as Secretary. He referred to "the very loose, inattentive manner in which the books of the Board were kept by the late Secretary," and, claimed that "many important notices of motion regarding the better management of the congregation" had never been brought on for discussion in consequence of their not being inserted in the circular convening the Meeting. This accusation seems to have been the last blow for Moss. He probably could not see his way out of the difficulties and, suffered what one would describe today as a nervous breakdown. There was then no "Sanitarium" where he could have recovered. He was taken to Tarban Creek Lunatic Asylum, where he died on 19 November, 1854, at the age of 44 years. The following day, he was buried at Rookwood Cemetery by Rev. Jacob Isaacs, whose engagement as Reader of the congregation he had once recommended. The York Street Synagogue Minutes record that on 3 June, 1855, the sum of £4.10/- was granted to Abraham Levi, the sexton "for making a tombstone for the late Secretary, George Moss". Was it conscience which induced the Committee to have this tombstone, which is still standing in the Cemetery, engraved with a curious inscription, it being stated that Moss had been "The Secretary of the Synagogue until infirmity overtook him"? The Minutes of the Synagogue have revealed what happened to George Moss. Benjamin wrote, many years ago, that Moss had been "one of the most important of the early communal workers. It is clear that he was a cultured man of considerable Jewish feeling and some literary attainments".⁴⁵ In a short biography which was silent about Moss's fate, published in 1951, in the *Great Synagogue Journal*,⁴⁶ Benjamin reiterated that Moss "was perhaps outstanding among the early leaders; that he had a cultured background and Jewish knowledge and was a capable and energetic Secretary. Though young, he did, in his brief life, much which was credit to the Jews of early Sydney." He was, probably, the only intellectual Australian Jewry had produced among the early free settlers. His dismissal and humiliation were unpardonable, because it may have resulted in his early death.

MOSS'S MARRIAGE AND HIS CHILDREN

His married life presents us with an unusual picture. Benjamin claimed that, in 1840, he married a convert named Elizabeth Hyams,⁴⁷ but he was mistaken, because this was George's namesake, the wine and spirit merchant, of whom little is known, but who, until 1865, is listed in Sands and Kenny's Sydney Directory. It appears that from about 1846, Moss had been living with a very young girl, Louisa Wilkins, as his de facto wife. Louisa, born in Sydney on 2 September 1828,⁴⁸ was the daughter of William Wilkins, an emancipist who was the "crier" of the Supreme Court,⁴⁷ and his wife, Ann.⁴⁸ Three children were born to the couple out

of wedlock. The first was a daughter, Maria or Miriam, born on 4 September 1836. She was to die unmarried on 21 April, 1854. A year later, Moss's first son, George, was born.⁴⁹ He was to follow his father's calling as a customs agent and forwarding agent and is listed as such in the above Directory until his death on 12 July, 1895, with offices in Arbitration Street near the Customs House at Circular Quay. He never married⁴⁹ and was buried in the Jewish section of Rookwood Cemetery by Rev. Landau. A third child, their daughter, Rosetta, was born on 16 August, 1838. Neither birth was recorded by P. J. Cohen in the Bridge Street Synagogue Birth Register, which was started in 1835. On the basis of the old Register, a more elaborate birth register was compiled after the congregation had moved into the York Street Synagogue. In this register the birth dates of Miriam and Rosetta, but not that of George, were entered by George Moss, himself, probably after he had become the paid secretary of the Synagogue, in vacant spaces, as the children of George and Louisa Moss. Miriam's birth was entered in Moss's handwriting after births which had occurred in December 1836, and the same procedure was followed when he entered Rosetta's birth, which had occurred in August, after birth notices of children who had been born in October 1838. Moss's marital situation was certainly known and disapproved of by the Jewish community. There is little doubt that this was at least one of the reasons why he was more or less forced to resign his position as a Member of the Committee and Honorary Secretary of the Synagogue in 1838. At the end of 1839, when Moss appeared to have a sound position with *The Australian* and when the Committee of the Synagogue wanted him to come back to the Committee, Moss decided to legalise his de facto wife and children. Great pressure was certainly exerted from all sides to end a situation which had probably become intolerable for the community. On 2 November 1839, Moss addressed a letter to the President which was read on the following day to the Committee. In this letter, Moss, signing himself G. M. Moss (George Moses),⁴⁹ said that his intended marriage should be "agreeably to the rites and customs of the Hebrew nation". He "sincerely trusted that the person in question", whose name he did not mention, "would become a Geyourth" (convert), and "that his marriage be solemnized according to our religious tenets . . . To prevent any misrepresentation", he offered to "attend the Committee any time and to answer all that may be required". He appealed to the "unbiased judgement, impartial decisions and upright conduct of the Committee", and, closed his letter, "with the profound respect for the religion of our forefathers". Moss was informed that he should attend a Committee Meeting convened for the purpose of his application on 6 November.

Some confusion seems then to have arisen about the name of his de facto wife, because at this meeting it was decided that Miss Elizabeth Hyams be admitted as a member of the Jewish faith. Moss must have asked that the mistake be corrected, but the Secretary, Mr. Crabb, again misunderstood the first name of the woman, because the Minutes record that on 20 November, at a Committee Meeting which was called to confirm the affairs of G. M. Moss, it was ordered that "the said Elizabeth Wilkins

should attend a meeting of the Committee on Wednesday next". It was further decided that the said "Elizabeth Wilkins should lay under the same restrictions as others have done". Whereupon it appears that Louisa Wilkins was duly converted, and on 23 March, 1840, the *Sydney Morning Herald* carried the unusual notice of the marriage of George Moss and Louisa Wilkins "according to the Jewish Mosaic tenets". At her conversion, Louisa Wilkins had adopted the name of Leah Abrahams and the Bridge Street Marriage Register recorded under 22 March, 1840, their marriage was performed by Moss's father, Mordecai Moses, the Shamas of the Synagogue, with the permission of Isaac Simmons, the then President of the congregation.

Three more children were born after their marriage. When their second son, Abraham, was born on 15 August, 1842, the birth was recorded in the "old" register and, of course, also in the new register, as the son of George and Leah Moss. Abraham died, however, on 25 October 1843. Two more sons were born to the couple, Montague, on 3 May, 1844, and Lewis in April, 1846. Montague called himself "Montefiore M. Moss", when in 1895, he notified the death of his brother, George, with whom he was obviously living at 3 Leinster Street, Paddington.⁹ Curiously enough, there are two entries of Lewis's birth in the new register, an "official" one, stating that he was born to George and Leah Moss on 9 April, 1846, and a second one, in Moss' handwriting, that Lewis, now called Louis, was born the son of George and Louisa Moss, on 17 April, 1846. This was obviously the date of his circumcision, which was performed by Rev. M. Rintel, as stated in the register, and Moss for some unknown reason, must have confused the dates. Louisa Leah Moss died on 8 May, 1850, aged 31, and George Moss was left alone with four small children. No doubt the worries connected with the death of his wife and the loss of his income contributed to his tragic death. As already mentioned, the birth of George Moss Jnr. was nowhere recorded. We find the first reference to him in 1860, when he is mentioned as beneficiary in the Will of his grandfather, Mordecai Moses. A year later, on 17 July, 1861, we find his signature on a document, attached to a marriage certificate, in the Marriage Register of the Macquarie Street — the "New" — Synagogue, when his sister, Rosetta, was to marry Mr. Henry Levy, "the son of Lazarus Levy of London", in that Synagogue.

The shadow of illegitimacy must have hovered over the life of Rosetta Moss, and to save her from trouble, her brother, George, posed as her "guardian", and as such, gave consent to the marriage, "the said Rosa Moss being under the age of 21". Rosetta, according to the Bridge and George Street Birth Register, was then already aged 23, but in view of the enmity between the two congregations, who had separated only two years earlier, nobody, apparently, consulted the York Street Synagogue records. George Moss died intestate and left his children in a dire situation. There was probably very little he could have left them. There was then George Jnr, aged 17; Rosetta, aged 16; Montague, aged 10; and Lewis, aged 8. Their grandfather was old, and to die soon. Yet, it is rather surprising that neither George Moss's sister, Catherine, married to Aaron Isaacs, nor

Rosetta, his other sister, married to Woolf Pyke, appeared to have in any way cared for the orphans. It was the compassionate old Rev. Jacob Isaacs who took care of Moss's children. But, on January 1856, he informed the Synagogue's Committee of his intention to resign and to return to England. Two years had passed since George Moss's death, when at least one of the members of the Committee felt that they had some responsibility for Moss's children. On 24th August, 1856, the Minutes record that Moses Moss asked the Committee what would happen, to the children of George Moss after the departure of Isaacs. The President then promised "to enquire and report on the matter". But, a year passed until on 9th August, 1857, the Committee, now under the presidency of Samuel Cohen, discussed the fate of the children. It was stated that they were not properly provided for, "although the two boys were costing the Synagogue fifty pounds per annum". This shows that the Synagogue had continued to pay the fifty pounds voted for in April 1855, to the Rev. Isaacs; a sum which was, of course, totally inadequate for the maintenance of the three children. The President stated further that "as one of the boys, the oldest — Montague — then aged 13, was old enough to be apprenticed to a good trade, so as to be capable of obtaining his own living", a Sub-Committee, consisting of P. J. Cohen, Moses Moss and Lewis Lippman, was appointed for the purpose of "consulting Master Moss's inclinations and of seeking a suitable master to apprentice him; and that they may be empowered to give as much as thirty pounds as a bonus with him, if required." The motion was unanimously adopted by the Committee. It appears that the responsibility which Moss had left to the Sydney Synagogue in the person of his children remained a stone around their necks, and that they would, when an opportunity offered, free themselves of their obligation.

When, therefore, in August 1857, the Jewish Orphan Society, which appears to have been founded to deal with the Moss children, according to a note in the *Jewish Chronicle*, requested the Committee to hand over the children to the Orphan Society and to place them entirely under their guidance and control, and that the sum of £50 should now be paid to the Society, as long as this sum was contributed to their maintenance by the Synagogue, the Committee was at once ready to comply with the Orphan Society's request. In October 1857, the Orphan Society informed the Committee that "they had made arrangements for the future maintenance of Moss's children", and applied for the yearly allowance of £50, which was granted by the Board. This amount was reduced by half in August 1859, when the Society reported that "the elder Master Moss has been placed in a position to obtain his own livelihood"; and in July 1860, the Orphan Society wrote to the Committee that "as Master Moss is not any more a burden to the Society, they would no longer be entitled to the reception of an allowance from the Synagogue."

As already mentioned, Rosetta married in 1861, and the Report of the Orphan Society for 1861 noted that Master Montague Moss had been apprenticed to Mr. A. Levy of Queanbeyan in 1859, and further reports said that Master Moss expressed his satisfaction for the apprenticeship arrangement, which he successfully completed three years later.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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NOTES

1. Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Vol. III, Pt. VIII, p.365.
2. The statement in Israel Getzler's "Neither Toleration nor Favour" that George Moss was an "emancipist", was erroneous. He was a son of an emancipist. The printed indent of the ship "Moffat" in which his father, Mordecai Moses, was deported stated: "son, George Moss, five years ago, came free". (Printed indents of convict ships, 1836, p.99.)
3. Laws and Rules of the Management and Regulations of the Sydney Synagogue, 1833. Great Synagogue Jubilee Souvenir, 1928.
4. *Sydney Gazette*, 15.10.1833; *The Australian*, 30.1.1844 and 11.12.1844.
5. *Sydney Gazette*, 15.10.1833.
6. *The Australian*, 24.6.1836 and 19.10.1836.
7. *The Australian*, 6.10.1837.
8. *The Australian*, 4.7.1837, 1.1.1839.
9. *The Australian*, 31.3.1839, 28.9.1839.
10. *The Australian*, 20.10.1840.
11. *The Australian*, 13.7.1841.
12. *The Australian*, 3.3.1842.
13. *The Australian*, 28.3.1842.
14. *The Australian*, 5.10.1842.
15. *The Australian*, 23.12.1842.
16. Benjamin, "Australia and *The Voice of Jacob*", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. III, Pt. VIII, p.245ff.
17. E. S. Marks, "Jewish Voters in Sydney's First Election", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. 1, Pt. VIII, p.276.
18. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. III Pt. X, Note 16, p.467.
19. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. I Pt. IX, p.302ff.
20. S. H. Roberts, "The Squatting Age in Australia, 1839-1847" p.186ff.
21. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12.7.1843.
22. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18.1.1844.
23. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 5.4.1844.
24. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1.7.1844.

25. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2.10.1844.
26. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27.10.1845.
27. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30.1.1844, 17.1.1845.
28. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30.1.1844.
29. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 27.10.1845.
30. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12.3.1846.
31. References in the Minutes of the Bridge Street and York Street Synagogues, 1837-1854.
32. G. F. J. Bergman, "David Poole, The First Jewish Lawyer in Australia", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. VII Pt. III, p.239ff.
33. Getzler, *Ibid*.
34. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22.9.1844.
35. *London Voice of Jacob*, 25.4.1845. Report of the Committee of the York Street (Sydney) Synagogue, 1845-5605.
36. G. F. J. Bergman, "Esther Johnston, The Lieutenant-Governor's Wife", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. VI Pt. II, p.90ff.
37. A. M. Hymanson, "A History of the Jews in England" (Lond. 1908).
38. John S. Levi, "The Tale of Australia's First 'Rabbi', Joseph Marcus", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. VIII Pt. II, p.29ff.
39. G. F. J. Bergman, "Abraham Polack" A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. VII Pt. V., p.346ff, Pt. VII, pp.537/8.
40. J. Maclehose, "The Pictures of Sydney and Strangers' Guide"; P. J. Marks, A.J.H.S., Journal, Vol. I Pt. IX, pages 302ff.
41. L. A. Falk, "The Sydney Jewish Library, 1846", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. III, Pt. III, p.308ff; P. J. Marks, A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. I, Pt. IX, p.308.
42. L. A. Falk, A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. III, Pt. III, pp.136/7.
43. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. I p.308. There is another error in this article. The author wrote that Moss in conjunction with J. B. Montefiore and Michael Phillips and A. Lyons, was in 1844 appointed on a Sub-Committee to draw up the code of rules for the York Street Synagogue. Yet, by 1844, both Montefiore and Phillips had long left New South Wales.
44. I. Porush, "Reverend Herman Hoelzel", A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. II Pt. IV, p.172ff.
45. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol. III Pt. VIII, page 365.
46. *Great Synagogue Journal*, June, 1951.
47. *Sydney Gazette*, 3.10.1825. St. Philips Register 417/35 reads: "Wilkins, William, 40, free, Crier in the Courts, and Pilkington, Ann, 24, Convict, married 22nd April 1822."
48. St. Philips Register 459/99 reads: "Wilkins, Louisa, daughter of William and Ann Wilkins, born 2.9.1820." Louisa was therefore born two years before her parents married. The 1828 Census gives the following particulars about William Wilkins:—
"He arrived in the Colony on 18th January, 1816, in the convict transport, "Fanny I" with a sentence of 14 years' transportation. In

1828, he was 41 years old, 'Crier at the Court House, Philip Street, Sydney'." He must also have had a farm, because the Census noted that he had "80 horned cattle". The Census does not mention his wife, Ann, who must have died sometime between 1824 and 1828, but mentions his daughters, born in the Colony, as Louisa, aged eight, Elizabeth, aged six, and Sarah, aged four.

49. Death certificate of George Moss Jnr. The certificate states that he was the son of George Moses Moss and Louisa Wilkins.

**FROM SCHOOL TO "SHUL"
THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE GOLD COAST (QUEENSLAND)
HEBREW CONGREGATION
(1954-1962)**

by
Rabbi A. Fabian, O.B.E., E.D.

In September 1981, 20 years passed since the first synagogue was consecrated and opened for worship in Surfers Paradise, Queensland. This important milestone in the history of Queensland's only non-metropolitan congregation — well worthy of special observance by the local membership — is a suitable vantage point from which to review the formative stages of this fast growing and now well established Community.

The year 1961, when the original synagogue building was opened (it has since been replaced by a much larger structure), was not the starting point of organised Jewish life. For this, one has to go back quite a few years to 1954, in fact, when steps were taken to provide Hebrew education at Queensland's South Coast for children of resident families. To gain the proper perspective of the then existing situation, one has to discard completely the picture which the Gold Coast offers today. In the intervening years, more than one land boom and subsequent residential developments have transformed this coastal stretch from Southport to Coolangatta into one of the glamour resorts and retirement areas of Australia — with a large and ever increasing population drawn not only from Queensland, but from many parts of Australia and overseas.

The writer of this paper, who was First Minister of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation from 1946-1962, well remembers his first visit to Surfers Paradise. It was in 1947 when, acting upon a request from the Sydney Rabbinate, he visited a gentleman from Melbourne who lived in Surfers Paradise for the purpose of discussing a certain family matter. After passing through Southport on the way from Brisbane, he reached three miles further on an intersection where the Surfers Paradise Hotel occupied the left hand corner position, exactly as today. Behind the Hotel there was an open view towards the beach and the surf, no houses at all, only sand dunes, while on the opposite side of the highway a few streets with houses were visible. He entered a side road leading to the beach somewhat further on, and after passing a few houses reached his destination right at the water's edge. This was close to 35 years ago and vastly different from the almost urban character of that area today. Even then, some Jewish families had already settled along the South Coast, particularly in Southport, which was a township of some size, with communal and shopping facilities far in excess of any other place on the Coast as far as the border with New South Wales.

What a tremendous transformation since then! It all started in the early 50s with a real estate boom which involved residential expansion on a gigantic scale and drew large numbers of tourists from the southern States and Queensland to the Coast, quite a few of whom became permanent

settlers. The Brisbane Community, only 50 miles away, was involved in these developments from the outset. Some of its members started to acquire flats and homes, others went into business at the Coast, while many came from interstate, mainly during the winter months, as tourists, as well as for business purposes. By 1954, sizeable numbers of families were to be found at the Coast, either as residents or as weekend holiday tourists. The Brisbane Community started to receive requests for the provision of Kosher food, synagogue services and educational facilities.

Communal concern at this stage was, in the first place, directed towards those families who had settled there permanently. While it was too early to think of erecting a building or even of forming a Congregation, two aspects soon assumed primary importance in view of the growing numbers: Education for children and services on the High Festivals. The earliest start for teaching children was made in Southport where some Jewish families had resided for some years and where now a Jewish guest house proprietor, H.W. Goldman, a long standing member of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, had come to live with his wife and family. The Annual Report of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation for 1954-5 carries this brief reference under the heading, United Board of Hebrew Education: "During the last few months the Board has established a Hebrew class at Southport to foster Hebrew education for children who are permanent residents of the South Coast. Our thanks go to Mr. H.W. Goldman of Southport who with his great knowledge of Hebrew and his experience as a Hebrew teacher is conducting a weekly class at the residence of Dr. R. Levy. It is with a feeling of satisfaction that the seven children who are at present attending this class at last are given the opportunity of Hebrew education".

Although the number of children was small in 1954, it was a start and, in fact, the nucleus for permanent educational facilities later on. Along the coastal stretch, other families with children settled, some having boys of pre-Barmitzvah age. A more central location was soon considered essential. When Mr. and Mrs. H.M. Samuel from Melbourne and their three children became permanent residents of Surfers Paradise — Mr. Samuel opened a pharmacy in Cavill Avenue — they offered their home in Ferny Avenue for teaching purposes. Classes were transferred to their residence, with Mr. H.W. Goldman still continuing as a teacher until the Goldman family moved away from the Coast in 1958. Already before that time, to assist Mr. Goldman, the Brisbane Congregation had undertaken to provide additional instruction, including the preparation of boys for their Barmitzvah. For some time, boys from the Coast had come in every Sunday morning to participate in the Brisbane Hebrew Classes and to have a weekly Barmitzvah lesson. Eventually, it was found more practical for the Brisbane Rabbi to travel to the Coast one afternoon per week, teach the children in various age groups and give Barmitzvah tuition to several candidates after these classes. When this special 100 mile round trip proved too difficult for the Rabbi, Mr. N. Tempelhof, President of the United Board of Hebrew Education, and his wife voluntarily undertook the responsibility of class teaching twice or three times a month while the Rabbi continued with a regular monthly visit. To centralise facilities even further,

the classes had meanwhile been transferred to the Surfers Paradise State School which, at the Rabbi's request, allowed the use of its buildings after school hours. In this way a well working and much appreciated arrangement had developed. It formed a strong basis for additional Jewish activities and was, both morally and financially, supported by the resident families.

II

The year 1958 was, in many respects, a year of decisive progress for Jewish life on the South Coast. Encouraged by the co-operation of the Brisbane Community and the effective working of the teaching scheme, the resident families, steadily growing in numbers and benefitting from an upsurge of tourism which brought many Jewish visitors from the south to Queensland, now turned their attention to the establishment of regular services. The Annual Report of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation for 1957-8, at page five, makes this reference: "For the first time Friday night and Saturday morning services have been held in Surfers Paradise during the summer holidays when a Minyan was arranged by Brisbane members whose initiative was well rewarded by good and regular attendances". With the approach of the High Festival season, moves were initiated by the 15 families now resident in Surfers Paradise to organise services for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Again, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel offered their home for this purpose and turned to the Brisbane Congregation for their active co-operation. Rabbi and Board were only too happy to give their full support and in several preliminary discussions at Mr. Samuel's home all essential arrangements, including provision of a Torah Scroll, were finalised. Mr. S. Gans, a regular and knowledgeable worshipper at the Margaret Street Synagogue in Brisbane, kindly offered his services as Baal T'fillah. It was, indeed, an historic occasion when about 70 people assembled at the Samuel residence on the First Day of the New Year 5719 to participate in the Rosh Hashanah service according to orthodox tradition. All present were deeply moved by the very fine rendition of the prayers and the festive spirit that prevailed among the large assembly of worshippers — taxing the home to its utmost capacity. Both New Year and Day of Atonement services were praised in glowing terms by residents and interstate visitors who formed about half the audience, and even the local Press carried favourable references to this unique event in the history of the South Coast.

Under the immediate impact of these highly successful services, a meeting was called at the end of the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah in the lounge of "Ocean Court", of which Mr. J. Hansky of Melbourne, was the resident proprietor, to which all resident Jewish families had been invited. On the agenda was the establishment of a Congregation for Surfers Paradise and surrounding districts and the formation of a Committee of Management. According to the minute book of the Surfers Paradise Hebrew Congregation, of which this is the first entry, 12 people were present and adopted both these proposals. Mr. H.M. Samuel was elected

President, Messrs. J. Hansky and L. Korman Vice-Presidents, Mr. John Goldstein became Hon. Secretary and Mr. N. Kipner, Hon. Treasurer. Messrs. Julius Goldstein, J. Adler, K. Peters and M. Travers, and Mrs. Pahoff snr. were elected as Committee members. A Ladies Guild was also formed with Mrs. J. Adler as President, Mesdames Hansky and Korman as Vice-Presidents, Mrs. H.M. Samuel as Secretary and Mesdames Grodeck, Goldstein, Levy, Lacey, Peters, Travers, Devries and Brauner as Committee members. Membership fees were fixed at £2.2/-. It was further decided to look around for suitable land in the vicinity of Sunset Boulevard for a synagogue site and to invite visitors from Brisbane and interstate to all services, also to seek the support of the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies.

The establishment of the Congregation on 16 September, 1958, and formation of its first Executive were hailed in the Brisbane Community with great enthusiasm. A few weeks later, in October, a delegation consisting of Mr. A.G. Myers, President of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, Mr. D.J. Solomon, its Treasurer, Mr. H.A. Goldman, one of its Trustees, Mr. N. Tempelhof, President of the Board of Hebrew Education, with the Rabbi and his wife, attended a Committee Meeting at the residence of Mr. Samuel to enter into more detailed discussions of the next steps to be taken in order to consolidate what so far had been achieved. It was at this meeting that the local representatives strongly declared themselves in favour of orthodoxy as the basis on which the new Congregation should be conducted and a corresponding motion was entered in the minutes (and later embodied in the Constitution). The Brisbane visitors offered fullest co-operation; also with regard to the services, if and when required, by the Brisbane Chevra Kadisha. Mr. Myers advised of the intended formation of a United Board of Queensland Hebrew Congregations and extended a cordial invitation to the local Committee to join the Brisbane and South Brisbane Congregations on this Board as an equal partner. Several cheques were presented by the visitors to swell the local funds. In the matter of land acquisition for a synagogue building, mention was made of an offer of land to the Brisbane Hebrew congregation by a well known Brisbane real estate developer, Alfred Grant. Educational arrangements had been re-organised during an earlier visit by the Rabbi and Mr. Tempelhof and the meeting was pleased to note that tuition would continue on this newly confirmed regular weekly basis. As a result of these intensified educational efforts, local children for the first time participated, in December 1958, in an excellently arranged Chanukah Celebration held at the local Scout Hall which was attended by more than 100 people, including many visitors from Brisbane. The foundation year of the Surfers Paradise Hebrew Congregation ended, indeed, on a happy and promising note.

III

The new Committee approached its future responsibilities in a realistic

spirit. Mindful of the fact that neither educational facilities at the local State school nor Festival services in a private home were really satisfactory, they saw the acquisition of a site for a building as the primary need of the moment. At the same time, it was felt that 15-20 local families could not undertake such a big effort on their own, and a move was made to approach not only casual visitors and tourists, but Congregations throughout Australia for their practical support. A circular letter was sent out in November 1958, signed by the President, H.M. Samuel, and bearing John Goldstein's address as Secretary. It read in part as follows: "It is indeed with great pleasure that we inform you of the formation of a Congregation and the commencement of Jewish Community Life here in Surfers Paradise . . . Many of our Jewish brothers continuously visit us here in Surfers in their thousands, and nowhere is there a Centre where they may gather for social or religious activities . . . The last High Holy Day Services were held in the home of Mr. Harry M. Samuel, our recently elected (first) President . . . with more than 75 participants. The spontaneity was unanimous and heartfelt, and all agreed that NOW was the time for a Congregation to be formed . . . Many Jewish people are settling here permanently, and many are here for periods of up to six months per year. Surfers is growing into a thriving area and is a wonderful place to live and a wonderful place for Judaism to take root and flourish . . . We need your support in our formative stages — and frankly, we need your help both morally and financially. Those of us who reside here permanently have pledged ourselves to the complete fulfilment of this wonderful ambition — to see a thriving Jewish Community here with a house of Worship and Jewish Communal Life! WILL YOU HELP US FULFIL THAT AMBITION?"

The response to this moving appeal, however, was rather disappointing, as none of the metropolitan interstate Congregations offered any financial support. The only positive reply came from the Hobart Hebrew Congregation, and well deserves to be recorded in this historic context (dated 14 November, 1958): "Our congregation is only a very small one, still we feel that we want to show you our goodwill and have pleasure in enclosing a cheque for five pounds five shillings towards erection of a synagogue and communal centre. We could not make a substantial contribution, and please take this as a token of solidarity".

So, it was going to be an uphill struggle for a while, and the President, in a statement to the *Australian Jewish Times*, expressed his regret that "Jews, many of whom holidayed on the Gold Coast and wanted communal facilities in the locality, were not prepared to help. Although land was available, it would be difficult to raise sufficient funds for the building unless outside aid was assured. The Surfers Paradise Community numbered only about 50 souls, many of whom were new in the district". Reference is made to the availability of land — which was also mentioned earlier. During the first half of 1958, the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation had been approached by Alfred Grant, a leading real estate developer. Mr. Grant's firm was then planning a new concept of land development which would turn a large tract of former dairy country into a system of waterways

fronted by picturesque homesites. It was named Miami Keys Estate and was conceived as a parallel development to the Florida Keys Estate in the United States. The land was situated immediately behind the Surfers Paradise-Broadbeach stretch of coastline, about 2½ km from the centre of Surfers. A satellite township of 750 waterfront homesites housing 3,500 people, was confidently envisaged. The demand for these sites had come not so much from Queenslanders, but from Victorians anxious to escape the rigours of their winter climate. Knowing of the large numbers of tourists of the Jewish faith, Mr. Grant had this well in mind when he sent two personal representatives to Melbourne to advertise this new scheme in the Jewish Community. In anticipation of a large influx of permanent settlers, he decided to offer free land for Houses of Worship to six major denominations, including the Jewish Congregation, as yet unborn. In view of the legal situation, however, the actual offer was made to the Brisbane Community. The donor emphasised that the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation was under no obligation to himself or the Estate. He merely expressed the hope that the Congregation would make use of the land for the benefit of its members. In making the offer, he added that he had formed a great admiration for Jewish Communities he saw while serving in the Middle East during the war years.

The Annual Report of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation — presented in August 1958 — referred to this matter in the following passage. "A very generous gesture has been made by Alfred Grant Pty. Ltd. in offering our Congregation a piece of land in the Broadbeach area as a site for a Jewish Centre. Your Board is most grateful for this offer which has been suitably acknowledged and will be utilised, it is hoped, in the not too distant future to the benefit of Jewish residents and interstate visitors in that area." It was clearly the intention of the Brisbane Board to offer the use of this land to the loosely organised Surfers Paradise Congregation, and this was conveyed to their Executive at the meeting in October 1958 (referred to above), prompting the appropriate reference in the Congregation's November circular as to the availability of land for a Synagogue Centre.

IV

The most important development of the next few months was the formation, early in 1959, of a United Board of Queensland Hebrew Congregations, comprising the two Brisbane Congregations and the new Congregation at Surfers Paradise which had been formally invited to join in November 1958. Its purpose was defined in the 1959 Annual Report of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation as "establishing the closest possible links between the three Queensland Congregations and co-ordinating their activities in fields of common interest, such as Shechita and Kashrut, Chevra Kadisha, education and similar matters". The President of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation was elected United Board President and its Treasurer became the United Board's Hon. Secretary. All three Congregations had three representatives each on this United Board, and it was to be hoped, as the Annual Report states, that this move of uniting the

three Queensland Congregations on the common platform of orthodox Judaism would be of particular help to the new Congregation in Surfers Paradise and strengthen its activities in the future. Regular quarterly meetings got immediately underway, marked by an encouraging degree of positive co-operation between the three constituent bodies.

During the winter months of 1959, regular Sabbath services (also weekday Yohrzeit services) were held in private homes, with excellent attendances from visitors and residents. Towards the end of winter, in August 1959, a special Sabbath service was organised in the Surfers Paradise Hotel, acquired at that time by a prominent Melbourne businessman, Stanley Korman. Due to Mr. Korman's excellent co-operation and ready support, the Board room of the Hotel was transformed into a Prayer Hall for one particular Friday night and Sabbath morning service. By special invitation, the President of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, A.G. Myers, accompanied the writer to the Gold Coast for these services which were highly successful. Some 40 people attended on Friday night and double that number on Sabbath morning, with many visitors from Melbourne and Sydney being in attendance. After the service, a Kiddush was held at "Ocean Court", across the road, where both its owner, J. Hansky as Vice-President and H.M. Samuel as President, supported by A.G. Myers, expressed firm hopes that the numerous southern visitors, would give fullest support to the Surfers Paradise Congregation in its more definite plans for erecting a Jewish Centre and also attend services on Sabbaths and during the forthcoming High Festivals. The effect of this special Sabbath service was most encouraging, and the second High Festival services were again well arranged and excellently attended.

In other significant developments during the year 1959, the newly arrived Brisbane Hebrew teacher from Israel, Y. Amitzur, visited the Coast regularly once a week for educational instruction, with classes at the Surfers Paradise State School attracting up to 20 children. The Jewish National Fund established its first Committee at the Coast in early 1959. J. Hansky, acting as Blue Box Commissioner, organised the first clearance of Boxes ever to take place in Surfers Paradise prior to Pesach that year. Earlier, during 1958, WIZO Nahariya had been formed at the Coast by Julia Rapke, the WIZO Federal President, during a holiday visit and found widespread support from both local residents and visitors. The same strong support was given when a highly successful U.I.A. Appeal meeting raised 1,000 pounds for Israel. Two prominent visitors were entertained by the local Committee during that year. Mr. Moshe Yuval, Minister for Israel, with Mrs. Yuval paid an official visit to the Coast — in conjunction with an ECAFE International Conference — and a supper party in their honour at the Chevron Hotel attracted a very large representative attendance. The world renowned tenor, Jan Peerce, accompanied by his wife, also visited the Coast. After dropping in briefly at a Betar Camp held a few miles away, the visitors were given a reception at "Ocean Court" arranged by the local Committee when again many people from interstate and Brisbane attended.

V

The main concern of the committee was, of course, the collection of funds for a Synagogue building, and some progress was made in that respect, mainly from offerings at services and a few functions. It was felt at this stage that the land in Broadbeach was not ideal from the point of view of distance — a walk of close to three kilometres each way — and would be too far away for the erection of a permanent Synagogue, however attractive it was in other respects. It was therefore more than a pleasant surprise for all concerned when a second offer of a piece of land for a Jewish Centre was made during 1959 by the well known Melbourne industrialist, Mr. (later Sir) Bruce Small who had come to Surfers Paradise as an investor and developer with plans for a 460 acre, £5,000,000 project, called "Paradise City". From the outset, he had set aside three acres in the very heart of this project for a Religious Centre with provision for Houses of Worship of the major denominations, including the Jewish Faith. This area was very much closer to the heart of Surfers Paradise, about one kilometre away, and therefore of particular attraction to the local Community. Mr. Small made his offer directly to the Surfers Paradise Committee, and his gift was most gratefully accepted by the local Congregation. In the original town plans for "Paradise City", Synagogue and Churches were to be grouped around a tree shaded square that would contain an ornamental pool. They would be among the first buildings to be erected in this area, henceforth known as "Isle of Capri", which would provide 2,200 homesites, a large civic centre with all amenities, a sports park and 25 acres of parks and gardens, surrounded on all sides by water, with a bridge crossing directly from the main shopping area to the Island.

As a result of this happy sequence of events, the Congregation, at the beginning of 1960, only 15 months after its formation, now had two pieces of land available for the erection of a communal structure — certainly a most auspicious beginning for so small a Community. The next important event occurred in June 1960 when Mr. Small made good his promise of giving the Religious Centre a high priority. He approached four denominations — Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian and Jewish — to dedicate ground donated by him, and set aside earlier for these four groups, in a joint — though separate — ceremony to be held in the Centre area on the same Sunday afternoon. The Surfers Paradise Committee invited the writer in his capacity as Rabbi of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation to participate, and together with representatives of the other three denominations he agreed to this arrangement.

On 12 June, 1960, the Jewish portion of the Religious Centre Area on the "Isle of Capri" was accordingly dedicated. Each of the participating Ministers officiated within his own area in turn — around the ornamental pool — while Mr. Small was present at all four ceremonies and later invited the very large gathering to refreshments in a marquee erected nearby. Our thanks were summed up in these words (quoted in part): "It affords me, as officiating Jewish Minister, the greatest of pleasure to express, on behalf of the Jewish Community of Queensland, heartfelt thanks to Mr. Bruce Small

for his most generous grant of a substantial piece of land on which to erect a Jewish House of Worship as part of the Religious Centre in the "Isle of Capri" development scheme. The Surfers Paradise Hebrew Congregation, which is the immediate beneficiary of this magnanimous gesture, will thereby be enabled to contemplate in the near future the commencement of a building programme which, when completed, can only result in a strengthening of its membership, also in its ability to cater for the many thousands of tourists visiting here in ever increasing numbers. The Queensland Jewish Community as a whole is proud to be associated with Mr. Bruce Small in this unique scheme which we see as a challenge to all religious and spiritual forces in this country and which we, as one of the groups concerned, though small in numbers, are only too eager to accept and hope to meet with dignity and success."

VI

During the winter months of 1960, the Congregation's efforts were now concentrated with fresh enthusiasm on a strong fund raising drive for the new building. Another High Festival period was approaching, the third since the Congregation's establishment, and again suitable arrangements were made for services, this time to be held in the specially transformed new Methodist Hall in Clifford Street. The Jewish resident population of the Gold Coast had now reached the 100 mark and many visitors joined the residents during the Festival period. Services were most ably conducted by S. Chester as Chazan, with some local help. Generous support for the building scheme, with the "Isle of Capri" area well in mind, resulted in a total amount of £1,600 to be available for the new Synagogue Memorial Hall which was planned, mainly for educational and social purposes, as a forerunner for a permanent Synagogue. For the first time, Simchat Torah was celebrated that year with traditional gaiety. Lew Samuel (father of the President) and J. Hansky were the first Chatan Torah and Chatan Bereshit respectively and entertained the Congregation afterwards at a delightful repast. The children present proudly waved their JNF flags supplied from Brisbane for the first time.

An important General Meeting held on 9 October, 1960, was in fact the Second Annual Meeting of the Congregation. It noted all ongoing developments with great satisfaction and appointed a Building Committee consisting of the re-elected President, H.M. Samuel, and Vice-President, J. Hansky and Mr. Rubinstein, Assistant Treasurer. Others elected were S. Saunders as Treasurer, John Goldstein, re-elected Hon. Secretary and R. Price, Asst. Hon. Secretary. To the Committee were elected Messrs. Goldstein snr., Isaacs, Samuel snr., Adler and Brauner. Mr. S. Roth (Melbourne), a frequent visitor to the Coast, who had taken a most prominent part in the organisation of regular services, the conduct of High Festival services and in marshalling financial support amongst the Melbourne Community was appointed as Hon. Life Governor. The Chazan, S. Chester, was given permanent membership. The Annual fee was set at £5.5/- for men and £3.3/- for ladies. Mr. Roth was specially

honoured at a party in the new Treasurer's home "Bellevue" in Clifford Street at which the local families were represented in full strength to express appreciation for his fund raising efforts in the Melbourne Community.

In reporting the progress of Queensland's newest Congregation during 1959-60, the Annual Report of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation for this period recorded under the heading "United Board of Queensland Hebrew Congregations", the "gift of a substantial piece of land within walking distance of the main shopping area which was dedicated by our Rabbi for the purposes of a Religious Centre. The foremost need is for classrooms to accommodate the children whose education during the whole year has been successfully continued on a weekly basis by our Teacher, Mr. Y. Amitzur. Meetings of the United Board have been held from time to time and a number of matters affecting all three Congregations such as Shechita and Kashrut, Chevra Kadisha, education, common observances and others are successfully being attended to as the need arises". During this period, H.M. Samuel as President of the Surfers Paradise Congregation was, in fact, by rotation President of the United Board for the first time.

VII

The stage had now been reached when serious consideration was to be given to the erection of a suitable Communal structure. The Congregation had the option of two sites and as far as the necessary funds were concerned, £1,600 available in cash and pledges, with further fund raising schemes being planned for the coming year, particularly in Melbourne. Several interesting developments marked this period after the 1960 High Festivals and well into the middle of 1961. At a Committee Meeting in March 1961, the change of name from "Surfers Paradise Hebrew Congregation" to "Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation" was decided upon, in keeping with the actual membership distribution which now extended over the whole length of that stretch of Coast — from Southport to Coolangatta — known more and more as the "Gold Coast" of Queensland. A new Hon. Secretary, Julian Rose, was appointed at the meeting. The Treasurer, S. Saunders, offered his home in Clifford Street for the holding of Sabbath services for the time being and regular services were held there for a number of months. Efforts were set in motion to obtain a Sefer Torah for the Congregation, either by purchase or on loan. The first Communal Seder was held at Mr. Hansky's "Ocean Court" with very encouraging support from local members. For the first time, Shavuot services were conducted by Y. Amitzur, the Hebrew teacher from Brisbane, who meanwhile continued his regular weekly lessons at the local State School for another year under the Rabbi's supervision. Mr. Hansky, in May 1961, returned from a visit to Melbourne where he had been able to obtain the loan of a Torah Scroll from the Carlton Synagogue.

However, it must have become apparent at this stage that a building on the "Isle of Capri" would not find the necessary financial support because the distance from the centre of Surfers Paradise was still too far. The

Committee, as previously mentioned, had already come to the conclusion that the land in Miami Keys, originally donated by Mr. Grant, was definitely much too far from where most visitors would stay during the winter months. As their support was crucial, this scheme had been finally abandoned. The Brisbane Congregation, recipient of the land, had been empowered by a Special General Meeting of its members of 4 April, 1961, to sell this land and the amount obtained had just covered the rates meanwhile paid to the local Council. But now, in May/June 1961, the other area in Mr. Small's development which had already been dedicated, was also found to be unsuitable from the point of view of the main financial supporters who considered the walking distance for the average visitor, without shelter and in all weathers, was a little too far. With the concurrence of Mr. Small, this land was later disposed of to the Mormon Church and the proceeds added to the Congregation's Building Fund.

At a meeting on 7 June, 1961, the Committee decided, not without some objection, to look for a new property closer to the shopping centre, preferably one where an already existing building could be adapted for religious and educational purposes. Only 15 days later a house in Hamilton Avenue (the present location) was under consideration, on a piece of land which had a frontage of 34 feet and a depth of 162 feet. The cottage was roomy enough to house the Synagogue Hall and classrooms in addition to kitchen and other standard facilities. The price was under £5,400, which included an amount for certain essential alterations. At that time, £600 was in hand and pledges amounted to £1,225, so that a loan of £4,000 would more than bridge the gap to the full purchase price. If ever further extensions were wanted, there was enough room on this block of land, both in front and at the side, to provide for extensions or even a larger building. The main feature of this place was its close proximity to the very centre of Surfers Paradise — not more than 300 yards away from the shopping and main hotel area. The motion to purchase the property was carried, with one dissentient voice. On 12 July, 1961, a Special Meeting of the Congregation with 21 people being present, out of a membership of 50 families, confirmed the purchase and the raising of a loan of £4,000. It also appointed Messrs. H.M. Samuel, J. Hansky and I.H. Brauner as Trustees. All members and supporters were notified of the purchase by special circular during July 1961.

At the Third Annual Meeting on 16 August, 1961, H.M. Samuel was once again re-elected as President and J. Hansky as Vice-President, as was J. Rose as Hon. Secretary, I. H. Brauner became the new Treasurer, with J. Adler as Assistant Secretary and Treasurer. The new Board comprised Messrs. M. Kirsner, N. Pahoff, S. Pahoff, L. Samuel, F. Rubenstein, John Goldstein, Barney Goldstein and Jack Jacobs. Mention was made of the first wedding having been held in Surfers Paradise. The Chuppah, on loan from Brisbane, had been erected in the grounds of Mrs. Lacey's home. The bride was the daughter of local residents, Mr. and Mrs. C. Solomon. In the Rabbi's absence, Rev. L. Levine, Assistant Minister of the Brisbane Congregation, had officiated. The President announced the completion of alterations to the building and the date of opening of the new Synagogue: 3

September, 1961 — which would be combined with the dedication of a Sefer Torah presented by Mrs. J. Smith of Brisbane and her family.

VIII

It was a gala occasion when just three years after its establishment the Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation was able to dedicate and open its Synagogue right in the heart of Surfers Paradise. The Jewish Press carried the following report (quoted in part) which covers the essential features of this historic occasion: "In brilliant Surfers Paradise sunshine, about 200 people gathered to attend the consecration of the Gold Coast Hebrew Congregation's new Synagogue, social hall and classrooms. Rabbi Dr. Fabian, assisted by Mr. Amitzur, performed the ceremony. Accompanied by a large group of members of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, they had travelled from Brisbane that morning to attend the ceremony.

"Mrs. J. Smith, of Brisbane, accompanied by her three sons, presented the Sefer Torah which was accepted on behalf of the Congregation by the President, Mr. H.M. Samuel. Among the distinguished visitors who spoke after the ceremony was Alderman Harley, Mayor of Gold Coast City, who said he welcomed the opening of the Synagogue on the Gold Coast and saw in it an indication of the growth of the area. Mr. David Solomon, President of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation, expressed the joy of his Congregation that a new Synagogue had come into existence. He said that the Brisbane Congregation had always regarded the Gold Coast Congregation as a "daughter" Congregation, but now it had to be regarded as a "sister" Congregation. Mr. A. Newhouse, President of the Queensland Jewish Board of Deputies, welcomed the opening of a new "House of God". He said he hoped the Congregation would go from strength to strength and be a stronghold of Jewish culture and learning. Mr. Earle Hoffman, President of the Canberra Hebrew Congregation, also expressed his best wishes. Mr. G. Frey, President of Queensland J.N.F., presented the Congregation with a parcel of Siddurim. The Ladies Auxiliary which is under the capable Chairmanship of Mrs. Esther Adler served the large crowd of local and interstate visitors with tea on the spacious lawns which front the new Gold Coast Synagogue."

There are several aspects which emphasise the significance of this grand milestone in Queensland and Australian Jewish history. This was the first synagogue established outside the metropolitan area of an Australian capital city for many years. Its opening as such is in stark contrast to the many closures of Synagogues that had taken place in country towns over the last few decades (in Queensland, Toowoomba has been the well known example). The short time that had elapsed between the date of establishment of the Congregation (September 1958) and the opening of the Synagogue (September 1961) was an absolute record in Synagogue history in Australia. Many of those who were present were also deeply moved by the building and consecration of a new Synagogue in Australia, reflecting as they did on the abominable desecration and destruction of so many Synagogues in the European Holocaust. In expressing some of these



Outside the Surfside Synagogue, 3 September, 1961.



Dedication Service, 3 September, 1961.



The Chief Rabbi and Mrs. Brodie outside the Gold Coast Synagogue, February 1962, with Rabbi and Mrs. A. Fabian, and Mr. D. J. Soloman, President, Brisbane Hebrew Congregation and Mrs. Soloman.



The newly built Synagogue in Surfers Paradise (1967).

sentiments in the Dedication Sermon, the Rabbi also drew attention to the slogan which heads this paper. He emphasised that without the persistent efforts in the field of Jewish education, extending over seven years under considerable practical and financial difficulties, the need for a permanent structure would have been much less obvious. It was indeed the Hebrew School which not only preceded the "Shul", but brought about its rapid establishment.

For historic reasons, it is to be regretted that no tablet was affixed to the building at that time, recording the official opening date and ceremony. This was later corrected and an appropriate plaque unveiled in 1964. Unfortunately, this plaque has disappeared from the building and despite widespread searches has not yet been located. The Congregation is aware of this loss and adequate steps, it is understood, are being taken for a suitable replacement.

IX

For a small Congregation it had been quite a problem to acquire Torah Scrolls. Indeed, it had been more than fortunate that, at the very opening of the new Synagogue, one Scroll, together with ornaments and covers, also curtains for the Ark and Bimah covers, had been presented by Mrs. J. Smith, of Brisbane, "Whom we look upon as being the fairy godmother to our Congregation", as the 1961/2 Annual Report later put it. However, it almost sounds miraculous that in the course of the next 12 months, two further Scrolls were obtained for the Congregation, one by the generosity of Melbourne visitors who fairly quickly raised sufficient funds for this most welcome gesture, and the other by fortuitous circumstances deserving a brief description.

On the occasion of a funeral which the writer, in his capacity as Brisbane Rabbi, conducted during 1960, he met with a family, Cox, from Tugun at the Gold Coast. Mrs. Cox was Jewish and she mentioned that a big parcel wrapped in canvas had been under their house stored away for years since, in fact, it had come into their possession from some uncles who had long passed on. Having arranged a suitable time for inspection, the writer experienced a really thrilling moment when he opened the old parcel and found the most perfect Torah Scroll — only the parchment — carefully wrapped and in an excellent state of preservation.

Mrs. Cox's maiden name was Ettie Hordice Rosenberg, daughter of Reuben Meir Rosenberg and Annie Leah, nee Karnofsky. The Karnofskys lived in Kangaroo Valley (NSW) and in other country areas for years and had brought this Scroll with them from Eastern Europe before World War I. She had some recollection of services being held in their isolated homestead and the Scroll being used on those occasions. Mrs. Cox passed away in July 1961 and a few months later, on October 29, 1961, her husband (who was not Jewish) handed over the Scroll to the writer on behalf of the Brisbane Hebrew Congregation. He conveyed the express wish of his late wife that the Scroll be used by a Jewish Congregation on Queensland's Gold Coast. He also offered to donate in her memory any

Ed. —

The south east corner of Queensland, known as the Gold Coast, extends over a 40 km stretch of ocean beaches within a short distance of the capital city, Brisbane. The excellent climate, the warm surf and a great variety of man-made and natural attractions, has made this area Australia's leading tourist destination. The permanent population of Gold Coast City has been increasing rapidly and has reached 120,000, although some think of it only as a brief stopping place for pleasure seekers. Recognised as an international tourist resort, it is estimated that the number of visitors is close to three million in a year. The region owes its development to tourists of the 1940s and 1950s. When the boom first came in the late 1950s, it came to Surfers Paradise. Today the whole length of coast from Coolangatta — at the border between Queensland and New South Wales — to Southport is one long highly developed pleasure strip. Accommodation blocks are necessarily spreading upwards, producing a profusion of high rise towers. Record building approvals worth \$284 million were passed on the Gold Coast last financial year. Such dramatic development has not been regarded by all as an unmitigated blessing. Thus, an outspoken critic refers to the area as "a tropical paradise without plants . . . the only thing that seems to grow is concrete". Yet, this region offers such a wide choice of lifestyles in providing for town, country and seaside living with bright lights, famous beaches and waterways. A magnificent hinterland of lush rural country reaches to areas of remarkable beauty and scenic grandeur.

At Surfers Paradise, in particular, there is now an abundance of beachfront blocks, hotels, restaurants, night clubs and motels, creating a vigorous atmosphere described as "fabulous", one of "sophistication and luxury". Less than 60 years ago, when James Cavill came to the area, there were but two or three houses and a Post Office. About 40 to 50 years ago, the Gold Coast was only a low cost family resort. In 1770 Captain James Cook made his voyage up the eastern coastline of Australia, passing what is now Tweed Heads and the border area of two States, naming Moreton Bay near the present City of Brisbane. He named also Mt. Warning which he called "a peaked mountain", a landmark for the shoals and breakers at Point Danger. To this district and northwards came the cedar getters who were later followed by cotton growers and the cattle men, opening up a rich district that had once served as Aboriginal feasting grounds. A century and a half ago, convicts used to break their chains from the Moreton Bay Prison and escape towards the coast.

In 1959, Stanley Korman — most co-operative in his support of the early Surfers Paradise Hebrew Congregation — erected a nine storey project, Kinkabool, in Hanlon Street, Surfers Paradise. It then dominated the relatively flat coastal scene but today it is dwarfed by the apartment blocks of the Gold Coast skyline. It is to these places that investors are being drawn by the spectacular development, promising, it is said, a pot of gold. So many are continually being attracted, whether as residents or visitors. There are possibly many explanations for the extraordinary popularity of this region. "It is not so much a place," a writer remarks, "as an idea that



*The Changing Skyline at Surfers Paradise.
(From 'Inside Story', June, 1981.)*

has taken tangible shape and now draws people to it with the power of a hypnotist". As regards the Jewish community, however, it is most satisfying that, small though the local Congregation is, its spiritual needs have not been neglected. Perhaps to our Gold Coast co-religionists, with their sanctuary and religious centre at Surfers Paradise, one may apply the rabbinic dictum, 'Tis not to all the privilege is given, to have one banquet here and one in heaven'. (Berachoth, 5b.)

M.Z.F.

**SOLOMON LEVEY AND THOMAS PEEL:
A RE-APPRAISAL**

by
Ian Berryman

Of all the people who emigrated — willingly or otherwise — from Britain to the Australian penal colonies, few had a career as remarkable as that of Solomon Levey. Born in 1794 in the East End of London, into a Jewish family that was probably only a generation or two removed from the ghettos of Eastern Europe, he was convicted of larceny in 1813 and sentenced to seven years transportation. He arrived in Sydney in January 1815 as a felon, and yet when he returned to England in 1826, he was one of the richest men in Australia.¹ His spectacular rise to wealth has few parallels in the Australia of that time.

Levey is also important in Australian history for his involvement in a colonisation scheme that was to have a profound effect — even if mainly negative — on the future development of Western Australia. In London in 1829 he became the partner of Thomas Peel and financed a company that was formed for the purpose of colonising 250,000 acres of ‘certain wild and unoccupied lands’ in the south western part of the Australian continent. The scheme was a total failure and both men were ruined by it. Levey, his heart and spirit broken, died in London in 1833 at the early age of thirty-nine, and Peel was to die in Australia in 1865, an elderly recluse whose name was remembered only in association with failure.

The partnership between Levey and Peel has already been the subject of investigation by two historians.² It is the present writer’s intention to give another history of the affair, based partly on new sources of evidence but also on a re-interpretation and re-assessment of existing sources.

When the two men met, probably late in the year 1828 or early 1829, there was only one or two years difference in their ages but otherwise they could not have been more dissimilar. Levey’s social class and religion were definite handicaps in the England of that time, and later he had become a convicted criminal, and yet by his own abilities he overcame every disadvantage and acquired wealth; his prospects for gaining more wealth seemed limitless. Peel, in contrast, was a man whose career until then was notable only for a lack of any real achievement, but whose family connections, in an age when patronage and influence were of the greatest importance, gave him considerable advantages.

The Peel family had been engaged in the cotton trade for several generations. The founder of the family’s prosperity was Thomas’s great-grandfather, Robert Peel (1723-1795), who established a cotton mill in Lancashire in the middle of the eighteenth century. Of his seven sons, the third, also Robert (1750-1830), was the most successful, prosperous and obtained a seat in the House of Commons and a baronetcy. His son, Robert, (1788-1850), who was a first cousin of Thomas Peel’s father, was the most famous of all the Peels, entering Parliament at the age of twenty-one and ultimately becoming one of Britain’s highly respected Prime Ministers.

Thomas Peel's family connections, which were important, should be seen in proper perspective. The Peel family was very large; the original Robert Peel had ten children, more than fifty grandchildren, and Thomas Peel the aspiring colonist was one of well over one hundred great-grandchildren. The ties of kinship among the Peels were not strong, and although Robert Peel, then Home Secretary, had addressed a brief letter to the Colonial Office in June 1828, recommending his relative as 'a young man of ample means, and very good character and abilities', he later said that he had met Thomas only half a dozen times. Moreover, the available evidence suggests strongly that Thomas was out of favour with his family. Unlike his brothers he had not made any career for himself. Instead of going into the cotton trade, he worked in an attorney's office, where he acquired some legal knowledge, but apparently did not obtain any formal qualifications. Around 1825 he went to Scotland and lived for several years at 'Carnousie', as estate near Forglan in Banffshire, where he is recorded as having been Master of the Turriff Hunt.³ In addition to his lack of a career, he offended the family over his marriage, which took place about 1824. His wife was one Mary Ayrton, about whom little is known, except that the union did not meet with the family's blessing. The family may also have disapproved of Thomas's 'reputed son' Frederick, born in 1817, whose parentage is a matter of conjecture; he was probably an illegitimate child of Peel's by an unknown mother, but he may have been a child of Mary's and subsequently adopted by Peel. Following the death of an elder brother in 1823, Thomas had become the eldest son and would normally have inherited the major share of his father's estate. Parental disapproval was so strong that early in 1828 his father decided to give Thomas the share of the estate that would later have come to him, on condition that he left the country. The amount of money that Peel received is not recorded, but it was probably £10,000 or more. The break between Peel and his family must have been final and irrevocable, because in later years he was often in desperate trouble, and yet there is no evidence that he ever appealed to them for help, or that he even communicated with them after he left England.

Robert Peel's letter of recommendation is dated 29 June 1828, and one presumes that by that time Thomas Peel came to London and was making preparations for going to New South Wales, although there is no record of his activities until November 1828. At about the same time, James Stirling, a naval lieutenant, was attempting to persuade the Colonial Office of the need for establishing a colony at the Swan River, on the western coast of Australia. Stirling and the Sydney botanist Charles Fraser explored the area in March 1827, when Stirling was in command of HMS *Success*, and both men wrote reports which bestowed lavish praise on the potential of the soil and climate. The Colonial Office, however, was not enthusiastic, and when assent was grudgingly given, in mid-October 1828, the main reason for doing so was to pre-empt the French, who were rumoured to be planning to establish a penal colony in Western Australia.

In the opinion of the present writer, the founding of the Swan River colony and the part played by Thomas Peel can be fully understood only by

reference to the contemporary state of affairs within the Colonial Office, and in particular to the personalities of the two parliamentary Secretaries of State. Between 1812 and 1827 the Colonial Office was presided over by the Earl of Bathurst, under whose conservative but competent direction there was at least continuity of policy. Following Bathurst's departure in April 1827, the office of Secretary of State was held briefly by Lord Goderich, who resigned on becoming Prime Minister in August, and then by William Huskisson. The political upheavals of the spring of 1828 saw Huskisson's resignation and on 30 May Sir George Murray and Horace Twiss succeeded respectively to the positions of Secretary of State and Under Secretary. Murray, formerly a general in the British Army, had little aptitude for the position and during his two years in office the department lacked any firm direction. It appears that Murray was too occupied with other matters to take any part in the negotiations over the Swan River colony, and left the job almost entirely to his deputy. Twiss, however, also lacked experience and was not a good administrator; for a man who was both a lawyer and a politician, he had an unfortunate capacity for making promises and then finding that he could not fulfil them, and for giving people incorrect or misleading impressions, that later had to be sorted out by Robert Hay, the civil servant who was the Permanent Under Secretary. Besides, there were personal factors which made Twiss unsuitable for conducting the negotiations over the Swan River colony: he was a friend or acquaintance of Stirling, and he also owed his position to the patronage of Robert Peel, so that he was at a special disadvantage when faced with a Thomas Peel armed with the patronage of his famous cousin. The correspondence between the Colonial Office and Peel is notable for Peel's frequent requests for privileged treatment — which Twiss often granted — and also for his complaints about Twiss's inconsistencies, which will be discussed later in the present article.

When the Colonial Office gave its affirmative to Stirling, no definite plans had been made, and swift action was necessary if Stirling was to depart as soon as possible and forestall the French. Since the colony was to be for free settlers — the first such colony on Australian soil — the major question related to the conditions under which land would be allocated to the settlers. In the other Australian colonies, immigrants could take up an area of land proportional to the amount of capital which they had imported, and Stirling probably envisaged a similar scheme, with more generous allowances because of the hazards of colonising unknown territory.

The decision to colonise was soon made public, and late in October 1828 the Colonial Office began receiving inquiries from persons interested in emigrating to the new colony. The news attracted the attention of some major investors, and early in November the Colonial Office was made aware of the intentions of a syndicate of four men — Thomas Peel, Colonel Thomas Potter Macqueen, Sir Francis Vincent and Edward Schenley. After a few informal meetings, probably with Twiss, the members of the syndicate addressed a memorial to Sir George Murray, dated 14 November.

When stripped of the circumlocutions and the protestations of the loyalty and humbleness of the signatories, the memorial contained the outline of a very ambitious project. The gentlemen proposed sending to the Swan River, during a four year period, 10,000 emigrants from Britain, plus livestock, supplies and equipment, and they intended to establish farms for the cultivation of tobacco, cotton, flax and sugar, for raising horses for the East India trade, and for raising cattle and pigs for the production of salted provisions. In return they did not ask for any loan or support from the British government; instead they would be prepared to take grants of land in the new colony at the rate of one acre for every one shilling and sixpence that they had invested, on the reckoning that each emigrant would cost them £30 to send out. A little simple arithmetic shows that the gentlemen were proposing to invest £300,000, in return for which they would expect to be granted the right to select four million acres of land.⁴

Although nothing is known of the private arrangements between the four gentlemen who appended their signatures to the memorial, all evidence suggests that Macqueen was the leader and motivator. Peel's experience of colonial matters was negligible, and while little is known about Vincent and Schenley, neither man appears to have had any association with the Australian colonies. By contrast, Macqueen already possessed extensive holdings of land in New South Wales, and was well known to the Colonial Office as a lobbyist who was forever giving advice to the officials about how New South Wales should be run, or putting forward schemes for exporting Britain's surplus population to the Antipodes. The events of later years do not show Macqueen in a favourable light; much of the money he had invested in New South Wales proved to have come from other people, and when he ran into financial difficulties he showed a decided reluctance to pay his debts or accept his responsibilities.⁵

The proposal put forward by the syndicate gives every appearance of having been drawn up by Macqueen, and the whole scheme was really so grandiose as to be ridiculous, as even a brief analysis will show. Of the ships that came to the Swan River, the largest carried about 180 persons, so that just the transporting of the 10,000 settlers would have required the chartering of between 60 and 100 sizable merchant ships, which would have to be despatched at intervals of one ship every two or three weeks during the next four years. The gentlemen had not specified whether the livestock and other items were to have come from Britain or from other colonies, but in either case there would have been considerable expenses and logistic problems. The grant of four million acres — an area larger than many English counties — was totally virgin territory, unexplored, with no roads or bridges, and the surveying and allocating of the land would have been a major task in itself. Finally, the gentlemen were being either very trusting or very incautious. The success of the scheme depended entirely on the accuracy of Stirling's assessment of the area, and any sensible person would have waited for more detailed reports before going ahead. The Colonial Office, before it could give its assent to so enormous an undertaking, would have to be certain that the four gentlemen possessed (or could raise) the necessary capital, and that they had the will and ability

to go through with the project. The gentlemen would have been most unrealistic if they had expected a prompt assent to their proposal.

Unfortunately for all, a major misunderstanding arose almost at once. A week or so after sending in the memorial, the members of the syndicate gained the impression that the Government had given its assent. Writing to Twiss on 30 November, Peel remarked that 'in consequence of his [i.e. Twiss's] assurance that the proposal sent in to Sir George Murray by Messrs. Vincent, Macqueen, Peel and Schenley was accepted;', the syndicate purchased the ship *Lady Nugent*, of 700 to 800 tons, and were making preparations to despatch 400 emigrants, and engaged the ship's captain to be at Spithead no later than 1 February 1829. A few days later, on 2 December, an incoherent Peel permitted himself

to observe that I have already, through the above assurances, led my constituents into a train of expenses above £20,000, from which we cannot now recede.

If Twiss — as is quite possible — was the sole cause of the misunderstanding, it was an exceptionally bad mistake on his part, and one which was to have serious consequences for many people, particularly Solomon Levey. But Peel may have been equally at fault, since his career shows that he had a considerable capacity for misinterpreting other people's intentions, and furthermore the members of the syndicate were collectively guilty of excessive imprudence if they had gone ahead with the expenditure of £20,000 without obtaining the consent in writing, and without caring to ascertain the conditions under which the Colonial Office would allow them to take up the land.

At this point in the negotiations, Robert Hay, the Permanent Under Secretary, intervened and brought some sense of realism into the affair. Writing to the syndicate on 6 December, he stated the intentions of the Colonial Office in succinct terms:

His Majesty's Government, however, are desirous that the experiment should not be made in the first instance upon a very large scale, on account of the extensive distress which would be occasioned by a failure in any of the objects expected from the undertaking . . .

In addition, the Colonial Office had decided to limit the syndicate's grant to a maximum of one million acres, of which half a million would be allocated when the first shipment of 400 emigrants were landed, and the rest could be claimed by successive importations of capital and settlers under the same conditions that applied to other emigrants. Hay's concession to the syndicate in allowing them half a million acres before they had even left Britain can be seen as an oblique admission of the responsibility that the Colonial Office was taking for allowing the syndicate to believe that their proposal had been accepted, and for their consequent expenditure and preparations.

A few days later Macqueen deserted the syndicate — which shows that his commitment to the others had not been very strong — and the Colonial Office was now left with three men whose capacity to carry on the scheme was in doubt. At about that time, Twiss, before leaving for a holiday in Paris, urged Peel to defer departing from England until the Colonial Office

received Stirling's first report from the colony, and Twiss's advice — which was perfectly reasonable — was repeated by other officials during the next few weeks. Peel refused to listen, and the Colonial Office, rather than give an outright refusal, now began changing the conditions and adding limitations, in an obvious attempt to force Peel into abandoning the project. When Vincent and Schenley withdrew, Peel persisted, and the negotiations eventually came to an end late in January 1829. Peel wrote to Twiss on 28 January, stating that he was willing to carry on the project by himself, and Twiss replied on the same day, giving the final conditions. The maximum grant was still one million acres but the initial grant, to be allocated after the arrival of the first shipment of 400 settlers, was reduced to 250,000 acres. On the following day Peel had an interview with Twiss, and asked for an extension of time in which to land his emigrants, and Twiss, who was now careful to put everything in writing, replied on the same day, stating that the tract of 250,000 acres would be reserved for Peel until the 1 November 1829, and given to him if he had landed his 400 settlers by that day.

The events which took place up to the end of January 1829, if somewhat tedious to recapitulate, need to be understood in order to explain what was to happen next. At some time early in the year 1829, Solomon Levey and Thomas Peel came to an agreement and formed a partnership, with the intention of developing Peel's grant of land. The circumstances in which the two men came together, and the nature of the relationship between them, are not known, and may always be the subject of controversy. In brief, the sequence of events was as follows:

- (i) on 29 January 1829 Peel concluded his negotiations with the Colonial Office;
- (ii) on 27 March Levey and Peel came to an agreement — of which no copy is extant — and soon afterwards began distributing handbills for the guidance of potential emigrants;
- (iii) on 27 April the agreement of 27 March was totally abandoned and a new agreement drawn up, by which Peel, who now had no money of his own, was appointed as Levey's agent, on a salary of £1,500 per year, and was to go to the Swan River, where he would take charge of operations;
- (iv) on 18 May Peel, giving his address as Eagle Place, Piccadilly, resumed his correspondence with the Colonial Office, but without informing them of his partnership with Levey.

Several questions of great importance remain unanswered. Firstly, it is not certain how much money Peel possessed, nor is it known how he had lost it. It seems most likely, particularly from his letter of 21 January to Hay, that Peel invested his capital in the scheme and then found, when the others had withdrawn, that he did not have the money to continue by himself, and lost heavily when he was obliged to cancel the voyage of the *Lady Nugent*, and perhaps, as Dame Alexandra Hasluck has suggested, he attempted to regain his money by gambling, succeeding only in losing more money.

The second question is when, where and how Peel and Levey came to



*Specimen of the society at the Swan River (c.1830).
 (From the Small Picture File in the Mitchell Library.)*

meet and form their partnership, to which question there is as yet no satisfactory answer. Both Dame Alexandra and Dr. Bergman assumed that when Peel wrote to Twiss on 28 January, he had already met Levey and was proposing to go ahead with the project because he had by then obtained Levey's promise of financial support. Four years later, Levey himself, when corresponding with the Colonial Office, claimed that in the year 1828 he 'was applied to by certain gentlemen' for advice, and that

after certain explanation and understanding given by them, the undersigned wrote the project dated 4 [sic] November 1828, and gave it to those gentlemen, who, with very little alteration, laid it before His Majesty's principal Secretary of State for the Colonies.

After three of the gentlemen had withdrawn, Levey urged Mr. Thos. Peel to accept on behalf of himself and the undersigned [i.e. Levey] the proposal contained in the letter of the 6 December 1828 which had been declined by the other gentlemen, and consequently Mr. Peel received Sir George Murray's confirmation of that proposal by letter dated 28 January 1829 and on the faith of the terms and conditions contained in that letter the undersigned entered into a Deed of Agreement with Mr. Peel.⁶

In the opinion of the present writer, however, Levey's account is not consistent with other evidence, and there is an alternative explanation which, if true, would explain why Levey had stretched the truth when writing to the Colonial Office in 1833.

The only known contemporary account of the partnership between Levey and Peel is given by William Nairne Clark in 1837. Of all the colonists in Western Australia, Clark was the man who could be expected to have the most knowledge of Peel's affairs, since he was a lawyer and had acted for Peel in a number of court cases. In 1836 he began publishing a newspaper, the *Swan River Guardian*, which he used as a platform for his own radical opinions, and in 1837 he published a series of articles on the founding of the colony. He managed to obtain a copy of the correspondence between Peel and the Colonial Office — the letters had been published as a Parliamentary Paper in 1829 — and the articles show that Clark had a detailed knowledge of Peel's affairs; he knew, for instance, that Peel's salary as Levey's agent was £1,500 per year. Moreover, on one vital question Clark's assertions are supported by independent evidence.

Clark refers twice to the beginning of the partnership. He says that after Macqueen and the others had withdrawn,

a partnership was entered into between [Peel] and Mr. Levi [sic], one of the partners in the firm of Cooper and Levi of Sydney; it being agreed that Levi should find the money necessary for the undertaking, and become an equal partner with Mr. Peel in the immense grant of land, (which he obtained through his cousin's interest) familiarly denominated in London "The Swan River Job" or a provision for my "Country Cousin". All immediately became bustle in Eagle Court, Piccadilly. Men were engaged — goods purchased, and ploughs, harrows, carts, and C. & C. ordered; for all

of which Mr. Levi paid, as his partner; Mr. Peel was then on a visit to the Surrey side of the Thames. By the cash of Mr. Levi, three ships were fitted out for Swan River . . .⁷

In the second reference, he says that after the negotiations with the Colonial Office had broken down,

Mr. Peel obtained an introduction to Mr. Levey through Mr. John Fairweather Harrison, a London merchant, in consequence of which, Mr. Levey entered into the speculation and supplied the necessary funds. For this introduction and the attendant consequences, Mr. Peel bound himself to give Mr. Harrison 10,000 acres of land . . .⁸

The involvement of John Fairweather Harrison in the affair is confirmed by two independent pieces of evidence. The present writer's research has shown that there was then in London a firm of merchants trading under the name of J. F. Harrison and E. G. Coulthard, and the agreement of 27th April 1829 between Levey and Peel was witnessed by Edward Coulthard, of 14 Southampton Buildings, Chancery Lane. Further, among the passengers aboard the *Hooghly* (the second of the three ships chartered by Levey) was a Mr. Stephen Parker, who in September 1830 wrote to the Colonial Secretary about exploring the land in the York district, to the east of the Darling Range. In his letter Parker stated that

I came out to take 5,000 acres of land on Mr. Peel's grant for J. F. Harrison Esq. 28 New Broad Street London that grant was supposed to be on the Swan and Canning River [sic] unfortunately it's not and I have not taking [sic] it up I was to draw stores of Mr. Peel and pay Mr. Peel by drafts at ninety days sight.⁹

The involvement of John Fairweather Harrison is thus proved beyond doubt, but unfortunately Clark's account is defective on one vital point: he does not indicate when Harrison arranged the introduction. The expression 'on a visit to the Surrey side of the Thames' is generally understood to allude to someone who was in debtors' prison. If Clark is to be believed — and there is no reason to disbelieve him — the agreement between Peel and Harrison was a *quid pro quo* arrangement, and it is thus possible that after his letter on 28 January to Twiss, Peel had attempted to carry on by himself, failed, was thrown into debtors' prison, from which he was rescued by Levey, through the introduction arranged by Harrison. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that Levey and Peel did not make their first formal agreement until 27 March, whereas if Levey had been involved as early as 29 January one would expect that he and Peel would not have waited for two months before coming to an agreement. Furthermore, if Levey had rescued Peel from debtors' prison, he is not likely to have wanted to admit the fact to the Colonial Office.

The third question is equally important. Why did Peel and Levey abandon the agreement of 27 March, and draw up a new one on 27 April? Once again, there is no unambiguous answer, but the available evidence suggests very strongly that the first agreement was abandoned because Peel had deceived Levey. The most damning evidence is contained in a letter written by Adam Elmslie, who spent some time in 1829 working for Peel

and Levey in their London office and then stayed with Peel in Western Australia until about September 1830. Writing to Daniel Cooper on 20 September 1830, Elmslie described the total failure of the venture, and of Peel he had the following to say:

Unfortunate are all those who have placed confidence in him — Many duped by his artifices and fair promises lodged money in his hands in England to be received here in cash or stock or stores as might best suit their convenience; very little of which has been got back all the rest is in jeopardy — How infinitely more unfortunate is Mr. Levey in having associated himself with such a man — Better by far that in the early stages of the business, when he found he had been deceived, he had determined upon hazarding the sacrifice of even the whole of the money he had at that period advanced, or become responsible for, than have persisted in a course of which he must then have perceived the danger — However, I admire his motives, which were those of consistency and keeping his word inviolate, I think he was wrong, as no fault could have been charged against him . . .¹⁰

Elmslie does not specify how Peel had deceived Levey. He assumes that Cooper knew and a hint as to the nature of the deception is to be found in a contemporary newspaper. In mid-April 1829 an indignant correspondent complained that, of the land at the Swan River,

nearly 400 square miles . . . has been granted to one gentleman who has no intention of emigrating, but issues printed letters inviting settlers to go out and stating terms of which he is disposed to let his land.¹¹

Now, when this letter was written, on 16 April, the first agreement was still in force, and the anonymous correspondent's complaint indicates that Peel was disposing of land which he did not possess, and to which any claim he had was conditional. Bergman has suggested that Peel deceived Levey by not showing him all of the correspondence with the Colonial Office, so that Levey was unaware of the terms under which Peel had a claim on the land. Bergman's hypothesis is plausible, and is consistent with the chronology of the affair. Levey and Peel began issuing their handbills early in April 1829, based on their first agreement, and there was an immediate flood of complaints to the newspapers and the Colonial Office, and perhaps Peel was then forced to admit that he had been dishonest.

Despite Peel's deception, Levey went ahead with the venture. The two men signed the new agreement and recommenced their advertising, presumably offering different terms to prospective emigrants.

When Levey signed the agreement, now knowing the conditions under which the land had been reserved for Peel, he must have known that swift action was required. The voyage to the Swan River took at least one hundred days, so that the 400 emigrants would have to be despatched by early in July at the latest, which left only two months — May and June — in which to arrange everything. Predictably enough, time ran out. The *Gilmore* did not leave the London docks until 18 July, and preparations for sending the other two ships were not well advanced. A day or so after the

departure of the *Gilmore*, Peel wrote to the Colonial Office and asked for an extension of time for landing his emigrants.¹² Twiss replied on 24 July, stating that Sir George Murray would allow Peel until 30 April 1830 for landing his 400 emigrants, although the first shipload still had to be landed before 1 November. A few days later, at the end of July, Peel left London for Plymouth, where he was to go aboard the *Gilmore*. Mrs. Peel and her three children remained in London, and Peel was accompanied only by his son Frederick.

In his dealings with the Colonial Office, Peel had been fortunate in having the patronage of his famous cousin, but patronage also had its disadvantages. Robert Peel had been bitterly criticised earlier in 1829 over his change of mind on Catholic emancipation, and his critics had joined in the chorus of protest over Thomas Peel's grant, hoping to embarrass the Home Secretary, who eventually felt obliged to make a statement in the House of Commons, refuting the allegations of jobbery and nepotism.

Among the most strident critics of Robert Peel was the editor of the *Morning Journal*, a daily newspaper published in London, and on Friday 31 July 1829 the paper printed an editorial which, while aimed at Robert Peel, is of vital importance in understanding the attitude of the Colonial Office towards Thomas Peel. The Colonial Office did not have any written intimation of the partnership between Peel and Levey until January 1833, when Levey wrote to the Colonial Office, although, from a note which Hay appended to Levey's letter, it is clear that Hay was already aware of Levey's involvement. But we now know that the Colonial Office knew of Levey's involvement even before Peel had left England.

After indulging in the usual abuse of Robert Peel, the editorialist of the *Morning Journal* went on to give a highly exaggerated account of the poor quality of the livestock aboard the *Gilmore*, and likened the *Hooghly* to a slave ship. The important part of the editorial, however, is the following paragraph:

But this is only an item in this nefarious job. Mr. Thomas Peel, the young man of "ample means", was represented and believed to be a person qualified to remove the 400 adults at his own expense. But it turns out that he has not even attempted to do this by his "ample means". The truth is — he has sold or mortgaged the whole of the lands of the grant to a returned convict — a Jew nearly as rich as Sir Masseh of Westbury — and who has made Mr. Thomas his steward and factor over the said estate at a salary of £1,000 a year. It is a notorious fact that this returned convict, who is anxious to locate a few hundred of his honest and liberated brethren in the new colony, is the guarantee for the payment of all the ships stores required by the young man of "ample means". This requires no comment — it is only a proof of the march of the Peels, the march of intellect, and the march of imprudence.

Although Levey is not named, anyone in London who had connections with the Australian colonies would have known that Levey was the person referred to, and the news spread rapidly around London, reaching the Australian colonies early in the following year.¹³ Peel was already

unpopular with the Colonial Office and any remaining goodwill towards him vanished when the officials became aware not only of his arrangement with Levey, but also that he had never told them about it. It is no coincidence that early in August Twiss sent a strongly worded letter to Stirling:

The Governor is not to put Mr. Peel on the Council. If, as is probable, his party shall arrive too late for fulfilment of the conditions on which he received his grant, he will have no claim at all: and even if he arrives in time, I cannot but think that the impetuosity and indiscretion, to use no harsher words, which he has betrayed in his communications with this department, will render him an unsafe member of a body whose deliberations are likely to involve both general and individual interests of great and yearly increasing importance.¹⁴

The editorial remarks about Levey were libellous, and Levey might well have taken the editor to court and obtained damages. He preferred, however, a more gentle approach, and on 23 November the editor printed a handsome apology:

When the subject of the Swan River was under discussion in the newspapers several months ago there appeared an article in this journal of the 31st July, in which the transaction, so far as the Government was concerned, was treated with much asperity, and Mr. Thomas Peel and his connections spoken of with considerable harshness. All this might or might not be right, but it has nothing to do with the object we are now about to notice.

In the article to which we refer, a gentleman of the name of Levey, of the house of Cooper and Levey, of New South Wales, felt himself aggrieved, and considered that certain insinuations and charges were intended by us to be directed against, and applied to him. Of the intention of our informant we were innocent. Mr Levey was unknown to us — and therefore, although legally, we were not morally responsible for accusations which we deemed of too general a nature to be construed as injurious to any individual.

However, as Mr. Levey complains of them, his connection with Mr. Thomas Peel being such that his friends consider them intended to apply to him, we can have no hesitation in doing this gentleman the justice he deserves and demands. We have made enquiries, and find that Mr. Levey stands completely exculpated from any insinuation of the nature of which he ascribes to us. His connections are of the very highest respectability, and there is not the slightest foundation for any charges such as that which secret enemies invented to his prejudice. We have much pleasure in making this frank avowal, and doing justice to a gentleman whose feelings we have unintentionally wounded, and whose character, so far as we can learn, is above reproach.

'Of the intention of our informant we were innocent' . . . What lies behind this phrase? Who was the anonymous informant? All that can be said is that the informant was close to both men.

Peel arrived at Plymouth early in August. The *Gilmore*, which had been delayed by unseasonal weather and by a dispute between the captain and the crew, did not come into Plymouth Harbour until 2 August, and was not to leave until a week later. In a last desperate attempt to wring yet another concession out of the Colonial Office, Peel wrote to Sir George Murray on 8 August and claimed that the deadline of 1 November was stipulated only in Twiss's letter of 29 January, 'to which letter I never replied and never assented to be bound by it', and therefore, Peel said, he felt that he only needed to have his emigrants embarked by the end of the year 1829, in accordance with conditions laid down in earlier letters.¹⁵ A furious Twiss replied on 13 August, with a letter that is one of the most important in the whole correspondence, since he recapitulates much of the earlier negotiations and points out that he had urged Peel to delay his departure until the reception of Stirling's first despatch from the colony, and also that if Peel had wished to dissent from the terms offered in the letter of 29 January, he had had plenty of time to do so. Twiss ends his letter on a note of unconcealed dislike and contempt:

All of this has already been fully explained to you by myself at this Office; and I am now directed by Sir George Murray to close a correspondence, which, as he is decidedly of opinion, that it will be improper to make any change in the arrangements with you, can obviously be productive of no advantage.¹⁶

The *Gilmore* arrived at Fremantle on 15 December 1829; her passengers began disembarking at the end of the month and by September 1830 the entire venture had collapsed, with the total loss of all the money that Levey had invested. The collapse and the associated death and suffering provide the most harrowing episode in the history of the European occupation of Western Australia.

What went wrong? There were, of course, external factors over which Peel had no control, principally Daniel Cooper's refusal to have anything to do with the venture, and the consequent non-arrival of stores and provisions from Sydney, all of which is discussed in detail by Dame Alexandra and by Bergman. Besides, late in May 1830 or soon afterwards, Peel had the misfortune to lose the use of his right hand after a shooting accident, and had to learn to write with his left hand. And yet even by the time that Peel had sustained his injury, the venture had almost collapsed, and Cooper's defection and Peel's injury only hastened a catastrophe that was already imminent.

A mere list of the names of the dead and the cause of death is sufficient to convey to the present-day reader the awfulness of human existence during the brief period of time which Levey's emigrants spent at the townsite of Clarence, on the shores of Cockburn Sound about seven miles south of Fremantle.¹⁷ The first recorded death at Clarence occurred on 4 March 1830 and during the next few months colonists of all ages and social classes perished from disease and malnutrition at a rate equalled only during the epidemics of plague that used to strike medieval Europe. In August 1830 Stirling was obliged to intervene; he set many of the people free from their indentures and they left Clarence for the other settled parts

of the colony. By the end of the year the site was almost deserted and in July 1832, when the colony's first census was taken, there were only five persons recorded as living at Clarence.¹⁸ Peel himself left soon afterwards and went to live near the mouth of the Murray River, at the southern extremity of the grant, where he was to spend the rest of his life.

The remainder of the story of Solomon Levey and Thomas Peel needs to be told only in brief outline. The local government had been obliged to lend stores to Peel in 1830, to prevent the settlers under his charge from starving, and when Stirling's action caused the settlement to break up in August 1830, the government took as security for the money owing on the stores the indentures and promissory notes of the people whose passage had been paid by Levey. In August 1832 Stirling departed for England, and before he went he obliged Peel to give the government a mortgage on the land as security for the debt — now standing at £2,560 — which Peel had incurred for the stores. Until then Peel had not communicated with Levey, but now he finally wrote to him, detailing the debt and enclosing a copy of the mortgage.¹⁹ Levey approached the Colonial Office, in an attempt to find out what was happening, and asked to see copies of any correspondence between Peel and the colonial officials. The Colonial Office, however, refused to have anything to do with him, merely saying that all of the arrangements had been made in Peel's name only. Levey then tried to pay the debt by ordering that a cargo, of sufficient value to cover the debt, be sent from Sydney to the Swan River. Once again his agents in Sydney refused to send the cargo and the unfortunate Levey died on 10 October 1833, his death, according to the executors of his will, 'much hastened if not caused by anxiety arising from the said adventure and his losses thereby'.²⁰

Peel subsequently managed to recover the indentures and promissory notes of the servants and then took them to court to recover the passage money, but was also counter-sued for his own non-fulfilment of the terms of the indentures, and by 1839 he was still no closer to paying off the debt. He then wrote to the executors of Levey's estate, asking for help, apparently his first communication since his letter of July 1832 to Levey. But nothing happened, and the debt remained unpaid when Levey's son, John Levey Roberts, came to Western Australia in 1851 and made an agreement with Peel. Some of the land was surrendered to the Crown for paying off the debt and the two men split the remainder, each receiving about 106,000 acres. Roberts later disposed of his share to the Colonisation Assurance Corporation, while Peel remained at Mandurah, where he died in December 1865, aged about 72.

The historical record does not give a flattering or pleasant picture of Peel. Private letters and diaries are unanimous in describing him as wilful, headstrong, presumptuous, incompetent and arrogant. In the present writer's opinion, an objective study of Peel's performance during the negotiations with the Colonial Office does not produce any evidence to suggest that the private criticism is unjustified or unfounded, and his failure to communicate with Levey, the man who had financed the undertaking, is totally unforgiveable. Of Levey, the historical record is

strangely silent, for a man who is so important in Australian history. His career as a merchant can be reconstructed but his personality remains obscure. The major question to be asked is how he could ever have come to associate himself with a man who was obviously lacking in the qualities required for taking charge of a major colonisation scheme.

NOTES

1. The subject of wealth in colonial Australia is discussed by W. D. Rubinstein in two recent papers in *Quadrant*, May 1980, p.36 and the *Push From The Bush*, December 1980, p.23.
2. Alexandra Hasluck, *Thomas Peel of Swan River* (Melbourne, 1965); G. F. J. Bergman and J. S. Levi, *Australian Genesis* (Melbourne, 1974) Chapter 8.
3. Hasluck, p.8.
4. With the exception of one important letter, the correspondence between the syndicate and the Colonial Office is reprinted in *Historical Records of Australia*, Series 3, Volume 6, p.588 ff. The exception is Peel's letter to Hay, dated 21 January 1829, which is to be found at CO 323/157, p.295.
5. Rachel Roxburgh, *Thomas Potter Macqueen of Segenhoe, New South Wales* (Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Volume, 58, Part 3, (September 1972) pp.178-189).
6. CO 18/13, p.258.
7. *Swan River Guardian*, 16.3.1837.
8. *Ibid.* 6.4.1837.
9. Batty Library, inward letters to the Colonial Secretary, Volume 8, page 150.
10. Mitchell Library, A292, Volume 3, page 69.
11. *Times*, 18.4.1829; Hasluck, p.50.
12. CO 18/4, p.321; Hasluck, p.61.
13. *Hobart Colonial Times*, 16.1.1830; Hasluck, p.62.
14. CO 18/3, p.31; Hasluck, p.71.
15. CO 18/4, p.333.
16. CO 397/1, p.208.
17. A complete list of all deaths in the Swan River Colony occurring between June 1829 and July 1832 can be found in Ian Berryman, *A Colony Detailed*, (Perth, 1979), pp.159-164.
18. *Ibid.*, p.73.
19. CO 18/26, p.260.
20. *Ibid.*

THE VICTORIAN INSOLVENT LIST: 1842 TO END JUNE 1862
(Selected Jewish Names)

Abrahams, Abraham	Melb		25 Nov 1848
Abrahams, Isaac	Geelong	Clothier	1 Nov 1855
Alexander, Moses Alexander	Melb	Comm. Agent	12 Dec 1856
Aarons, John	Sandhurst	Carpenter	29 Oct 1859
Abrahams, Charles	Sandhurst	Qartz miner	14 Mar 1860
Alexander Samuel	Ararat	Storekeeper	24 Mar 1860
Alexander Godfrey	St Kilda	Grocer	24 Mar 1860
Alexander, Moss	Melb	Drapers asst.	23 Oct 1860
Alexander, Charles	Melb	Merchant	8 Dec 1860
Alexander brothers	Melb	Merchants	8 Dec 1860
Aarons, David	Richmond	Carpenter	17 Jan 1861
Alexander, Abraham			
Edward	Melb	Wine merch.	24 Apr 1862
Alexander, Benjamin	Talbot	Bootmaker	17 Apr 1862
Barnett, Reuben	Melb	Merchant	12 May 1853
Barnett, Isaac	Melb	Grocer	5 Aug 1858
Benjamin, Lewis	Melb	Gen. dlr.	22 July 1858
Barnett, Michael	Melb	Gen. dlr.	7 Dec 1859
Bergenstein, Shulim	Melb	Watchmaker	20 Sept 1861
Belifante, Solomon	Melb	Merchant	26 June 1862
Berrick, Lewis	Ballarat	Watchmaker	Apr 1862
Cantor, Adam	Geelong	Innkeeper	24 Nov 1854
Cohen, Victor			29 Mar 1854
Cohen, Abraham Elias	Melb	Soap/candle mfr	8 Jan 1858
Cohen, Lipman	Melb	Gen. dlr.	6 Nov 1858
Cohen, Victor	Melb	Watchmaker	10 Aug 1859
Cohen, Abraham Elias	Ballarat	Storekeeper	13 Dec 1859
Cantor, Benjamin			
& Fisher, Arnold	Geelong	Storekeepers	2 Apr 1860
Cohen, Jacob	Melb	Comm. Agent	22 Aug 1860
Capua, Mark	Melb	Gen. dlr.	20 Apr 1861
Cohen, Hyman	Brighton	Publican	13 Feb 1861
Cohen, Andrew	Emerald Hill	Storeman	2 May 1861
Cohen, Henry	Melb	Gen. dlr.	8 Aug 1861
Cohen, Joseph	Melb.	Clothier	19 Aug 1861
Cohen, Isidore	Sandhurst	Photo. artist	20 Aug 1861
Coleman, Isaac	Sandhurst	Storekeeper	27 Nov 1861
Citron, Abraham	Ballarat	Hawker	6 May 1862
Dancyger, George	Maggie Gully	Storekeeper	21 Dec 1855
Dimant, Alexander	Ballarat	Storekeeper	17 Feb 1855
D'Azevedo, Isaac	Melb	Cigar imp.	13 Oct 1858
Davis, Hyam	Beechworth	Gen. Dlr.	12 Sept 1860
Edelman, Albert	Melb	Merchant	10 Jan 1860
Emanuel, David			
& others	Sandhurst	United Mining Co.	12 June 1862

Fargeon, Israel & Benjamin	Sandhurst	Storekeepers	20 Aug 1857
Friedlich, Harris	Maldon	Storekeeper	11 Aug 1860
Green, Solomon Levy	Melb	Storekeeper	19 Mar 1856
Goodman, Louis	Sandhurst	Storekeeper	14 Oct 1857
Hyman, Louis			15 Jan 1855
Hart, Samuel	Collingwood		18 Sept 1858
Hart, Joel	Yackandandah	Storekeeper	14 Mar 1859
Harris, Morris	Indigo	Storekeeper	18 Mar 1859
Hart, Hyam	Melb	Clerk	1 June 1861
Hollander, William	Sandhurst	Hawker	17 Jan 1862
Imberg, Julius Samuel	Melb	Music Seller	8 Feb 1858
Imber, Julius Sanuel	Melb	Musician	20 Dec 1858
Isaacs, David A.	Melb	Publican	7 Oct 1859
Isaacs, Samuel	Inglewood	Rest. kpr.	1 June 1860
Iffla, Solomon	Melb	Surgeon	15 Nov 1861
Isaacs, Barnard Israel	Mountain Creek	Druggist	14 Aug 1861
Isaacs, Jacob Andrade	Melb	Publican	11 July 1861
Israel, Isaac & Phillips, Edward N.	Sandhurst	Fishmongers	21 June 1862
Joseph, Hyam			2 Dec 1853
Jonas, Moses			27 Jan 1854
Jacobs, Bernarde	Collingwood	Comm. Agent	19 Oct 1857
Josephs, Benjamin	Beechworth	Quartz crusher	14 Mar 1857
Josephson, Bernard	Melb	Gen. dlr.	22 Apr 1858
Jacobs, Samuel	Melb	Storekeeper	16 July 1859
Jacobs & Levy	Melb	Storekeepers	2 Aug 1859
Josephson, Bernard	Melb	Gen. dlr.	2 Apr 1860
Katz, William	Yackandandah	Rest. kpr.	8 July 1858
Kuttner, Marcus	Black Creek	Tobacconist	22 May 1860
Lazarus, Moses			19 Jan 1843
Levien, John			11 Dec 1846
Lincoln, Isaac Lazarus			2 Feb 1849
Louis & Cohen			18 Aug 1854
Lewis, David	Emerald Hill	Storekeeper	31 July 1857
Leers, Moritz Samuel	Melb	Storekeeper	4 Mar 1858
Levy, Lewis	Richmond		20 Nov 1858
Lazarus, Cashmore	Collingwood	Clothier	23 Sept 1859
Levy, Abraham	Melb	Shoemaker	16 June 1859
Ljunguist, Israel Magnus	Heachcote	Miner	25 Nov 1859
Loewe, Louis	Melb	Wine/spirit merch.	6 May 1859
Lobascher, David	Melb	Storekeeper	12 Oct 1859
Lazarus, David	Melb	Clerk	2 Feb 1860
Lazarus, Louis	Fitzroy	Gen. dlr	8 Nov 1860
Lewis, Julius	Melb	Storekeeper	20 Mar 1860
Levy, Raphael	Melb	Dealer	Oct 1860
Loel, Harris	Stanley	Draper	6 June 1860
Loewe, Benjamin	Nth Melb	Draper	4 Dec 1860

Labowitzky, Daniel	Melb	Comm. Agent	26 Feb 1861
Levy, Barnett	Collingwood	Fruiterer	27 Feb 1861
Levi, Abraham & Mathews, Solomon	Melb	Shoe mfrs	6 Apr 1861
Mendels, Emanuel Solomon	Melb	Furn. broker	18 Apr 1855
Marks, David	Melb	Coach mkr.	26 Aug 1857
Marks, Issachar	Ballarat	Merchant	24 Nov 1857
Marks, David	Melb	Coach bldr.	7 Jan 1859
Marks, Henry	Melb	Comm. Agent	17 Jan 1859
Mandelick & Loewe	Melb	Wine/spirit merchs.	30 June 1859
Marks, Samuel Joseph	Collingwood	Comm. Agent	12 July 1859
Moss, Abraham	Melb	Dealer	4 Feb 1859
Marks, Henry	Melb	Comm. Agent	31 Dec 1860
Moser, Moritz	St Kilda	Publican	12 June 1860
Myers, Joseph	Melb	Storekeeper	25 Apr 1860
Mathews, Solomon	Melb	Storekeeper	6 Apr 1861
Marks, Morris	Melb	Publican	17 Apr 1861
Mendoza, Isaac	Melb	Dealer	28 Mar 1861
Moss, George	Melb	Dealer	3 Apr 1861
Moses & Meyers	Sandhurst	Merchants	26 Apr 1861
Moses, Israel A.	Sandhurst	Merchant	26 Apr 1861
Myers, Lewis Myer	Sandhurst	Merchant	26 Apr 1861
Myer, Julius	Melb	Jeweller	18 Mar 1862
Phillips, Philip Abraham	Melb	Soda water mfr	10 Sept 1857
Phillips, Morris	Sandhurst	Storekeeper	24 Aug 1859
Phillips, Philip	Melb	Dealer	1 Dec 1859
Phillips, Charles Saul	Chiltern	Storekeeper	9 Apr 1860
Pirani, Charles A.	Ballarat	Clothier	26 July 1860
Polak, Israel	Melb	Hawker	7 Oct 1861
Raphael, Simeon	Melb	Storekeeper	27 Nov 1856
Rosemann, Augustus	Ballarat	Surgeon	1 June 1859
Solomon, Bernard	Melb	Bonded storekeeper	29 Aug 1855
Steinfeld & Co, Emanuel	Ballarat	Merchants	14 Nov 1856
Samuel, Samuel	Ballarat	Clerk	12 Jan 1857
Samuell, Abraham Mitchell	Melb	Tobacconist	14 Oct 1858
Soleberg, Samson	Melb	Tailor	9 Feb 1858
Solomon, Nathan	Melb	Gen. dir.	4 May 1858
Samuel, Bernard Saul	Nth Melb	Upholsterer	20 Dec 1859
Solomon, Maurice Henry	Collingwood	Schoolmaster	19 May 1859
Solomon, Isaac	Collingwood	Comm. agent	1 Sept 1859
Solomons, Abraham	Sandhurst	Goldbroker	12 Sept 1859
Solomon, Edward	Melb	Dealer	19 Apr 1861
Solomon, Judah	Melb	Clerk	14 Aug 1861
Salinger, Nathan	Pleasant Creek	Storekeeper	27 Feb 1862
Salmon, Benjamin	Sandhurst	Blacksmith	4 Mar 1862
Snyder, Solomon Jacob	Ballarat	Rest. kpr.	26 May 1862
Vandenberg, Jacob	Ovens	Publican	22 May 1858

Woolf, Aaron	Melb	Merchant	20 July 1854
Woolf, Hyman Leman	Sandhurst	Comm. trav.	26 Feb 1861
Woolff, Bernard	Maldon	Tobacconist	5 July 1861

A Selection of Jewish names compiled by Beverley Davis.
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 Published Melbourne, 1862.

THE VICTORIAN INSOLVENT LIST: JANUARY 1867 TO JANUARY 1873

Abadee, Solomon	Lonsdale St. East	Furn. dlr.	4 Oct 1867
Abrahams, Joseph	St. Helens	Farmer	1 Apr 1870
Aarons, Newman	Ballarat	Hawker	12 Apr 1870
Abraham, Isaac	Ararat	Tobacconist	8 June 1870
Blashki, Philip	late Queenscliff now Melbourne	out of business	20 Dec 1867
Barnett, Nathaniel	Sandhurst	Late lessee Lyceum Theatre	7 July 1868
Benjamin, Samuel	Queen St.	Merchant	28 July 1868
Benjamin Samuel M.	Ballarat	Auctioneer	1 June 1869
Berlowitz, Lazarus	Molesworth	Storekeeper	25 March 1870
Cohen, Joseph	Emerald Hill	Bootmaker	19 June 1867
Cohen, Woolf	Alexandra	Storekeeper	2 July 1869
Cohn, Henry	Melb	Hotelpr.	23 Sept 1870
Cohen, Philip	Melb	Tobacconist	31 Jan 1871
Daniel, Albert	Collingwood	Hatter	24 Oct 1870
Green, Louis	Little Lonsdale St.	Gen. dlr.	10 Jan 1868
Goldstein, Albert	Melb	Clothier	10 Dec 1868
Hollander, Louis	Ballarat	late dealer in fancy goods	31 Jan 1871
Joseph, Henry	Melb	Mining agent & sharebroker	28 Sept 1867
Jacobs, Coleman	Ballarat	Musician	18 Apr 1868
Joseph, Solomon	Melb	Broker	16 Mar 1870
Josephson, Marcus	Melb	Dealer	13 Jan 1871
Isaacs, Frederick	Melb	Comm. trav.	13 May 1870
Isaacs, Simeon	late Dunedin now Richmond	Storekeeper out of business	15 Sept 1870

Levy, Louis	Ballarat now Melb	Late auctioneer now clerk	29 June 1869
Lee, Louis Josiah	Melb	Dealer	20 Apr 1870
Levy, Simon	Ballarat	Bootmaker	22 Apr 1870
Lewis, Joseph	Emerald Hill	Late publican out of business	29 Apr 1870
Levy, Moses	Melb	Gen. dlr.	31 May 1870
Levy, John Barnett	Melb	Gen. dlr.	22 July 1870
Morris, Maurice	Ballarat	Publican	25 Jan 1867
Monash, Louis	Melb	Merchant	25 Mar 1867
Meyers, Emanuel	Little Collins St.	Comm. agent	24 Jun 1868
Moss, Joseph	Eldorado	late publican out of business	10 Mar 1870
Meyers, Benjamin Henry	Ballarat	Miner	23 Jan 1871
Nathan, Solomon D.	Emerald Hill	Storekeeper	27 Jan 1871
Perlstein, Philip	Beechworth late Harrietville	Late storekpr.	23 July 1870
Phillips, Isaac	Melb	Gen. dlr.	9 Aug 1870
Rosenthal, J.S.	Fitzroy	Traveller	1 Dec 1869
Sussman, David	Melb	Boot/shoe importer	19 Nov 1867
Spyer, Laurence Joseph	Queen St resident partner in the firm of L. & S. Spyer	Merchant	17 Jan 1868
Solomon, Henry	Geelong	Draper	18 Oct 1869
Simonds, Abraham	Melb	Dealer	31 Mar 1870
Solomon, Henry	Fitzroy	Marine store dealer	22 Apr 1870
Salomon, Joseph	Fitzroy	Hotelkeeper	27 Jan 1871
Tobias, Reuben & Marks, John	Queenscliff & Ballarat	Fish dealers	26 Apr 1867
Victorsen, John	Melb	Tailor	24 Dec 1869
Wolf, Moses Lemon	Late Melb now Collingwood	Wine/spirit merch.	11 Dec 1868
Woolf, Philip Aaron	Gobur	out of business Late baker	27 Aug 1870

**LIST OF INSOLVENCIES UNDER NEW INSOLVENCY STATUTE
1871**

Alexander, Joseph	Sandhurst	Publican	1 May 1871
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Abrahams, Joseph	Richmond	Agent	8 May 1871
Alexander, Isaac	Carlton	Farmer	18 Mar 1873
Benjamin, Lewis	Melb	Fish dealer	28 Mar 1872
Berrick, Lewis	Melb	Watchmaker	22 July 1872
Burnstein, Joseph	Melb	Hawker	6 Feb 1873
Coleman, Isaac	Carlton	Late publican	8 Feb 1872
Cohen, Philip	Melb	Tobacconist	2 Oct 1872
Cohen, Joseph	East Collingwood	Fellmonger	11 Feb 1873
Dinte, Hyman	Melb	Tailor	8 Aug 1871
Dinte, Philip James	Melb	Tailor	11 Oct 1873
Emanuel, Benjamin	Collingwood	Dentist	20 Nov 1872
Fraenkel, Charles	Wodonga	Storekeeper	2 Sept 1872
Frankel, Louis	Bairnsdale	Storekeepers	25 Feb 1873
& Abrahams, James	Bairnsdale	Storekeeper	25 Apr 1873
Frankel, Louis			
Hart, Samuel	Melb	Merchant	3 June 1871
Harris, Samuel	Ballarat	Produce merch.	13 Dec 1871
Jacobs, Frederick	East Melb	Comm. agent	12 Aug 1872
Levy, Abraham	Fitzroy	Dealer	14 June 1871
Levey, Lawrence	Fitzroy	Confectioner	26 Apr 1872
Levey, Louis	Melb	Sharebroker	21 Aug 1872
Levey, William	Melb	Sharebroker	11 Sept 1872
Levy, Barnet	Fitzroy	Musician	12 Oct 1872
Lyons, Louis	Ballarat East	Fruiterer	8 Dec 1872
Levy, Joseph	Fitzroy	Bootmaker	6 June 1873
Miers, Benjamin Leon	Sandhurst	Confectioner	4 Dec 1872
Marks, David	Emerald Hill	Moneybroker	20 May 1873
Morris, Bernard Joseph	Carlton	Oyster salesman	21 May 1873
Myers, Edward	Melb	Gentleman	11 Sept 1873
Morris, Joseph Moss	Melb	Provision merch.	13 July 1871
Phillips, Philip	Melb	Clothier	19 June 1872
Perl, Michael Matthias	Melb	Importer	17 Sept 1872
Rosenwax, Elias	Melb	Pawnbroker	2 Sept 1871
Solomon, Henry	Fitzroy	Gen. dlr.	16 Aug 1871
Salomon, Michael	Fitzroy	Dancing master	25 Sept 1871
Solomon, David	East Collingwood	Comm. agent	10 Aug 1872
Solomon, Nathan	Melb	Gen. dlr.	23 Oct 1872
Salomon, Moritz	Melb	Comm. agent	6 Jan 1873
Saunders, Louis	Ballarat	Hawker	13 Jan 1873

Van Der Berg, Leon	Barnawartha (Beechworth dist.)	Storekeeper	26 Nov 1873
Woolfson, Sigismund	Melb	Dealer out of business	10 Jan 1872
Waxman, Joseph (liquidation by arrangement)	Fitzroy	Pawnbroker	27 Aug 1873

A Selection of Jewish Names compiled by Beverley Davis.

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THE VICTORIAN INSOLVENT LIST 1862-1866†

Abrahams, Louis	Melb	Pawnbrokers assist.	10 Feb 1863
Alexander, Sanuel	Yandrit	Hawker	10 Mar 1863
Abrahams, Joseph	Nth Richmond	Agent	29 July 1864
Aarons, David B.	Sandhurst	Wheelwright	7 Nov 1864
		Gen. dlr.	
Abrahams, Alfred	Gippsland	Publican	28 Jan 1866
Berger, Hermann	Caulfield	Horse dealer	19 Apr 1864
Benjamin, Lewis	Melb	Gen. dlr.	20 Aug 1864
Berbitz, Asher	West Melb	Clothier	12 May 1865
Barnett, Lewis	South Yarra	Gen. agent	7 Sept 1866
Cohen, Woolf	Jamieson	Storekeeper	22 Oct 1863
Cohen, Elizabeth	Ballarat	Widow	1866
Feldman, Joseph	Jamieson	Storekeeper	2 Apr 1863
Goldsmidt, Samuel & Henry	Melb	Merchants	5 July 1864
Harris, Isaac	Wimmera	Storekeeper	4 Nov 1862
Hirschfield, Lewis	Melb	Bird dealer	4 Feb 1863
Hart, Lewis	Melb		9 Apr 1864
	late New Zealand		
Helffenstein, Louis	Castlemaine	Soap/candle mfr.	16 Sept 1865
Hyams, John & Lewis Levy	Ballarat	Auctioneers	1866
Josephs, Lewis	Ballarat	Fishmonger	1863
Joseph, Isaac	Melb	Salesman	29 Feb 1864
Jacobs, Samuel	Ballarat	Hawker	21 Jan 1866

†This and following Lists compiled by M. Z. Forbes

Lyons, Abraham	Big Hill	Boardinghouse kpr.	14 July 1862
Lyons, Isaac	Ballarat	Fishmonger	1 Nov 1862
Lyons, Abraham	Melb	Tobacconist	18 June 1863
Levinsohn, Levi	Inglewood	Storekeeper	24 July 1863
Levi, Nathan J.	Fitzroy	Comm. traveller	1 Sept 1863
		late storekeeper, N.Z.	
Lazarus, David	Melb	Gen. dlr.	31 July 1865
Levy, Nathan	Melb	Clothier	21 Dec 1865
Marks, Hyman	Melb		21 Aug 1862
Mandelberg, Nathaniel	Melb	Tobacconist & hardware dlr.	19 Sept 1863
Myers, Abraham	Melb	Warehouseman	15 Jan 1864
Morwitch, Abraham & Samuel	Ballarat	Publicans	26 Jan 1864
Myers, Emanuel Moses	Victoria St.	Teacher	8 Mar 1864
Moses, Solomon & Henry	Melb	Cigar mfrs.	3 Mar 1865
Morwitch, Abraham	Ballarat	Late publican	2 Nov 1866
Norman, Henry Abraham	Hamilton	Watchmaker/jeweller	24 Oct 1863
Solomon, Joseph & Henry Israel			2 July 1862
Solomon, Isaac	Melb	Gen. dlr.	14 Apr 1863
Shappere, Samuel	Fitzroy	Watchmaker	21 Nov 1864
Solomon, Nathan	Melb	Gen. draper	6 Dec 1864
Solomon, Simeon	Melb	Dealer	22 Dec 1864
Vandenberg, Jacob	Beechworth	Publican	12 Mar 1866
Zachariah, Isaac	Ballarat	Dealer	26 Apr 1866

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS 1842-1862

Behrmann, Samuel	Eldorado, Woolshed & Ovens	Storekeeper	28 Dec 1861
Cohen, Simon	Ballarat	Storekeeper	21 Jan 1859
Cohen, Benjamin	Ballarat	Hawker	23 Jan 1862
Davis, Emanuel	Melb	Merchant To Edward F. Sichel & Samuel Davis	4 Apr 1860
Finkenstein, Louis & Cohen, Hyman	Melb	Publicans	16 Aug 1854
Hart, Hyam	Geelong	Storekeeper To Moritz Michaelis	11 Sept 1860

Levinsohn, Levi	Inglewood	Storekeeper To Nathaniel Harris & George Marsh	18 Oct 1861
Levy, Michael Samuel	Geelong	Auctioneer	28 May 1856
Mendels, Emanuel Solomon	Melb	Furniture dlr.	6 Jan 1858
Moses, Israel Henry & Myer, Lewis	Sandhurst	Merchants	5 Dec 1859
Moss, Samuel			28 Mar 1855
Phillips, Solomon	Melb	Ironmonger	8 Mar 1855
Samuels, Jacob		Storekeeper	4 July 1857
Woolf, Leon	Sandhurst	Storekeeper To Samuel Lazarus & Alfred Harris	11 Jan 1858
Zukerman, Hyman	Ballarat	Publican	5 June 1856

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS 1862-1866

Amsberg, Bernard & Julius, Michael	Melb & Adelaide	To Joseph S. Joseph & Samuel Henry Cohen	30 May 1864
Barnett, Samuel	Melb & Bald Hill	Storekeeper To Joseph Aarons	6 May 1864
Cohen, Joseph & Lewis	Melb	Merchants	17 Oct 1864
Feldman, Joseph	Jamieson & Drummonds Point	Storekeeper To Joseph Aarons	Nov 1862
Horwitz, Henry & Marks, Abraham	Melb & Hobart Town	Merchants	27 May 1865
Katzenstein, Joseph & Isaac	Melb	Merchants	25 June 1865
Koschitzky, Albert & Davis, Morris	Jamieson	Storekeepers	9 Oct 1866
Lyons, Isaac & Harris	Melb	Auctioneers	8 Jan 1864
To W. G. Murray & Nathaniel Levi			
Morwitch, Abraham & Samuel	Ballarat	Publicans	28 Aug 1862
Moses, Joachim	Ballarat	Storekeeper To Joseph Aarons	26 May 1865

Pirani, Henry Cohen	Melb	Wine/spirit/ tea merch.	21 June 1864
Rosenthal, Julius Max & Lyons, David	Donnellys Creek	Storekeepers To Joseph Aarons	19 Dec 1865
Wittkowski, Julius Isidore & Joseph	Melb & Ballarat	Tobacco merchs. To Charles Meyer	Dec 1864

LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS 1867-1870

Alexander, Michael	Melb	Auctioners To J. Aarons	22 Dec 1869
Aarons, Lewis	Melb	Restaurant kpr.	13 Oct 1870
Alexander, Raphael	Ballarat East	Draper	12 Dec 1870
Bentwich, Morris	Melb	Tobacconist	11 July 1867
Davis, Lewis	Ballarat	Fancy Goods To M. Rosenfeldt	13 Sept 1870
Fink, Moses & Hirsch	Geelong	Storekeepers	10 Jan 1871
Hollander, Lewis	Ballarat	Storekeeper To A. Oppenheimer	13 Sept 1870
Horwitz, Henry & Jacoby, Sigismund Hart, Moses Henry	Hamilton Melb	Storekeepers Importer To John De Pass & Hon. Edward Cohen	1 Nov 1870 13 Dec 1870
Joseph, S. Joseph Jacob, John	Melb Sandhurst	Merchant Storekeeper	10 May 1870 1 Sept 1870
Katzenstein, Joseph	Melb	Merchant	20 Jan 1870
Marks, Herman & Joseph Meyer, George	Clothing mfrs. Carlton	16 Dec 1870 To Nathaniel Levi	8 Jan 1869
Rosenthal, Michael & Louis	Pleasant Creek	Storekeepers	27 Oct 1868
Stone, Elias	Geelong	Jeweller/gen. storekpr. To David Rosenthal & Michael Samuel Levy	27 Oct 1870
Zox, Michael Alexander & Joseph Abraham	Melb	Storekeepers To J. Aarons	20 June 1867
Zukerman, Hyman	Carnghan	Storekeeper	31 Dec 1867 M.Z.F.

**INSOLVENCIES IN VICTORIA, 1842-1902
A HISTORICAL SURVEY OF JEWISH INTEREST**

by

M. Z. Forbes, B.A., LL.B.

The Secretary of the Victorian Branch of this Society prepared a selection of Jewish names appearing in *The Victorian Insolvent List*, a publication which was "compiled from authentic sources" by J. Noble Wilson. It was first printed in 1862, included also a list of Public Assignments, 1854-1862, and was intended "to provide a great commercial want". The first edition of the book covered the period, 1842-1862, containing the names of Victorian insolvents, their addresses and occupations, and the value of their assets and liabilities. In the case of assignments for the benefit of creditors — where no insolvency had yet occurred — the name of the assignee was given. A continuation of this earlier work was published by Lyall & Gowan, furnishing similar particulars for the years 1863-1866; and a third and last edition covered the period, 1867-1873. The obvious purpose of the work was to provide the commercial community and traders with a reference book from which it could be determined whether credit could safely be given to customers, and of course anyone in business would be cautious in dealing with one whose name was listed as an insolvent or as having assigned his estate. Such a type of publication, which has since become regularly available in commercial circles, must have filled an essential need in the unstable economic conditions under which Victorians carried on business during the last century, when the means of communication were not always easy, especially in the remoter areas. The present writer is responsible only for the selected list of insolvents, 1862-1866, and also for the names of those who assigned their estates. In making the selection of names, and bringing these lists under notice, Mrs. Davis rightly perceived that it had intrinsic interest for readers and students of Australian Jewish history, as well as furnishing contemporary information about Jews of the relevant periods, thereby helping also to identify individuals who may be the subject of future research and investigation. However, this writer was fascinated, to an extent, by such a substantial collection of names, and thought that it would be further desirable to identify some of them with persons who have otherwise been referred to in a work such as L. M. Goldman's *The Jews in Victoria In the Nineteenth Century*, an author who sometimes made reference to the business difficulties encountered by these persons. The economic history of those times in the colony of Victoria reveals continuous and even confusing fluctuations in the financial conditions between periods of boom and depression, and it is certainly of interest to note how members of the Jewish community fared, many of whom experienced all the vicissitudes of traders in general. There was usually little to the discredit of these people and some of them could have hoped for a more charitable concern by the Jewish community. In this essay the writer has attempted to examine a variety of cases constituting many strands in a story that is far from complete. Having regard to the sources available, the

reader will be taken, as it were, along a stream nowhere broad, which frequently meanders through its course. And, towards the end of the 19th century it is also possible to survey some of the involvement of Jewish personalities in the most serious of the depressions in Victoria's history. In touching upon the role of Isaac Isaacs, and others as well, an occasional digression may be permitted, enabling such information to be conveniently recorded within the confines of this article. The aim has not been simply to repeat all the details already appearing elsewhere but rather to make some of them more accessible and relevant for readers of this Journal.

The pastoral boom of the thirties of the last century, when the Colony of New South Wales experienced rapid expansion, was followed in the early years of the next decade by a severe depression, often called "distress" or "monetary confusion". Schedules of Insolvency were of frequent occurrence and unemployment was rife. High land prices, over-capitalization, dramatic falls in the value of wool, and excessive immigration all contributed to the slump which caused the failure of a number of banks. Before the end of 1844, Sydney had 1356 sequestrations, and Melbourne, 282.¹ Filing a Schedule, it has been said, ceased to be a disgrace:

"You may talk of your honour and honest repute,
And for loss of your credit may fret;
But when you can't pay there's nothing will suit,
But to schedule and get out of debt."²

A new Insolvency Act was brought down in 1842, and in 1843, a Select Committee of the Council was appointed to inquire into and report on the Insolvent Act.³ The members of the Committee were, Dr. Charles Nicholson (Chairman), Messrs. Cowper, Foster, Lowe, Therry (Attorney General), and W. C. Wentworth. In this regard, it is of interest to advert to some of the evidence given to the Committee by Samuel Lyons, the Jewish emancipist who had already achieved spectacular commercial success.

On Saturday, 25 November, 1843, Lyons appeared before the Committee and stated that he had proved for debts of £33,000 and recovered only £800, or 6d. in the £. He attributed this situation, he said, to a very great extent of frauds, although other witnesses laid no special emphasis on the fraudulent conduct of debtors. "There is an insolvent," Lyons remarked, "that walks the streets now, but is dressed in better clothes, and better boots, than they wore before they passed the Court." He added, "I see none with their elbows through their coats, or toes through their shoes; they are to be seen dashing and driving about in their carriages." Although he had effected sales of £703,403/15/- during the last two years and five months, he was able, Lyons said, to realise only £26,915/2/- from the sale of insolvent property. He told the Committee that the Court ought to have additional powers, so that a fraudulent debtor might be punished "in the same way as a felon". He thought that the Court proceedings were not formal enough, and he spoke of being "grossly bullied and abused" in noisy scenes before the Commissioner. Stricter control over fraud and perjury on the part of debtors was also advocated by the Attorney, David Poole.

In Port Phillip, too, the rate of development had caused a great demand for all commodities, which were mostly imported. On the other hand, exports were small, and people lived extravagantly. There was an excessive demand for land in the country, and sheep stocks were far too high, selling for 2/- each and less. Melbourne was almost ruined by the resulting depression, trade was disorganised, and bankruptcy was widespread. The land boom had created a fictitious prosperity and encouraged reckless speculation and easy borrowing. There had been an influx of population but business failures were almost a daily event.⁴ It is, however, not surprising that there is a dearth of Jewish names in the Insolvency lists of this early depression. Most of the Jewish migrants were poor people who sought escape from the adverse economic conditions in England. They had little or no capital, and the majority occupied themselves in Port Phillip, in the business of selling clothes or in the drapery trade. Their general poverty explains the scarcity of Jewish names in the Land Sales lists. At the height of the crisis, in 1843, only Moses Lazarus is listed as insolvent. He conducted a clothing and drapery store, known as "Portland House", and it was upon these premises that one of the very first religious services was held on New Year, 1839. By the end of the forties, Port Phillip had surmounted its financial troubles although the name of Abraham Abrahams is shown as an Insolvent in 1848. It was from him that the Jewish community acquired its first burial ground. Another, Isaac Lazarus Lincoln, who had been prominent in religious affairs, faced insolvency in 1849. About this same time, much adverse publicity was given to the case of Phillip Phillips, a trader of Geelong accused of practices unfair to his creditors. He was one of the first to be buried in consecrated ground in Geelong after being drowned in crossing Muston's Creek, apparently in 1851. Incidentally, fate was no kinder to Lincoln who, whilst returning in 1847 from a visit to California, was drowned in a shipwreck with others of the family. Such, indeed, was the lot of some of these pioneers to whom the words of the ancient liturgy were very real: ". . . It is sealed and determined . . . who by water . . . who shall be at rest, and who shall be wandering . . . who shall get rich and who become poor."

In the newly separated Colony of Victoria, in 1851, the gold fever commenced to rage and was later followed by chaotic conditions and an acute depression. Money was scarce and credit became unobtainable. The great influx of population, a glut of imports, and excessive speculation culminated in the depression of 1854. At the height of the gold rush, most other industries stagnated, prices and wages were extremely high, but trade profits began a decline. Within a short time, there was little alluvial gold to be found and many of the migrants, particularly in Melbourne, experienced destitution and unemployment. While the boom had lasted, over-trading continued on a grand scale.⁵ "There are very few," wrote an observer, "if any, pawnbroker shops, or old clothes shops."⁶ The economic distress, however, did not leave the Jewish community unscathed, even if it did not appear to suffer too many insolvencies. Amongst the names to be noted, are: Benjamin Fargeon, storekeeper, journalist and writer of Sandhurst (Bendigo); George Dancyger, active in the Ballarat Congregation; Emanuel

Steinfeld of the Committee of Ballarat Congregation and later Mayor of Ballarat East; S. Soleberg of East Melbourne Congregation; M. H. Solomon, who conducted a Jewish School in Melbourne and was afterwards Headmaster of the Ballarat Hebrew School; Solomon Phillips, of the Melbourne Congregation. He was prominent in Jewish communal affairs, he had been assistant Minister at the Sydney, Bridge Street, Synagogue and took part in the consecration of the York Street Synagogue. Phillips went into business in Melbourne and is listed as an Ironmonger who assigned his estate for the benefit of creditors in 1855.

During the earlier 'sixties there was a tightness in Victoria's money market, unemployment was extensive and trade declined under the influence of a deflationary period. The Protection legislation of that time was of little effect as the goldfields population began to look for other livelihoods, there being few factories or industries. The fiscal question occupied considerable attention when manufacturers could not compete in a glutted market and there was a serious fall in the level of wages. In the latter half of the decade, the number of miners steadily diminished and there was a shrinkage of those supplying their wants.⁷ There were, therefore, many bankruptcies and assignments, and although it is impossible to be precise, the number of Jewish cases seems to have been significantly high — perhaps 10 per cent of the total. Speaking, apparently of the next decade, Goldman wrote: "Of the hundreds that passed through the Insolvency Court annually, few belonged to the Jewish persuasion."⁸ The available evidence, however, does not justify such a positive statement. Without any need to cast reflections of any kind, the fact is that the small minority Jewish element was much involved in trade, so that it inevitably suffered from the adverse economic conditions. The Jewish migrants, as the same author so rightly remarks, were "prepared to undergo all the hazards of mining life, with its hardships, difficulties and uncertainties."⁹ As was the case, earlier, with Solomon Phillips, so now, in 1864, even the Minister of the Melbourne Congregation was exposed to Insolvency when Emanuel Myers, described as a teacher, filed his Schedule. Solomon Belifante, a leader of the Sephardim, was heavily in debt. Some others included in the Insolvency lists were: Solomon Iffla, surgeon, and active in the Melbourne Jewish community; Henry Horwitz, a President of the Melbourne Congregation (assignment); Isaac Lyons, President of Bourke Street Synagogue (assignment); Wittkowski Bros. of Melbourne, Ballarat and Geelong (assignment); Joel Hart of Yackandandah, Secretary of the Beechworth and District Congregation; Isaac Zachariah, dealer of Ballarat and registered as an acting lay Minister of the Ballarat Congregation; Henry Cohen Pirani (assignment), a leader in Melbourne Jewish Education; Philip Blashki, the founder of the well known Melbourne family, later a Vice President of the Chamber of Manufactures. It may be noted that, in 1867, Louis Monash, the father of the famous John Monash, was bankrupt, although on a relatively small scale. He had arrived in Melbourne as a migrant in 1853, becoming a partner, not too long afterwards, with one, Martin, Soft Goods Importers. The biographers are certainly correct in finding that Louis Monash made no fortune as a

Melbourne merchant, and that his affairs were not too prosperous.¹⁰

Most of the Jews listed as insolvents or otherwise in financial difficulties carried on business, as might be expected, in Melbourne or in other centres, such as Ballarat, Geelong and Sandhurst. Others, however, were located in remote or more distant places. Thus, one notices, for example, Lazarus Berlowitz of Molesworth and Alexandra, Woolf Cohen of Alexandra, Joseph Moss of Eldorado, Philip Perlstein of Beechworth and late of Harrierville, Joseph Feldman of Jamieson and Drummond's Point, Morris Davis of Jamieson, Michael and Louis Rosenthal of Pleasant Creek near Ararat, Samuel Alexander of Ararat, Samuel Isaacs of Inglewood, Charles Phillips of Chiltern, Jacob Vandenberg of the Ovens, Levi Levinsohn of Inglewood, Harris Friedlich of Maldon, Nathan Salinger of Pleasant Creek, Julius Max Rosenthal and David Lyons of Donnelly's Creek. Some of those here listed could not have been as successful as others who would have reaped richer rewards, engaged in the less arduous occupation of supplying the needs of the miners. There were many reckless ventures by some of the miners, and when the gold reefs were exhausted, goldfield traders shared in the resulting losses.¹¹

A passing comment would seem to be warranted in noting one of the very few rather large bankruptcies. In 1868, Lawrence Joseph Spyer, described as a Merchant of Queen Street, Melbourne, and resident partner in the firm of L. & S. Spyer, had incurred liabilities of the order of £16,000 a sum which may well be the equivalent, perhaps, of almost one-half million dollars in today's currency. Assuming that there has been no mistake of identity, this same Spyer was in partnership in Sydney, in 1831, with P. J. Cohen. That partnership was wound up, in 1831, when Michael Phillips and others took the necessary insolvency proceedings. Again, in 1837, when Lawrence and his brother Stephen Spyer were in business as partners, Samuel Lyons, who was not noted for any leniency in such cases, prevented their release from prison after they had served three months for being unable to meet their debts. Until about 1865, the firm was trading at Wynyard Square, Sydney under the name of L. S. Spyer & Co., merchants.¹²

As the 'seventies advanced, the Colony of Victoria entered upon a stormy epoch marked by political excitement and the division of the country into camps, the liberal protectionist radicals and — on the other hand — the conservative free traders. Party discipline was very weak, government was unstable and both Houses of Parliament were in conflict with each other. Eventually, business and industry was paralysed and public confidence and credit was shaken. It was, as some said, a rueful time as the "Berry Blight" ultimately spread over the land.¹³

In 1871, Moses and Hirsch Fink, storekeepers of Geelong, assigned their estate. Moses Fink arrived in Geelong from Guernsey, joining his brother, Hirsch, in business. Two of the sons of the former, Benjamin and Theodore were later, as will be mentioned, particularly prominent. Hirsch Fink had been a member of the Committee of the first Geelong Synagogue. About this same time, Philip Cohen, Tobacconist, was insolvent. He is recorded as espousing the cause of Free Trade but with no apparent

success. Solomon Joseph, listed as a broker, faced bankruptcy. He appears to have established the Melbourne Hebrew Literary Society and also published and owned "The Australian Israelite", which first appeared in 1871 and ceased publication about four years later. This most valuable paper, it was stated, was "left to die of starvation".¹⁴ Joseph's insolvency preceded the launching of the paper, so that it was not the cause of his financial difficulties. Then comes the case of the unfortunate Marcus Josephson, Caretaker-*Shamos* of the Melbourne Synagogue and Collector for the Hebrew School. However charitable the Congregation otherwise was, its own employee officials were not objects of their bounty. Josephson was completely rebuffed when he appealed to the Congregation for assistance. He was allowed to suffer the fate of the proverbial "church mouse", with the result that the poor *shamos*, listed as a dealer, filed a schedule showing liabilities of £85. When, in 1872, Lewis Berrick hoped for a further term as collector, *shamos*, and doorkeeper of the Congregation, he failed to secure the appointment in view of his refusal to abandon other business. This turn of events must have contributed to Berrick's voluntary sequestration in his watchmaker business. At this time, also Michael Perl, a Melbourne Importer, underwent a compulsory sequestration, presumably because that kind of business could then have been very hazardous. He afterwards assisted in the Services of the East Melbourne Congregation and, some ten years earlier, Perl was one of those who was particularly helpful to Rabbi Saphir's Palestine Mission. In Geelong, Elias Stone was in business as a jeweller and general storekeeper. He was then the Treasurer of the local Synagogue. Both of the assignees of Stone's estate were fellow Jews, recorded as David Rosenthal, merchant of Melbourne, and Michael Samuel Levy, auctioneer of Geelong. Rosenthal was active in the formation of the first St. Kilda Synagogue, whilst Levy was one to receive special appreciation of his efforts to assist Rabbi Snersohn in raising funds for Jerusalem. He stood, unsuccessfully, in 1876, for the seat of Geelong West. Again, in 1870, Sigismund Jacoby, together with Henry Horwitz, both general storekeepers of Hamilton, assigned their estate. Jacoby was a member of the Hamilton Borough Council, and some years later, was a Councillor of St. Kilda Borough Council. In the field of music and entertainment, there were few Jews involved. In 1872, however, two of them were reduced to bankruptcy, one being Isaac Coleman of Carlton, formerly a Publican, and the other being Barnett Levy of Fitzroy, a Musician. Goldman writes that Coleman was the proprietor of the London Music Hall at which the tenor Braham sang, adding that the orchestra was "under the baton of Barnett Levy, late of the Theatre Royal".

Whether Sir Graham Berry's policies and administration had the effect of setting back progress, is perhaps a moot point, although some felt very strongly that his Government had terrorised the moneyed classes of the community.¹⁵ From the beginning, however, of the 1880's, moderation and compromise began to prevail in government. The Colony regained stability, particularly during the regime of James Service who advocated the mutual interest of classes and adopted reforms of a practical kind. As the *Age* conceded in 1886, "no parliament can show a more imposing

record of great public utility".¹⁶ Capital was flowing into the colony, industry was expanding, and widespread speculation produced an extraordinary land boom during which land values climbed to fantastic levels. Many land and finance companies were being promoted but they offered the investing public too little protection. The government, in 1889, encouraged extravagant borrowing policies. Parliament itself, as Michael Cannon points out in his fascinating story, *The Land Boomers*, "became a sort of land speculators' club",¹⁷ and few, indeed, raised their voice in Parliament against the scandals of the day. From 1891, when the crash came, until 1892, more than 120 public companies went into liquidation, and certain Banks either failed or suspended business. The Colonial Bank, of which Sir Benjamin Benjamin was a director, was forced to close its doors temporarily, but the Imperial Bank, under the leading directorship of Benjamin and others, crashed as a result of its heavy speculations in land deals. As the Lord Mayor of Melbourne, Legislative Councillor and leader of the Melbourne Hebrew Congregation, Benjamin maintained a reputation for the highest rectitude, even if his eventual bankruptcy with the aid of hindsight, could be attributed to imprudent speculation and excessive trust reposed in others. Benjamin, as is well known, incurred heavy losses, filing a schedule that gave the creditors 1s.0d in the £1. He resigned from all public offices held by him — which Benjamin never afterwards resumed — including his position as trustee of the Melbourne Congregation. Benjamin did not avoid the public stigma of bankruptcy, unlike many others who took advantage of the law by entering into secret compositions with their creditors, gaining thereby a complete discharge from insolvency.

Benjamin Josman Fink, a son of Moses Fink, has been described as "the real epitome of the era", starting "so many billowing companies, borrowed so heavily, speculated so widely, failed so disastrously . . . left such a swathe of ruin and despair".¹⁸ Fink was the Independent Member for Maryborough in 1883-89 but his business affairs rapidly and extensively occupied his main interests. Those who wish to do so may refer to Michael Cannon for a full account of Fink's gigantic speculations and financial schemes. Fink's total debts were at least £1,830,000, and his bankruptcy yielded ½d. in the £1 to the creditors. He left Melbourne with his family and died in London in 1909.¹⁹ There is nothing to indicate that he played any role whatever in the affairs of the Jewish community. His younger brother, Theodore, built up a thriving legal practice in Melbourne, one of the partners being P.D. Phillips, son of Solomon Phillips. It seems that Theodore had a special expertise for arranging secret compositions with creditors. Apart from his clients, Theodore himself, his brother Wolfe and father-in-law, George Isaacs, enjoyed the benefit of such compositions.²⁰ It does appear that Theodore Fink had some involvement in Jewish Education, and for a period was on the Executive of the Melbourne Synagogue.^{19a}

P.D. Phillips is sometimes referred to as "a famous barrister" of the day. Most indications are, however, that in a profession that was only theoretically fused as between barristers and solicitors, Phillips practised as

mentioned, P.D. Phillips, described by the Press as "the well known Insolvency practitioner", addressed the Institute of Accountants at the Vienna Cafe, Melbourne on 7 October, 1897. It seems a little strange, indeed, that Phillips was motivated for such an assignment so close to the concluding hours of Yom Kippur, the sacred Day of Atonement. The speaker, however, was able to launch himself into a vigorous attack upon Isaacs's Insolvency legislation which, he said, included retrograde and inoperative clauses, producing, in his view, "a pretty mess in a legal code", for which the Premier, Sir George Turner would have no reason to be proud. The new Act, Phillips continued, included costly, cumbersome and complicated provisions affording little protection to the honest trader and the unfortunate debtor.²⁹

In early times, both under English and Australian law, insolvency was regarded as almost criminal. Provision was made in England, in 1719, for the release of bankrupts from prison after obtaining their certificates of discharge, but it was not until 1869 that imprisonment for debt was abolished subject to certain exceptions in the case of fraudulent debtors. The bankruptcy law ultimately developed so as "to mitigate the severity of the primitive rules which gave creditors the power to secure the imprisonment of their debtors", *Storey v. Lane* ([1981] 55 A.L.J.R. 608, 611). Even today, although rather infrequently, a debtor may be committed to prison because of some fraud or dishonesty in contracting debts or in divesting himself of property or if he has acted in defiance of court orders; *Commissioner for Motor Transport v. Train* ([1972] 127 C.L.R. 396). In the early days of New South Wales, which then of course included Port Phillip, debtors were imprisoned for debt but were discharged unless they were maintained by the creditors: 6 Geo. IV. No. 8 (1825). Under the statute, 11 Geo. IV No. 7 (1830), insolvent debtors who made full disclosure and surrender of their estate were entitled to be discharged out of prison. After the enactment of 2 Wm. IV No. 11 (1832), any person imprisoned and unable to pay his debts, might apply to the court to be discharged and to be permitted to file his schedule. These local procedures were beginning to humanise some of the rigours of the relevant English law. The eminent legal historian and jurist, Sir Henry Maine, noted the severity of the ancient legal systems: "Nothing strikes the scholar and jurist more than this severity of ancient systems of law towards the debtor and the extravagant powers which they lodge in the creditor." In early Athens enslavement for debt was a fundamental law. The Roman Republic extended little mercy for insolvents, but in the time of Julius Caesar a debtor was discharged if he gave up everything to the creditor — *cessio bonorum*. The traditional Jewish ethical teachings, however, in contrast to such systems, were always, at least ideally, markedly different in requiring lenient and kind treatment as between creditor and debtor: "If thou lend money to any of my people who is poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an oppressor." (Ex. 22:24). The Torah emphatically indicates due restraint in demanding payment from the debtor when it is known that he is unable to pay. It is laid down that the debtor must not be harassed if he is without the means of repayment, but the debt may again be demanded when there

is a chance of recovery; Talmud, *Baba Metzia*, 75B. These ethical laws, as a modern commentator writes, stress that the creditor may not even appear as an oppressor towards the debtor: "In other words, when we see someone who owes us money, and he cannot pay us, we should walk on the other side of the street so that he should not see us."³⁰ In this regard, it is difficult to avoid an unfavourable view of the treatment by the Victorian Congregations of some of their own officials whose financial condition forced them into insolvency. One would have hoped that men such as Solomon Phillips, Emanuel Myers and Marcus Josephson, who all appeared "to occupy themselves in faithfulness with the wants of the Congregation", would have earned a reward that would have saved them from the indignity and distress of insolvency.

Even before the disastrous land boom of the 90's, the Victorian economy was far from buoyant. In 1879, the popular parliamentarian, E.L. Zox, accepted a "friendly liquidation" when he and his partner Lewis Myers found themselves in financial difficulties. Although he was not actually bankrupt, Zox decided to resign his seat and was re-elected.³¹ However, the depression of the next decade, which was much more significant, involved some prominent Jewish names. Most valuable as Rabbi Goldman's history is, the author's work barely contains any mention of the role played by some Jews in the sorry and tragic events of the above depression. In three lines, there is only a mention that, "In the calamitous bank and financial crash, another former member of the legislature, Benjamin Josman Fink, fell heavily, filing his schedule to the extent of a deficiency of £1,109,275."³² It is of course true that Goldman did not have the advantage of an account such as Michael Cannon's *the Land Boomers*, but the contemporary newspapers and writings are full of details of the depression and of those who featured in it. It is quite unnecessary, and it is sometimes too easy, to be condemnatory of those whose names come under notice in a period described as being perhaps the supreme crisis of the colony in the Victorian era. It is possible to write fairly and objectively of persons such as B.J. Fink of whom, as Cannon remarks, "His manipulations when the boom collapsed disfigured an otherwise productive career." In his early life, as that same authority observes, Fink "undoubtedly had remarkable acumen and energy, but like many others became obsessed by the land boom of the 1880s".³³ A contemporary who was well familiar with Fink, afterwards wrote of him as "far and away the ablest of all the land boomers", as the "cleverest of all the financiers", and as a subtle and astute man of business, filled with restless energy in the carrying out of his schemes.^{33a} Sometimes linked with Fink, and a leading speculator of the time, was Abraham Kozminsky, who entered into a secret composition in 1892 paying 1d. in the pound when his estate showed a deficiency of £92,266.³⁴ Kozminsky was apparently active in Jewish communal affairs, being the first Treasurer of the re-organised Jewish Aid Society. In 1896, Barnett Hyman Altson, well known as the Melbourne tobacconist, went bankrupt, suffering substantial losses in share deals and other speculation. Altson also took an interest in the affairs of his own community, appearing as one of the Committee of the first United Jewish

the Court decided that the certificate ought to be refused. Justice Molesworth held that the insolvent's evidence was grossly improbable and that the settlement was not a bona fide one. Speaking of the lady's actions, which she claimed were in accordance with her husband's wishes that she should settle all her property on one daughter, the learned Judge said: "No intention of the kind was ever promulgated to add to the young lady's attraction to suitors. This settlement formed no part of the negotiations with the intended husband and was no inducement to the marriage . . ." An appeal, which was taken to the Full Court (Stawell C.J., Barry and Williams J.J.) was dismissed.⁴⁰

Joseph Aarons was the trustee of a deed of assignment made in 1864 by Samuel Barnett for the benefit of all his creditors. Bertram Nathan, a creditor who executed the deed, called on the trustee for a payment of a dividend, but a meeting of creditors directed Aarons to refuse payment of Nathan's claim as there were doubts of the genuineness of the debt. The Equity Court (Molesworth J.) decided that the trustee, Aarons, had a discretion to refuse payment, but Nathan was not ordered to pay any costs as the provisions of the deed had come upon him as a surprise. The Judge was of the opinion that the particular deed ought not to have been hawked about among the creditors for execution by them. It may seem a little strange today that these three Jews were unable to resolve a dispute over a dividend of £25.5.0. without resort to such litigation in the highest courts. The bona fides of the debt was ventilated in public, even if there may also have been argument on some question of principle. Joseph Aarons himself was a builder by trade, he was well known for his activities within the Jewish community and, in the 70's, he was also an Alderman of the Melbourne City Council. The Academy of Music in Bourke Street, which Aarons built, proved to be a financial embarrassment. When Aarons went insolvent and was later granted a certificate of discharge, an appeal was taken to the Full Court of Victoria against the grant of the certificate. The Court dismissed that appeal although a number of allegations had been made against Aarons.⁴¹

Charles Dyte was a man of great popularity in the Ballarat district, he was a local Mayor, leader of the Hebrew Congregation and in the 60's he represented Ballarat as a parliamentarian. His business affairs, however, were not conducted so successfully, and in 1875, Dyte filed his schedule. The Judge in Insolvency in Ballarat granted a certificate of discharge without the payment by Dyte of the statutory sum of seven shillings in the pound. The insolvent believed that his bank, to whom he was indebted for overdrafts, was his only creditor. As a shareholder and mining speculator, Dyte claimed that he met with reverses and misfortunes. He received a legacy from a brother in England, he borrowed money from another brother, Edward, and then purchased a moneybroking business which turned out to be a source of liability. Charles Dyte was also the trustee of The Co-operative Store Company of which a creditor sued Dyte and then levied upon Dyte's property, to the utmost extremity of the law, leaving him without anything. Dyte was therefore anxious to resume his business as an auctioneer and to be able to support his wife and family. When the last

mentioned creditor appealed against the grant of the certificate, Molesworth J. was unfavourably impressed with Dyte's dealings and affairs. His Honour remarked that allowance was always made for unusual misfortunes, which did not include "rash inconsiderable speculations, dealing in a gambling way with mining shares or purchasing a business requiring capital to carry it on, not having that capital". There had been presented "a confused muddle of dealings", as the Judge concluded, ordering that Dyte should pay seven shillings in the pound before the issue of a certificate.⁴² Charles Dyte established a reputation as a man of courage and high principles, and as one who had contributed much in personal service to the general welfare of Ballarat, including the Jewish community in that district. His own financial and business affairs may well have suffered as a result of his involvement in public affairs, particularly at a time when the economy was unstable. Further, there may be reason to doubt whether Dyte had a head for business complexities.

Towards the end of the 80's Abraham Schachtel Abraham failed to obtain an unconditional discharge from the Court of Insolvency. He had been engaged in floating companies, buying company shares and the sale of shares on commission by the company promoters. In dismissing his appeal, the Full Court of Victoria went on to say that the appellant relied only on his own unsupported testimony, and that he had resorted to reckless speculation in land and shares.⁴³ Abraham, it might be noted, had earlier served on the management committee of the Melbourne Jewish Club. Yet another case to reach the Full Court about this time resulted from the attempt by Joseph Davis, a partner with John David Myers in the business of J.D. Myers & Co., to set aside an order for voluntary sequestration obtained by Myers several years earlier during the absence overseas of Davis. The Court declined to set aside the order as Davis gave no good reason for the long delay on his part.⁴⁴

The operations of Theodore Fink came under notice, although only indirectly and briefly, of the Full Court when in 1894 Isaac Isaacs appeared for the appellants, Messrs. Saunders & Levy, who sought to set aside a composition by Fink with his creditors, claiming that their debt should be assessed on a different basis. The Chief Justice, Sir John Madden, pointed out that insolvency had nothing to do with a statutory composition with creditors by which the debtor was enabled to retain his property by arrangement with the creditors, so that it was too late for the appellants to try and dispute the matter.⁴⁵

There are many familiar Rabbinical dicta to the effect that religious learning ought to be combined with practical occupations. As has already been mentioned, several of Victoria's Synagogue officials found it necessary to engage in other occupations from time to time, but they did so, either because their business ventures had failed or for the reason that the Jewish community paid them such meagre rewards for their religious services. Moses Saunders, who joined the Melbourne Congregation in 1876 as a Second Reader, afterwards assigned his estate when he was unable to pay a judgment debt when sued in the Supreme Court by a former Jewish partner. The Congregation refused Saunders's request for an advance of

salary by way of assistance to him in his difficulties. In 1896, the Congregation was concerned to conserve its funds and retrenched Saunders who had become insolvent. After 19 years service with the Melbourne community, he accepted a position with the Perth Congregation.⁴⁶ In the 70's, Maurice Brodzky arrived in Melbourne and tried to earn a living as a teacher in the Hebrew schools until he discovered his niche in journalism. Michael Cannon has traced Brodzky's life and career by devoting a short section in his book and by an entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.⁴⁷ Brodzky was first insolvent after his publication in 1877 of the *Historical Sketch of the Two Melbourne Synagogues*, when the author unsuccessfully sued Rev. E. Blaubaum of St. Kilda for libel. He was related by marriage to Theodore Fink who arranged a voluntary sequestration for Brodzky when he was unable to pay the costs of his litigation. Eight years later Brodzky secured his discharge, and although still in a difficult position, he immediately launched his weekly journal, *Table Talk*. In the next few years this paper achieved an extraordinary standard in so far as it furnished financial news and information and contained disclosures of some of the disastrous speculations and transactions of the period. Not without surprise, Brodzky, a man of rather limited means, exposed himself to defamation proceedings.

The *Ballarat Star*, which Brodzky sued for damages in 1893, had published a brief report of certain remarks in Parliament by Dr. Maloney who, speaking of the so-called "mace slanders", said that Brodzky started the slanders in his "blackmailing" paper. The proprietors of the *Ballarat Star*, for whom Isaacs appeared, sought in the Practice Court before Justice A'Beckett, to have the action stayed until the plaintiff gave security for costs or to have it remitted to the County Court for hearing. The defendants would have been protected if they had published a normal report of parliamentary proceedings, but the case apparently raised an important question of law whether such privilege could be claimed by a paper that contained the above remarks of Dr. Maloney in a very condensed form. On behalf of the defendants, Isaacs submitted that the plaintiff had admitted that he had already made over to his wife all that he possessed in the world, and also that it was absurd for anybody to expect the newspaper to have printed a full report of the remarks in Parliament, particularly when it had to rely upon a telegraphic report. The judge decided that such an important question of law ought to be tried in the Supreme Court, even if a plaintiff were a pauper, adding that it was the defendant's misfortune that it should be so.⁴⁸ The *Melbourne Age*, in a leading article, was very critical of the Court's ruling on this point, urging that it ought to "frown upon speculative or blackmailing actions, which some Messrs. Dodson and Fogg may take up in the hope of getting costs out of a solvent defendant, and that the ruling might prove 'disastrous to the efficiency of an upright and outspoken Press'."⁴⁹

Sir Zelman Cowen, in his major biography of Isaacs, defends his subject against certain contemporary criticism that he neglected his portfolio as Solicitor-General in favour of his private practice at the bar.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, a modern day commentator must find it rather difficult to

appreciate how Isaacs, holding the position of Solicitor-General, so readily acted for private litigants in matters that raised controversial political and public issues. Thus, within a few days only of appearing against Brodzky, Isaacs was briefed on behalf of the Commercial Bank to appear before the Chief Justice to obtain a stay of a winding up Petition against the Bank so as to enable its creditors and shareholders to consider a compromise or arrangement after the Bank was forced to suspend payment to its depositors. Although the Court had no difficulty in acceding to the Bank's motion, it does seem surprising, to say the least, that one with Isaacs's official status should have been seen appearing in a case of such a nature.⁵¹ Perhaps, whatever might be said of present day politics, the niceties of public life were not clearly defined and observed throughout the 19th century in Australia.

Obligated to support a wife and seven children, Maurice Brodzky relied heavily upon his business as a journalist. The profits from the publication of *Table Talk* provided him with a living until about 1902, when Brodzky was declared insolvent as a result of his failure to pay a verdict recovered against him in a libel action by F.H. Bromley, M.L.A. This was the end, in Victoria, of Brodzky's provocative and sometimes brilliant journalism. Early in his career, as has been previously indicated, he published two booklets, one being a useful brief history of the Melbourne synagogues, while the other was a novelette, caricature type biography of Dr. David Hailperin, entitled *Genius, Lunacy and Knavery*. This last-named effort, written around the life of an apparently eccentric colonial physician and Jewish scholar, showed Brodzky to be a very imaginative writer, even if the immediate result might be regarded as a cheap skit on orthodox Judaism. It is, therefore, by no means strange that the Jewish community offered no scope for Brodzky's talents and that he seems to have made no impact within that community. In 1896, for example, he is recorded as being in attendance at the first annual meeting of the new United Jewish Education Board. Given permission to address the meeting, he remarked that no place in the whole world was so badly served as Melbourne in Jewish educational matters. Stating — amidst dissent — that the average possessions of Jews in Melbourne were higher than elsewhere, Brodzky deplored that Jewish children were being educated in Christian colleges, away from Jewish influences. "Where was the better class Jewish boy," the speaker asked, "to get his spiritual and moral instruction?" Brodzky was finally ruled out of order by the Chairman, P. Blashki, when he suggested that the Board's laws be altered to permit it to provide secular as well as Hebrew and religious instructions. The speaker, the Chairman pointed out, seemed to be travelling beyond limits in his discussion and he was decidedly of the opinion that the meeting had to consider the annual report and not the laws of the Board. The Chairman also acted very firmly when he stated that he would decline to take any part in the work of the Board if the Attorney-General, the Hon. I.A. Isaacs was re-elected as President, seeing that "from the eminence of his position and the great pressure of his private affairs", Isaacs had not been able to devote any attention to the needs of the Board. Isaacs was nominated as President by Edward Marks and

Moritz Michaelis and a ballot was taken, the Rev. Dr. Abrahams acting as one of the scrutineers. In the result, Blashki was declared elected as President. Amongst those elected to the Committee were Theodore Fink and M. Brodzky. The meeting was poorly attended and perhaps Fink secured Brodzky's appointment to the Committee. Shortly afterwards, the United Education Board created the position of Patron, and a deputation consisting of Dr. Abrahams, Rev. Blaubaum, Rev. J. Lenzer and Maurice Brodzky failed to induce Isaacs to allow his name to appear on the report and circulars of the Society as patron. Isaac's brother John, who was then member of Ovens in the Assembly, is recorded as withdrawing his support from the Education Board at this time.⁵² It may be inferred that Isaac Isaacs was resentful of the opposition towards him by Blashki and others. He was undoubtedly, as Sir Zelman Cowen mentions, a man of enormous energy, but his connections with the Jewish community and religious life became quite tenuous — a conclusion properly and fairly drawn by that distinguished author.

NOTES

1. S.H. Roberts, *The Squatting Age in Australia*, (1935), p.248; J.B. Cooper, *Victorian Commerce, 1834-1934*.
2. *Sydney Herald*, 16 October 1843
3. N.S.W. Governors' Despatches, Vol.44, which includes Select Committee's Report on the Insolvent Act and Minutes of Evidence
4. S.H. Roberts, *supra*, pp.224-233
5. Robert Caldwell, *The Gold Era of Victoria*, pp.239-247; James Griffin, *Essays in Economic History of Australia 1788-1939*, at p.119, *The Golden Decade* by Richard Cotter
6. Caldwell, *supra*, p.44
7. Ambrose Pratt, *The Centenary History of Victoria* (1934); J. Smith, *Cyclopedia of Victoria*, Vol.1 pp.50-51
8. L.M. Goldman, *The Jews in Victoria in the 19th Century*, p.277
9. Goldman, *supra*, p.178
10. A.J. Smithers, *Sir John Monash*, (1973), p.16; Cecil Edwards, *John Monash* (1970), pp.3-7
11. *The Discovery of the Woods Point Goldfield* by H.J. Stackeppole, *The Victorian Historical Magazine*, Vol.37, pp.50-72
12. A.J.H.S. *Journals*, Vol.8, pp.51-77; Vol.5, pp.238-39; Levi & Bergman, *Australian Genesis* (1974), p.203
13. J. Smith, *supra*, pp.50-52
14. A.J.H.S. *Journal*, Vol.1, p.310
15. *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol.3, p.154, Sir Graham Berry by Geoffrey Bartlett
16. A.D.B., Vol.6, p.109, James Service by Geoffrey Serle

17. Cannon (1967), p.29
18. Ibid, p.148
19. A.D.B., Vol.4, pp.168-69, B.J. Fink by Michael Cannon; see also, Obituary by Archie Michaelis in A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol.1, pp.255-56. I am informed by Isidor Solomon of Melbourne, that B.J. Fink was 62 years of age when he died at Port Said, en route to Australia. His ashes were placed in an elaborate memorial in the Jewish section of the Melbourne General Cemetery at Carlton. His epitaph reads: "Sleep after a life of toil and suffering" (J. Solomon, Melbourne Hebrew Congregation Newsletter, Sept. 1971, p.7)
- 19a. For biographical details of B.J. & T. Fink, see Table Talk, 9 Dec. 1892; 12 May, 1893
20. Cannon, Land Boomers, p.145
21. Ibid, p.143, 146
22. Ibid, p.235, note 208
23. Treatise On Insolvency Law, at p.5
24. Ibid, p.2
25. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol.4, by R. Apple; Vol.1 by Victor Cohen, p.80, p.208
26. Parliamentary Debates, Victoria, Vol.81 (1896), pp.543-554
27. Ibid, Vol.83, p.2520; A.D.B., Vol.5, p.83 by L.E. Fredman
28. Ibid, Vol.83, pp.3437-39; see A.D.B., Vol.5, pp.82-83, Nathaniel Levi by L.E. Fredman
29. Age, 8 Oct. 1897
30. Herbert S. Goldstein, Between the Lines of the Bible, pp.39-40
31. A.J.H.S. Journal, Vol.8, p.111 by M. Lazarus
32. Goldman, supra, p.373
33. Cannon, A.D.B., Vol.4, p.169
- 33a. George Mendell, The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift, pp.26-27
34. Cannon, Land Boomers, p.212
35. Ibid, p.213
36. Ibid, pp.211-213
37. Melbourne Herald, 23 March 1849
38. Ibid, 8 March, 1849
39. Ibid, 6 March, 1849
40. W, W & A'B (1864), 45 (I)
41. 6 V.L.R. (1880) 56
42. II V.L.R. (1876)
43. (1890) V.L.R. 706
44. 17 V.L.R. (1891) 351
45. 20 V.L.R. (1894) 223
46. The Australian Hebrew, Vol.1, 14 Feb. 1896
47. A.D.B., Vol.7, pp.419-20
48. Age, 12 April, 1893
49. Ibid, 14 April, 1893
50. Isaac Isaacs by Zelman Cowen, p.26
51. Age, 15 April, 1893
52. The Australian Hebrew, Vol.1, pp.308, 370

THE JEWISH NATIONAL FUND AS SEEN BY AUSTRALIAN AND BRITISH SECURITY FORCES DURING WORLD WAR I

by
E. Fried, B.A. (Hons.)†

When a country is in a state of war it is common, indeed natural, for Intelligence Agencies to concern themselves with organisations which have international networks. It is therefore hardly surprising that the J.N.F. attracted the attention of British Intelligence soon after the outbreak of hostilities.

An examination of the U.K. Articles of Association of the J.N.F. (1907) quickly allayed the fears of the guardians of British security. Of the three founding directors of J.N.F. (London), Dr. Wolfsohn of Cologne, the only foreigner, was dead. Of the remaining two, Jacob Moser was a former Mayor of Bradford and Leonard Greenburg was a well known and respected Londoner. By the time the investigation began, these were joined by C.H. Weizman who held a Chair at Manchester University and Claude Montefiore, who was at the time the President of the Anglo-Jewish Association. The investigation of the London branch of the J.N.F. was therefore concluded with the following summary:

“... the London branch seems to be an influential one, and has the support of distinguished Jews whose loyalty to British interests cannot reasonably be doubted. (Mr. Montefiore and Dr. Weizman for instance).”

Nevertheless, the international character of the Fund was the cause of periodic concern. These fears were further augmented by the predominance of German and Austrian Jews in the hierarchy of the J.N.F.'s Central Bureau which had its headquarters in the Hague. The sudden realisation that Kaplansky, an active functionary of the Central Bureau, was also a well known Russian Socialist with close links to Poalei Zion² contributed to the concern of the Intelligence Agencies.

Further investigation of the Central Bureau revealed the following information on the nationalities of its members:

Governors:

Otto Warburg, Professor of Zoology, Berlin.

Jacob H. Kann, Banker, The Hague.

Directors:

Max Bodenheimer, Counsellor at Law, Cologne.

Arthur Hantke, Counsellor at Law, Berlin.

Leopold Kessler, Consulting Engineer, London.

Johann Kremenevsky, Electrical Engineer, Vienna.

E. Tschelenow, Physician, Moscow.

Controlling Committee:

Otto Warburg, Professor of Zoology, Berlin.

Victor Jacobson, Doctor of Philosophy, Copenhagen.

Arthur Hantke, Counsellor at Law, Berlin.
Shmaryah Lewin, Doctor of Philosophy, New York.
Nahum Sokolow, Author, London.
E. Tschelenow, Physician, Moscow.

Clearly, the directorate of the J.N.F. had a predominant membership of citizens of the Central Powers. The investigators nevertheless concluded that even though there existed a:

“ . . . slight preponderance on the directorate of Jews in Germany and Austria over those in England and Russia and (though) the headquarters were in Germany before the War . . . the Zionists would welcome rather than otherwise a British protectorate over Palestine, as likely to provide a more peaceful environment than the present Turkish domination.”³

Besides the directorate, there was one group within the J.N.F. which, because of the nature of its work, tended to attract attention. The principal task of this group was to promote Zionism and to raise funds for the War Land Fund.⁴ Therefore, members of this group were constantly attracting the attention of the Press and, of course, of various Intelligence Agencies. The group consisted of Israel Cohen (London), Dr. D. Thon (Cracow), Dr. E. Zweig (Austria), J. Oettinger (Austria), and Adolf Boehn (Austria).

Israel Cohen was born in Manchester in 1879. In 1914 he was in Cologne as the Secretary of the “Action Group”. Interned, he spent 19 months in the Ruhleben Prisoner of War Camp. On his return to England in June 1916, he resumed his work for the J.N.F. He was engaged to translate a number of articles for the Jewish-American Press and he also wrote and published a book. One of the articles he translated attracted the attention of the American authorities who handed over the matter to British Intelligence. It soon became apparent that even though the J.N.F., due to its international character, remained studiously non-partisan and at no time did it display pro-German sentiments, it was most emphatically anti-Russian. In fact, the whole tenor of J.N.F. polemics was directed against Russia. The article translated by Cohen and written by Dr. Thon of Cracow described the miserable conditions of Jews in Galicia. It further described the retreat of the Russian Army in Debia, West Galicia, of which Thon caustically wrote:

“Out of 125 houses destroyed by fire during the Russian retreat in 1915, only 123 belonged to Jews.”⁵

Such an article was an obvious embarrassment to the British Government and the censor refused to allow its publication.

In Australia the J.N.F. came to the notice of Central Intelligence in circumstances which can today be described as comical. In July 1917, a letter addressed to “Berliner Blechem-ballage-Fabrik” (sic) from the Fund’s headquarters at The Hague, miraculously found its way to Wellington, N.Z. The letter referred to a consignment of 500 **Buchsen**

which was to be sent by the Fund to Berlin. Alarm bells were sounded and an investigation into the activities of the Fund was launched. The translator had interpreted the word **Buchsen** as “firearms or muskets” which indeed it can mean. However, in late August communication was received from Rotterdam pointing out that the word also means “cans/tins or small boxes”. The embarrassed Intelligence Offices in Australia promptly dropped the whole matter, but not before A. Mutz, the Australian President of the J.N.F., was subjected to intense questioning. He agreed to make all J.N.F. books and records available to the authorities for inspection. These revealed that in the year ending 31st December 1916, the total receipts of the Association amounted to £293/16/1d., of which £44/14/1d. was sent to the London J.N.F.

A report filed with the Secretary, Prime Minister’s Department, concluded that “all Executive Officers (of the J.N.F.) are well known loyal citizens”.⁶ It then added that “the question as to whether the Jewish Colonial Trust is under enemy influence is being investigated in London and on receipt of advice you will be advised further”.⁷

Though the affair arising from the mistranslation was closed, the Australian Censor continued to scan all the incoming mail of the Fund. Despite repeated assurances from British Intelligence that the members of the London Branch of the J.N.F. were citizens of unquestioned loyalty, the Australian Intelligence authorities remained suspicious. In the summary to the Secretary, Prime Minister’s Department, the report made the following points:

1. The funds collected in Australia and in the other countries of the Entente were sent to Palestine.
2. That this could not but help provide and maintain enemy subjects in employment.
3. That booklets of stamps sent to J.N.F. Melbourne by the Central Bureau for fund-raising purposes bore a portrait of Dr. Wolfsohn with a **German** inscription.

The report concluded:

“It would be easy to give much further evidence against the present activities of the J.N.F. but I think there is sufficient in the above to prove the undesirability of this work being allowed to continue.”⁸

The difference of approach between the two Intelligence Services probably reflects different degrees of sophistication. It seems that the Prime Minister’s Department did not act on the above report and no further action was taken against the J.N.F.

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1. P.M. Dept. Correspondence Files, SC (Secret and Confidential) Series. Regd. No. 17/18/483. Item 17 (4).

2. Poalei Zion was a pacifist organisation opposed to the War effort.
 3. No. 17/18/483 p. 6.
 4. This was started in April, 1915 by Dr. Gerson Zipper and Dr. Zweig.
 5. No. 17/18/483 p. 3.
 6. No. 17/11/483 p. 1.
 7. *Ibid.*, p. 2.
 8. No. 17/18/483 p. 4.
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THE HUMANIST JEW
THE FAMILY OF ELIAS AND REBECCA ELLIS

Compiled by
M. Chapman
Craftsman Press Pty. Ltd. (Hawthorn)

Genealogy has been described as the illumination of history and it is certainly a phenomenon of our times that genealogy has been increasingly used as the tool to illustrate historical studies. Genealogy does indeed have its own fascination and an ever-growing army of enthusiastic researchers have been climbing their family trees in recent years. More and more people are being led to an understanding of their own roots, origins, traditions and to learn more about themselves by looking at the lives of their forebears. There has been a mushrooming of "self-help" genealogical groups and the older learned societies devoted to the pursuit of genealogy have experienced an unprecedented growth in enquiries and expansion of their membership. Amongst this world wide growth an increasing number of Australian Jews, too, have become interested in their families; and the past few years has seen a spate of privately published booklets, newsheets and even full scale books concerning the spread of widely ramified kith and kin from early progenitors. These publications have represented the fruits of much labour and have followed a great deal of painstaking research, sifting of material and extensive collation of scattered lines often world wide. As an obsessive genealogical delver myself, I have found this trend entirely commendable, and I have enjoyed greatly being involved in some of the work. *The Humanist Jew* has been an interesting and valuable addition to the publications of this nature that have been emerging; and I am pleased to have an opportunity of discussing it here. Although the frontispiece announces that the work has been "compiled by Meg Chapman" (and indeed she is deserving of much credit for it) it is apparent that other genealogical enthusiasts have been deeply involved. In fact, several inter-related people have all made major contributions to it and notably Arch Ellis, who has written a preface and whose enterprise has well complemented Meg Chapman's.

The book starts by tracing the lives and fortunes of two early Anglo-Jewish migrants to Australia (Elias Ellis and his wife Rebecca, nee Levey). There follow individual sections on the lives of each of Elias and Rebecca's surviving eleven children (three children apparently died in infancy) and within each section is a survey of the further descendants from each child covering as many generations as have arisen until the present day. At the outset of each biographical sub-section there is listed in genealogical sequence all the further descendants of that branch which makes it clearer to see how the family is constructed. At the end of each biographical sub-section is appended a most useful list of references including frequently full or partial excerpts from such primary sources as birth or death certificates, grants of probate (including wills), newspaper obituary notices etc. Following all the individual biography sections, there is a collection of 169

photographs covering many individual members of the family, groups, buildings and places relevant to their lives. There is a useful index to all the photographs and much explanatory information to each one, but it is a matter of minor irritation that this part is slightly separated from the pictures, necessitating to-ing and fro-ing between text and photographs. Finally, there is an extended (and extensible) family tree chart tabulating all the lines of the family, and that, also, has been referenced and has an indexed list of names to assist the reader. The whole comes over very effectively and the overall impression is of a workmanlike production, carefully planned and with much attention to detail and commendably devoted to clarity of style and layout.

It has to be expected that some data may be inaccurate or some approaches may be at variance with most interpretations of events. Arch Ellis anticipates this to some extent by providing his address and inviting people who discover errors to send them to him for correction in a later edition. My major reservations concern the Introduction — with some parts of which I disagree. I would not quarrel with the opening statement of philosophy suggesting that Elias and Rebecca Ellis and their family is in many ways very typical of the pioneer Australian Jewish families and how they lived and evolved. Further, I would agree that as early Australian society was developing, much of European Jewry was then experiencing a loosening of its bonds. The walls of many a European ghetto were indeed being broken down in the late 18th century (the age of reason and enlightenment) and the erstwhile inhabitants of these claustrophobic and often depressing quarters suddenly found themselves with hitherto unsuspected freedoms. Jews entering Australia have always been on an equal footing to others. The convict transportees were all treated equally badly and all the free-settlers had identical opportunities for advancement, irrespective of their origins. However, the relationships between the Jews and their gentile "host" societies, in England and throughout Europe generally, were very complex. The account given is considerably over simplified and is portrayed in a somewhat romantic light. Perhaps a more pointed criticism can be levelled at the passage treating Levi Barent Cohen whose actual relationship to the Ellis family is probably zero. When I read that Levi Barent Cohen had arrived in London in 1670 I thought it was a misprint for 1770 since this latter year is about correct. He was born in Holland in 1747, which would have made it difficult for him to have come to England in 1670 in any case. However, reading on, I learn that the unborn, at the time, arch-ancestor of a powerful section of a later era of Anglo-Jewry is supposed to have opened the first Ashkenazi Synagogue in London in 1690: so, I suspect that these were no misprints and are simply complete errors of fact. There is a confusing reference to Ashkenazi/Sephardi relationships implying that, although Levi Barent Cohen was Ashkenazi, the patrician Sephardi established Anglo-Jewish families such as the Moccattas, Montefiores, Sebags etc. were only too happy to ally themselves with him. In fact, Ashkenazi/Sephardi relationships were nearly always at best uneasy and often hostile, especially from the Sephardi side. It is true that sufficient wealth could help break down these

barriers, but it was not a smooth or easily undergone process. However, all of this musing and the muddling of Levi Barent Cohen's function in Anglo-Jewry by a century is somewhat irrelevant to the point as there is no evidence that Levi Barent Cohen's family had any connection with the Ellis or Levey families. If several research papers do link the families they have produced no specific genealogical evidence to support their desired conclusion. Rebecca Levey's father was a cousin of Sierlah Levy who married Burnett Cohen; and this latter Cohen stands perhaps very similarly placed as an arch-ancestor of a powerful later era of Australian Jewry as his namesake Cohen did for Anglo-Jewry (as I mentioned). Various of the prolific descendants of Burnett and Sierlah Cohen have made the claim of kinship to Levi Barent Cohen and the Rothschild connection but I have never seen any documentary evidence to support such a claim. The usual argument adduced is an alleged resemblance of photographs of descendants of each side but such 'proofs' should always be viewed with the greatest reservation. I would feel therefore that the story of the Ellis (and Levey) migration to Australia is best told without reference to any kind to Levi Barent Cohen.

The most likely reason for Elias and Rebecca Ellis coming to Australia is because of Rebecca's connections. Two of her brothers, Barnet Levey and Solomon Levey, made a great impact in New South Wales and the stories of their lives have been told on numerous occasions already. Two other sisters and their husbands came to Australia and it is therefore perhaps not so surprising that the Ellis couple should also feel their future lay there. An important aspect of the Ellis family experience, as well as the Levey connection, is the degree with which the families inter-married amongst the non-Jewish community. Frequently, treatment of this subject either adopts a reproving tone that such things should happen, or, gives an undue emphasis on the importance of the Jewish element in later completely assimilated descendants. In *The Humanist Jew* the detailing of such matters seems to me to be fairly objective, avoiding belittling the Jewish origins into insignificance but at the same time realising and accepting that in a young community, with few suitable marriage partners, such situations are inevitable with consequent dilution of the Jewish impact. Naturally, where such matters happen and individuals have strong views opposing such marriages, individual distress will occur; and this point is brought out usefully without destroying the balance of the theme I have been discussing.

I note that a second volume on the Ellis family is planned and it is proposed to trace therein the further story of succeeding generations of the clan. I look forward with anticipation to its appearance which, if it sustains the quality of the current volume, will be well deserving of study.

— Dr. A. P. Joseph

SIR ISAAC ISAACS

by

*Zelman Cowen, Melbourne University Press, 1979***SIR JOHN MONASH**

by

Bernard Callinan, Melbourne University Press, 1981

The subjects of the second and third in the series of the Daniel Mannix Memorial Lectures were Sir Isaac Isaacs and Sir John Monash, delivered respectively under the auspices of the Newman College Students' Club (Melbourne) on 29 June 1978 by Sir Zelman Cowen and on 17 June 1980, by Bernard Callinan. The aim of these lectures, which honour the memory of Archbishop Mannix, is apparently to focus attention on great Australian leaders of the past and to emphasise the need for courage and principle in leadership. The lectures have since been published by the Melbourne University Press in booklet form of about 30 pages each, including two portrait illustrations. Both of the authors have attempted an essay in biography and, as I have indicated, the object has been to distil the fine and outstanding qualities of leadership from the life and work of such eminent Australians. Every student of the broad canvas of our national history would assuredly profit by a careful reading of these two texts. Mature school students ought to be encouraged to assimilate the content of these lectures, for they would both provide an appropriate discipline and mental stimulus to the youthful mind. One would hope, also, that these comments may have a special relevance particularly for the Jewish reader, whether historian, school pupil, or our co-religionists in general. Few, indeed, would not already have acquired some basic familiarity with the facts about the lives of Isaacs and Monash, including the significance of their contributions to the development of Australia as a nation.

Sir Zelman Cowen is naturally the obvious author on Isaacs, seeing that he had previously written a biography which it will be difficult to excel. Although he wrote from a complex of reasons, he had a special interest in a fellow Jew who made for himself a brilliant career in this country. However, as Sir Zelman notes, the memory of Isaacs has grown faint. He was one who, even as a High Court Judge, was readily swayed by patriotic and imperial feelings which, as our author remarks, later also coloured Isaacs' stand on the question of "political Zionism". His earlier career as a lawyer and politician are briefly traced, noticing that Isaacs was prominent in the Constitutional Convention of 1897-98, that he was Commonwealth Attorney General in 1905, a High Court Justice in 1906, and Chief Justice for a few months prior to his appointment as the first Australian born Governor General in 1931 — appointed on the nomination of the Australian Government. His legal learning, intellectual capacity, his dedication and energy, were extraordinary. Yet, as the lecturer rightly observes, Isaacs revealed an "appalling certainty" in all his opinions and convictions which, we are reminded, was particularly true in his strong objections to Zionism. As a member of the Bench he consistently strove to

uphold the central power vested in the Commonwealth under the Constitution.

A good biography never appears to be an exercise in adulation, and it must be recognised that Isaacs suffers from the defects of his greatness. He was an egocentric and dogmatic personality, and in his final comments, whilst conceding that Isaacs ranks as a major national figure, Sir Zelman Cowen adds that he remained remote from the Jewish community and that he raised issues that were "deeply divisive" for his co-religionists.

In his lecture on Monash, the author, Bernard Callinan, points out that Monash came from a family of standing and substance, that he had a number of Rabbis among his forbears, and a grandfather who founded a well known Hebrew publishing firm. He could also have mentioned that the Jewish historian, Graetz, had ties with his family. It is interesting to notice the cultural influence of the mother of the young John Monash which, in some respects, resembled the maternal influence to which Isaacs was subject. At a time when diversions and entertainments were not as many as they are today, we learn that Monash had a passion for knowledge on a wide scale, and that he completed University courses in Engineering, Arts and Law, finally emerging as a successful Civil Engineer. As one would expect, the greater part of this biographical essay concentrates attention on Monash as a military leader in World War I. The author stresses Monash's care in the preparation, and his lucidity in exposition, of operations, winning recognition as an outstanding Commander — perhaps one of the very best Generals of his time.

On his return to Australia at the end of the War, it was Monash who "came nearest to the universal hero figure". Callinan believes that Monash was "socially unassertive", although there were some who regarded him as egotistical. He had hoped that he might have been rewarded by an appointment as State Governor but perhaps the time had not yet come for such a radical step. The last phase of his career finds Monash in charge of the Yallourn brown coal project, as head of the new State Electricity Commission. This assignment was certainly no sinecure and the appointee succeeded in firmly laying the foundation of a Government enterprise that was of critical importance for the future welfare of Victoria.

Today, just 50 years after the death of Sir John Monash, occasional doubts are still sometimes raised about the nature of his military achievements. Many questions should be resolved when Dr. Geoffrey Serle completes the biography of Monash on which he has embarked, noting that he alone will have had the advantage of having the personal papers of his subject at his disposal. But, even if the serious Jewish reader will appreciate historical biography of the present type, he would wish to understand the impact of racial and religious background, including family tradition in the extraordinary careers of men such as Isaacs and Monash. In some instances, although not so much in the case of Monash, explanations may even be sought, negatively, so to speak, in the attempt of the particular subject to react against and to play down his background. Neither of the above publications, however, do more than to contain a passing hint about these aspects of the personalities under consideration. As regards Monash,

there is, in any event, a consensus that he sought active identification with the Jewish community. Perhaps it is not generally known that his coat-of-arms was surmounted by a crest in the form of the lion of Judah, denoting thereby his Jewish origin.

Both of these booklets are printed in an attractive format, they are modestly priced at \$2.80 each, and they provide the reader, in each case, with a penetrating biographical sketch of a notable Australian whose contributions are in danger of being forgotten, not only by the general public, but even by others who should now be induced to make closer studies of their lives as Australians of Jewish origin.

M.Z.F.

BACKYARD OF MARS
Memoirs of the "Reffo" Period in Australia

by
Emery Barcs
Wildcat Press, Sydney (1980)
227 pages. \$14.95

Martin Buber teaches that one generation passes on to the next a memory which has gained in scope for "new destiny and new emotional life were constantly accruing to it". The "memory" recorded in *Backyard of Mars*, confirms this premise. Its title indicates the mental attitude of "Reffos", who, after having fled a hostile and war-threatened Europe, found themselves begrudgingly taken in here, then relegated to various internment camps around Australia.

Emery Barcs, the author, is today a well-known and highly respected journalist and commentator, semi-retired. He was amongst the first Jewish refugees to come from Mussolini's Italy of 1938. Hungarian born, Barcs was working in Italy as a correspondent for a firm of Hungarian newspapers, and was only one of a great number of educated and cultured people, doctors, dentists, academics, businessmen, rabbis, literary figures and artists to come to Australia at that time. Rumour had it then that many Hungarians, Rumanians, Germans, Poles and others had come here with vast wealth, secretly removed from Europe. We were suspicious and resentful of them — they found us prejudiced and insular, apathetic about the rest of the world. One ship bringing European internees via England to Australia during the War, the *Dunera*, contained about 200 Jews, including 10 or 12 qualified rabbis. But behind the bitterness of Barcs' memories there is humour. If one can find things to smile about when recalling the mid-20th century's negative destructive elements of violence, blood shed, discrimination and civil hostility engendered by racial, religious or political differences, then that should be welcomed.

But *Backyard of Mars* is important also because it gives a highly

personalized, subjective account of what happened here more than 40 years ago — the first of its kind. Reading it today one compares the situation with an Australian society now made up of 40 per cent of people either born overseas or who are first generation migrants — and including upwards of 100 different ethnic groups. This statistical and cultural fact of our life shows up the real value of Emery Barcs' book.

Just one example of the wry humour to emerge (in today's light) from the work is the anecdote Barcs recounts from his close association with Desiderius Orban, who had already been a confident, established artist in Europe. Both men had received call-up notices to the same Labour Camp:

"I can't recall what happened at the Drill Hall, but I remember walking up and down in front of a military depot in the Sydney Showground with Dezso (who 'anglicised' his name to Desiderius) Orban. The discovery that we would probably toil for King and Country in the same unit came as a pleasant surprise for both of us. Dezso, though he had seen his 57th birthday, felt not in the least dismayed about becoming a uniformed labourer.

'At last,' he said, 'I have managed to become something in Australia. I won't have any time for painting, so will cease my completely unprofitable efforts, which means that I shall not spend money I don't earn.'

'Besides,' he added, 'for me this thing has come just when I had finally decided that if there are any people in the world who will never be interested in art then they are the Australians. Art has no past, present or future here.'

Sitting in a big hall on one of a dozen wooden benches with other civilians, Dezso and I had just finished eating our cut lunches when I heard our names called from a door at the far end:

'Mr. D. Orban, Mr. E. Barcs,' bellowed a corporal. Dezso yawned, got up, and followed me to the door. The NCO ticked off our names then said with a broad grin: 'You know why I have called you Mister?' And without waiting for an answer, continued, 'Because it will be a long time before anybody calls you Mister again.'

Dezso, who had served as an artillery officer in the Austrian-Hungarian army in World War I, let out a loud brouhaha and I followed his example. The corporal, with the tolerant smile of a man whose irresistible humour had scored another hit, patted us on the back as we crossed the threshold."

This passage holds ironic humour when it is realised that Orban, today approaching his 98th birthday and having held a superb retrospective exhibition 10 years ago at the National Art Gallery of New South Wales, is regarded as a foremost teacher of art. He encourages individual creative work from his students.

If these are the "Reffos" we accepted so reluctantly a generation ago who, when recalling the past may laugh with us, and judge us today with affectionate humour, there is hope for our future.

Louise Rosenberg

MAKING AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY.

THE JEWS, (*Nelson*)

by

Rabbi Raymond Apple

In 105 pages the author of this book succeeds to a significant extent to make non-Jewish people, in at least the larger cities of Australia, as familiar with Jews and their customs as are the citizens of parts of U.S.A. In New York, as one would expect, Jewish people are fully integrated into society, and their language, customs, religious observances and Yiddish are not infrequently well known to the general community, and most are familiar with Jewish terms and observances.

Until the last forty or fifty years, and in some places today in Australia, Jewish customs, achievements and beliefs were generally very little known, or known adversely. A few celebrated figures were recognised as Jews, but on the whole our people were considered "a race apart". Fortunately there has been an improvement in knowledge of our beliefs, achievements, and customs, and our rights. One of the factors in this development has been the direct influence of the Rabbis and communal leaders who have embarked on a positive education programme to place the Jews and their beliefs in proper perspective. There are others, too, such as the efforts of the Australian Jewish Historical Society, Jewish writers generally, communal organisations and civic participation on occasions.

This book by Rabbi Apple is designed to clarify the position of Jewish citizens as an integral part of the general community, the wide ranging contributions they have made at all times to the growth of Australia as part of their unique heritage from the past, and the basic principles of their religious beliefs.

Rabbi Apple leaves the reader in no doubt of the universality of Jewish culture and Jewish contributions to whatever country they inhabit as home, and he traces the parts they played in the Australian scene, from the country's inception in 1788, with the consummate skill we come to expect, and indeed get, from him.

All aspects of Jewish life from its origins in antiquity, its emergence in the Bible, and in the prison colony of N.S.W., to an honoured place in the professions and government, are treated with sympathetic understanding, clarity of expression and authority. It was obviously written to be understood — simple, factual, logical; it is one of a series to rank with others to make up a comprehensive picture of Australian society, and the part played by each component. "The Jews" is a worthy segment depicting the gradual development from a small band of men with a proud largely unknown heritage, to influential communities rich in material and spiritual assets, with developed traditional Jewish institutions, a general adherence to religious beliefs, and an awakening to the need to strengthen communal ties with synagogues and Torah.

The format of the book is attractive, convenient for study and reference.

The index is adequate and the suggested follow-up activities helpful. Pictures are carefully selected and add to the general appearance and effectiveness of the text.

I consider this book is a worthwhile addition to Jewish literature in Australia, worthy of a place in every library and school.

The comprehensive review by Louise Rosenberg (*Great Synagogue*, May, 1981) is such a well balanced analysis of historical events, that I consider it unnecessary to repeat the points so ably expressed by her. The two reviews taken in conjunction should do much to enlighten readers generally, and to remove misconceptions about Jewish beliefs and history.

M. H. Kellerman

AN AUSTRALIAN MINISTRY

by
Rabbi Fabian

An Australian Ministry by Rabbi Dr. Alfred Fabian is a worthy addition to the growing volume of literature on Australian Jewry by Australian authors.

The author, a Rabbi with extensive experience as a minister in three Australian States, and as a European scholar, presented his work in the form of an anthology. His material is carefully selected and classified into eight sections, five of them on Australian institutions, problems and development. In no sense can it be considered a history, but it portrays an historical sense inasmuch as it consists of a collection of sermons, articles and papers analysing, evaluating and criticising current events and social problems that constitute history.

“The Man and his Mission” could well be the title of the splendid review of this book written by Rabbi Apple. (*Jewish Times*, 2 April, 1981.) The reviewer highlights the application of the author’s integrity, profound scholarship, and love of Judaism, keen logical powers of analysis, broad experience, and humane regard for his fellow man, to the diverse problems encountered by Jewry during the past forty years, and to his contribution towards improving our Jewish identity.

Rabbi Fabian displays a real historical sense, a keenness for well researched material and skill in selecting relevant and significant facts. Added to these are his logical approach to problems, his skill in presenting points of view, and his fine choice of language. The result is a series of topics, arranged thematically on vital questions exercising the minds of the community at the time — migration, growth of congregations, Israel, education, conferences and public opinion, and above all the practice of Judaism — the whole a valuable basis for the historical study of the development of the Australian Jewish population and its integration into world Jewry. If he had given us no more than the history of B’nai Berith,

Jewish Chaplains, Jewish Students in Universities, and the growth of the North Shore Synagogue it would have been sufficient. But he has given us much more.

I consider this book would be excellent for basic background material for High School pupils to study for content, debates, lectures and essay construction. Here they would have guidelines on current affairs, Judaism as a way of life, Jewish history, and the incentive to delve more deeply into many facets of Jewish affairs often taken for granted or ignored.

Rabbi Fabian suggests that some of his material may have become dated and irrelevant today, but his insight into current affairs has kept them as significant today as examples for historical treatment as they were twenty or thirty years ago.

There is much to learn from this book, from the study of its logical presentation of ascertainable facts, its emotional appeal to readers and listeners and the diversity of subjects in its contents.

I echo Rabbi Apple's words, "a book for thinking Australian Jewry to purchase and ponder" and add, "for young people to study".

M. H. Kellerman

SECRETARY'S REPORT

This Society has been involved in important and exciting events during the past few months, rather than in its serious basic tasks of researching, recording and collecting original source material and data. Following the visit here of the President of the American Jewish Historical Society, Mr. Saul Viener, and his wife, Jacequeline (nee Wolman), in the early months of 1981, Jill Balkind went to America and represented us at the Conference of the American Society, in New York, where she read out a message from our President, Mr. M. Z. Forbes. After this it was agreed that Mrs. Balkind would collaborate in a project to collect as oral history the stories of descendants of Australian Jewish pioneer families. In this endeavour, Mr. Viener gave encouragement and advice. He believes there is a wealth of history to be captured from the asking of older people a set of questions about their experiences and memories handed on from previous generations: "It is easier for people to speak than write and it is self-evident that certain people have certain knowledge and when they go no one is going to know about it." It is intended that our Oral History Library should be developed and, with this in view, we have entered into an exchange of journals arrangement with the Oral History of Australia (NSW Branch) Association.

In March, Rabbi Apple's book "The Jews" was published. It outlines the various manifestations of the Jewish spirit in Australia and gives both Jews and non-Jews a renewed interest in the Jewish tradition in this country. Rabbi Apple, in writing the book, made wide use of the archives of our Society, and dedicated the work to our late Vice-President, George Bergman. (A review of the book is included in this Journal.) Rabbi Fabian's book "An Australian Ministry" — also reviewed — covers a vital period in the development of the Australian Jewish community. It deals with the author's 40-year Ministry in three capital cities.

The Committee Meeting held in March last took some important decisions, including that to form a sub-committee for the collection of material relating to Jews On The Land In Australia. We applied for, and are most appreciative of the \$250 grant received through the Royal Australian Historical Society towards cost of collecting data for this project. Another matter considered at that Meeting was the suggestion of Susan Bures of the Editorial Staff of the "Jewish Times", that we plan for a Jewish participation in Heritage Week, 1982. She believes that the Jewish community should enter these annual celebrations regularly and in a positive way. It was decided that the principle item for the August General Meeting be Rabbi Fabian's history of the early years of the Gold Coast (Queensland) Hebrew Congregation. (This fascinating paper is published in this Journal.)

Shirley Singer, Secretary of the Australia-Israel Society for Cultural Exchange, took with her to Israel selected items from our publications, as well as Federal and State Government publications for display at the 10th Jerusalem Book Fair, in April. Sam Havin, Chairman of the Publications Division of the Australia-Israel Chamber of Commerce also participated in

making the first Australian exhibit to the Fair one of the most attractive stands there.

In May, the Jewish Maternity Society invited our Society to attend its meeting when the decision was taken to dissolve the 137-year-old organisation and to hand over its assets to the Montefiore Home. Also in May, our President addressed a meeting of the Jewish Board of Deputies to give an outline of the work of our Society, its objectives and aims. Rabbi Porush completed the history of the Canberra Community, to be published in the Journal next year.

Mr. Forbes is presently collecting, with the object of publication, data and citations on Australian synagogues which have been classified by the National Trust of Australia, and which are no longer in active use as places of worship.

It is always pleasing and gratifying to note appreciative comments on our work and publications from outside the community. A brief extract from a recent letter of Mr. Les Murray, a well-known poet, reads: "I found your Journal fascinating, particularly the literary articles — the history of Melbourne's Yiddish Theatre and the review of Nancy Keesing's book on John Lang and "The Forger's Wife". I was also moved by the personal portraits, such as the one on the late Mr. Korsunski. Your magazine is refreshingly free from the excessive dryness and impersonality of many historical Journals."

Mrs. M. Marks represented us at the Royal Australian Historical Society Conference with Affiliated Societies in October. The theme of the Conference was "The Local Historical Society — Problems and Rewards". A useful response resulted from the circulars relating to Jews On The Land, which were distributed at the Conference.

Whilst pursuing the search for data on early synagogues, now demolished, for Rabbi Gorr in Jerusalem, we were most fortunate to obtain a line drawing sketch of the old Toowoomba synagogue, which was published in a recent issue of the "Toowoomba Chronicle" — after our request for information — and which was followed up by further information from correspondents with long memories. The synagogue's foundation stone was laid in August 1875, and the synagogue, *Beth Yisrael*, was ready for Rosh Hashana 1876. A description of the building, capable of accommodating 150 worshippers, accompanied the sketch. It was designed in the Greek Doric style. By 1917, the congregation had diminished to just a few Jewish families, and the building fell into disrepair. Although no longer used, it was restored and maintained during the next 10 years. The building and adjoining property was sold to the Lutheran Synod in 1928.

The Society was represented by the President at the opening in June, of the Holocaust Exhibition at the Sydney Lower Town Hall. We were also represented in September at the B'nai B'rith Banquet in honour of Rabbi Dr. Israel Porush.

The Jewish Communal Appeal has again made an allocation to the Society towards library equipment, microfilming, restoration of cemeteries, binding and publication of Journals, etc. It is cause for much

satisfaction to be associated with the communal body such as the J.C.A. which has assisted our Society very materially and helpfully.

The Great Synagogue Education Centre extensions were officially opened by the Governor General, Sir Zelman Cowen, in October. Sir Zelman, in his address, noted with pleasure that the Historical Society had been given suitable accommodation in the new complex. The accommodation is adjoining the new Jewish Museum. Our Society will work closely with the Synagogue in the mounting of displays and maintenance of the Museum. The new area of the Society will be dedicated as the George Bergman Memorial Archive.

The Register of Memorial Inscriptions from Jewish Burial Grounds in Australia, New Zealand and other Pacific Islands, compiled by Beverley and John Davis, and Terry Newman and others, is now ready for editing. It is expected these lists, with accompanying text, will be published as a Special Journal Issue. We applied to the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture for financial assistance to publish them. Our application was supported by several key figures in historical circles including Professor Kenneth J. Cable, President of the Royal Australian Historical Society. His letter of reference said the work is "of prime importance for the study of Australia's Jewish community, and of Australian history in general. It has been performed with devotion, skill and professional competence."

We warmly congratulate both Rabbi Dr. S. Coleman of Perth on his award of the Order of the Commander of the British Empire, for services to Youth, Education and the Jewish Community, and Rabbi John S. Levi, of Melbourne, who received the AM for his services to religion, in the Queen's Birthday Honours.

The Committee Meeting in October was advised of the progress made in the writing of the history of the Australian Jewish Welfare Society by Mrs. A. Andgel, of the exchange of journals arranged between ourselves and the newly formed Genealogy Society, Northern Territory, and of the benefaction received from Mr. Charles Aaron.

The Victorian Branch's General Meeting was held in the Toorak-South Yarra Library in November. It featured Reuben Havin's paper "Origins of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry". Dr. Serge Liberman's second consecutive Alan Marshal Award for anthologies of short stories is a cause for congratulation. The collection of stories, "On Firmer Shores", which won the 1979 Award is now available at \$9.25. The Victorian Branch has established its own Reference Library for the benefit of members' reference and research needs. The Library contains, besides a fine collection of books on Australian Jewish history, 50 reels of microfilm and a microfilm reader; complete sets of the Society's journals and periodicals; lists of newspaper announcements of births, marriages and deaths; and an excellent collection of photographs of every synagogue in Australasia.

We record with sincere regret the deaths of members Mr. J. S. Landau, George Beecher, Harry Castle, Mr. Douglas David of Melbourne and Dr. Anna Haber of Sydney. Also our good friend and firm supporter Mr. Alfred White died in August. We extend sincere condolences to the families of these valued members.

The Society has reason to be pleased with the permanent accommodation, in a small room of its own, now provided by the Great Synagogue in the area adjacent to the Auditorium. Steel shelves are being installed around the walls, and these will display and hold the Society's collection of books and periodicals. The Society's archive collection is assembled in cabinets to be housed in the new room. A portrait of the late George Bergman, suitably framed, will hang on the wall just outside this room. Until now, and although it always enjoyed security at 166 Castlereagh Street, the Society often found itself moving, literally, so to speak, "from pillar to post". However, such wanderings are now a thing of the past as the Society takes up its quarters in a dignified and prestigious location.

It is gratifying to report that substantial historical research is being actively pursued by Jewish writers under our auspices, e.g. Canberra Jewish Community, Gold Coast Congregation, Australian Jewish Welfare Society, Memorial Inscriptions and Jews On The Land. Experienced writers and others under our guidance are producing such valuable, reliable and authentic historical work. There is clearly the need and scope for much more to be done by way of research and publication. All of this work is costly, particularly today, and the Society must accumulate sufficient funds to enable all its work and future projects to go ahead. We again appeal to all Jewish communal bodies and organisations to provide the Society with copies of their publications, reports, periodicals, etc., which will be collected in our Library for future reference by *bona fide* historians and students. In the past, much valuable materials has either been lost or was difficult to locate because there has never been a central repository where such records could be retained and preserved.

Every member of the Society is lending support by the membership subscription which has been, and continues to be, a nominal one only. It is, however, of importance to emphasise that members should all be encouraged to interest themselves in some aspect of historical work, whether oral history, genealogy, the collection of archive material and, of course, researching and writing up any aspect of Jewish life and activity in this country. In all these efforts the Society can assist and help to co-ordinate, collate and guide the work into useful channels which will make all such efforts worthwhile, of interest to those directly involved, all significant and contributing to the Society's overall aims.

NOTES

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A person donating an amount of not less than \$100 in one sum may be elected by the Committee a Benefactor Member of the Society.

