

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

---

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

---

1990

## "Proving up and Moving up": Jewish Homesteading Activity in North Dakota, 1900-1920

Janet E. Schulte  
*Brandeis University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

---

Schulte, Janet E., "'Proving up and Moving up': Jewish Homesteading Activity in North Dakota, 1900-1920" (1990). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 398.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/398>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

## “PROVING UP AND MOVING UP”

### JEWISH HOMESTEADING ACTIVITY IN NORTH DAKOTA, 1900-1920

JANET E. SCHULTE

In the spring of 1908, Morris Zemsky, a Russian-Jewish immigrant homesteading in Ashley, North Dakota, sent a letter to the Industrial Removal Office (IRO) of the Baron de Hirsch Fund in New York. Joseph Kaminer, Secretary of the Ashley Farmer's Bureau, wrote the note for Zemsky, who spoke only Yiddish. The letter requested advice on the condition of Zemsky's parents "who are now in New York and are actually starving to death. As they are several in the family and no one of them can find work."<sup>1</sup> Zemsky requested the IRO to send his parents to his North Dakota homestead not only to help them escape the dangers of the city but also because he needed their assistance to make his farm successful. Zemsky was one of a group of more than 1200 Russian-Jewish immigrants who

had been located on North Dakota homesteads with the assistance of German-American Jews in the first decade of the twentieth century. This brief glance at his experience is indicative of the purpose and process of homestead settlement by Jewish immigrants on the Great Plains between 1900 and 1920.

In many respects, the homesteading experience of Russian-Jewish immigrants in North Dakota parallels that of immigrants from other ethnic groups. Like other homesteaders, they suffered from a lack of money and experience and from a desperate sense of loneliness and isolation; they persisted and thrived on the hope that the promise of land ownership offered a struggling city dweller. Their story was different from that of other homesteaders, however, in that their traditional Jewish culture did not adapt to the environmental and geographic conditions of the prairie. For a brief period in the early twentieth century, Russian-Jewish immigrants were transformed into North Dakota homesteaders, and then they left.

Their departure from North Dakota homesteads does not mean that the whole experiment was a failure. Instead of turning their homesteads into farms, Jewish immigrants turned them into capital by selling their land to other farmers

*Janet E. Schulte is a doctoral candidate and Crown Fellow in the History of American Civilization at Brandeis University. Her publications and papers have been in the field of women's history.*

[GPQ 10 (Fall 1990): 228-244]

once the claims had been proved up. With cash in hand, Russian-Jewish immigrants moved on to occupations and locations more conducive to their occupational and cultural background. The accumulation of capital that allowed Russian-Jewish immigrants to settle in village and urban communities was a measure of the success of the homesteading experiment.<sup>2</sup>

#### JEWISH IMMIGRATION

In 1907 the Jewish population of the United States numbered one and a half million, up from 250,000 in 1880. The increase in the American Jewish population was a result of the "second wave of Jewish immigration" originating from an area of Eastern Europe called the Pale of Settlement, which included Russia, Rumania, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Beginning in 1881, a wave of anti-Semitic activity had forced Jews to join the army of the Czar, stripped them of property, wealth, and worldly goods, subjected them to physical beatings, denied them citizenship, and restricted their settlements to the industrialized cities of the Pale of Settlement. Over 70 percent of each group of Russian Jews that entered the United States through the portals of Ellis Island settled in New York, among people sharing their traditional Jewish heritage and Yiddish culture. Fleeing Russia, they were attracted to New York and other large cities by the promise of industrial and commercial opportunities and the presence of other eastern European Jews and family members who had preceded them to America. Within a very short time, the Jewish neighborhoods of the country's larger cities suffered from overcrowding, starvation, unemployment, unsanitary public health conditions, prostitution, and inadequate housing.<sup>3</sup>

In 1900, the Baron de Hirsch Fund was formed in New York by leading members of America's established German-Jewish community to provide assistance to Russian-Jewish immigrants in the United States. The funding to begin and operate the New York office came from the estate of the wealthy French baron

Maurice de Hirsch, whose will had specified that his fortune be used to aid Jewish migrants escaping Russia. The de Hirsch Fund trustees in New York created two agencies to serve the immigrant population: the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society (JAIAS) in 1900 and the Industrial Removal Office (IRO) in 1901. Meanwhile in Chicago, Rabbi Abraham R. Levy helped to organize the Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society of America (JAAS or Chicago Society) in 1900. The Chicago Society funded its programs by issuing certificates of credit and by distributing "mite boxes" to Jewish families to collect spare change. In 1901, the Chicago Society began a ten-year relationship with the Baron de Hirsch Fund, serving as a midwestern base for the New York agencies.<sup>4</sup>

#### SETTLEMENT AND ANTI-SEMITISM

One of the chief objectives of these agencies was to reduce the concentration of Jewish immigrants in urban ghettos by dispersing newly arrived immigrants throughout the country. Designing their programs both to assist immigrants escape the dangers of urban living conditions and to curb anti-Semitism that linked all Jews to overcrowding and poverty, the philanthropists attempted to remove their coreligionists from congested cities to rural areas and to smaller cities and towns. The IRO was created especially for the "removal of congestion." Its agents emphasized that by learning and practicing a new trade in another part of the country immigrants could greatly improve their economic and social condition. As much as the Jewish agricultural colonies were an attempt to provide for the physical needs of eastern European immigrants, they were also an example of a minority attempt to remove a stereotype. One of the reasons behind the formation of Am Olam, a Jewish "back-to-the-land movement," was to prove to non-Jews that Jews were capable of productive physical labor, not merely commercial or financial dealings. The agricultural colonies on the prairies of North America never furnished such validation, but the successes of



Vol. III, No. 1.

New York, January, 1910

Price 3 Cents

דיא אמעריקאנער צייטונגען וועגען דער אויסשטעלונג

נען לכבוד דער אויסשטעלונג אין דעם הומאריסטישען וועכענטליכען זשורנאל דושארדושו, וויא אויך דיא בעסערסונג אונ-ער דעם קארטון.

נעקענט איבערנעבען, וואס זיי האבען גע-זאגט וועגען דער אויסשטעלונג. דאך ס'ע-נען מיר זיך ניט איינהאלטען ניט איבער-צוד יקען דעם קארטון, וואס איז ערשיע-

דיא ענגלישע צייטונגען און זשורנאל-ען האבען היבש געשריבען וועגען דער אידישער אנריקולטור אויסשטעלונג, נאך-צוילייב מאנעל אין פלאץ האבען מיר ניט

דאס איז דער קארטון.



(COPYRIGHT, LESLIE JUDGE CO., 1909.)

דישע פארמערס אין דיא פערסייניגטע שטאטען אליין, און מיט יעדען יאהר ווערט דיא צאהל אלץ גרעסער. זיי זעהען איין אז זיי קענען האבען מעהר ערפאלג אין פארמערריי וויא אין דיא געדיכטע גהעטאס. — פון לעסליס וויקלי.

נעקרוינט מיט ערפאלג. מיט א יאהר צעהן צייט איז דא געווען א הייפעלע אידישע פארמערס, צווייטע און צווייטע איבער'ן גאצען לאנד און האבען היינט ניט גע-וואוסט, וואס מארגען וועט פון זיי ווערען. איצט האבען מיר איבער פינף טויזענד אי-

דאס נייע לאנד פון מילך און האניג. די פאניגעשאן און אויסשטעלונג וואס דיא אידישע פארמערס האבען ניט לאנג אבגעהאלטען אין ניו יארק האבען געווען, אז דעם אידעל'ס אריינטרעטען אויס'ן פלעד פון אנריקולטור האט זיך

FIG. 1. The Jewish Farmer, Vol. 3, No. 1, Cover page. Courtesy of American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts.

the present-day kibbutz movement in Israel do furnish the evidence that the earlier colonizers had sought.<sup>5</sup>

Established German Jews had long feared that the concentration of Russian-Jewish immigrants in cities prevented their assimilation into American society and bred prejudice against all Jews. When Russian Jews had first begun to flee the oppressive laws of 1881, idealistic Jewish intellectuals suggested cooperative agricultural colonies as a way to address their plight. The Russian law forbidding land ownership by Jews had forced them into urban-based occupations, consequently reinforcing the prejudice that Jews were not capable of productive physical labor. Am Olam placed Eastern European Jews on hundreds of planned communal agricultural settlements in North America between 1880 and 1900. Each cooperative eventually failed, usually within two or three years of its creation, most often due to differences of opinion in running the colony as well as to farming inexperience and poor weather. Two colonies were sited in Painted Woods and Devils Lake, North Dakota, and even after the colonies failed, Russian-Jewish homesteaders were attracted to the area by the presence of Jewish settlers who had maintained independent farms.<sup>6</sup>

Even if the failure of the earlier agricultural colonies seemed to suggest that "Jewish farmer" was a misnomer, the New York and Chicago societies did not hesitate to believe that Jews could become homesteaders. The chief concern of the Jewish agricultural agencies was the sponsorship of a variety of agricultural efforts to encourage urban-oriented immigrants to develop new trades. The JAIAS listed its first objective as "the encouragement and direction of agriculture among Jews in America and the removal of those working in crowded metropolitan sections to agricultural and industrial districts." The Chicago Society held a similar belief about the advantages of creating a class of Jewish farmers. In the report of his visit to North Dakota farmers in 1903, Rabbi Levy wrote that "however favorable the chances city life offers to the poor Jewish immigrant from Russia and Rumania to rise from a peddler to an importer or

sweatshop operator to manufacturer, it is the farm that holds the true key to a difficult situation."<sup>7</sup> The New York Society promoted the image in its publication, *The Jewish Farmer*, contrasting the prosperity and happiness of the life of the "Jew farmer" with the struggle of the urban sweatshop worker or itinerant peddler (Fig. 1).

The Societies sought economic and psychological improvement for the immigrants they served. Although the movement from city to country was expected to result in better working conditions, equally important were the benefits to be obtained with "a complete change from the moral atmosphere of the overcrowded city tenement houses." Rabbi Levy believed that the promotion of farm life among Jewish immigrants would certainly raise crops, but even more important, it would raise their self-image.<sup>8</sup>

#### JEWES COME TO NORTH DAKOTA

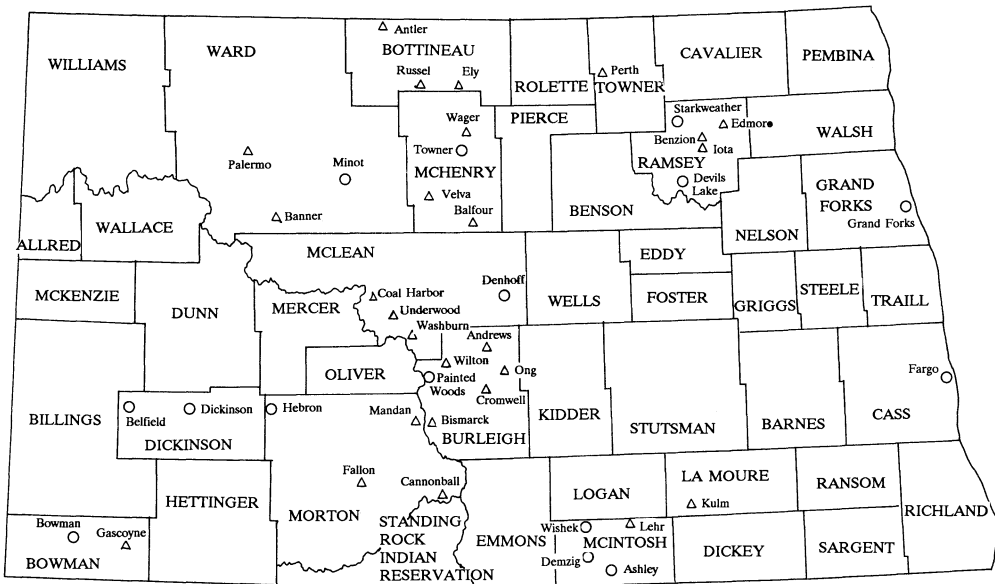
The Homestead Act offered 160 acres of "free" land to individuals who paid a filing fee and lived on the site for five years. The attraction of cheap land spurred thousands of European immigrants to the Great Plains. Many more were exposed to the propaganda of western states' Immigration Commissions or were lured by the efforts of organized agricultural movements to attract settlers into the region. The desire to improve one's lot economically and morally must certainly have been part of the individual immigrant's motivation to leave the urban ghetto for a North Dakota homestead. The promise of land ownership sounded deeply in the hearts of persecuted Russian Jews who had been denied the privilege of property in their homelands. The sense of security that comes with owning land could act as a buffer against the intense anxiety felt by a new immigrant in a foreign environment. Additionally, the ownership of fruitful farms could be used to "shake off the curse of trade" and refute the anti-Semitic notion that Jews were unproductive retailers or usurers. To the suffering Jewish immigrant, a homestead offered many forms of hope.<sup>9</sup>

From 1900 to 1908, the Chicago-based Jew-

ish Agriculturists' Aid Society of America conducted an enthusiastic effort to settle Jews on individual homesteads in North Dakota, sending 144 families to twenty-six townships in counties throughout the state. Most of the JAAS-sponsored Jewish homesteaders took up land in central North Dakota in counties adjacent to or east of the Missouri River: Burleigh, McHenry, McIntosh, McLean, Morton, and Ward. A few settlements developed in the eastern portions of the state, but the fertile and more humid land in the counties of this region had long been preempted by the time the Russian-Jewish immigrants arrived after 1900 (Fig. 2).

The Society maintained a firm policy of placing immigrants near one another and preferred to send them in family groups. Evidently the JAAS recognized two important issues involved in creating Jewish farming communities on the

prairie. First, sending families together, or sending additional family members in subsequent years, meant sending more workers to assist in the difficult tasks of homesteading—a step that would help to insure the success of the effort. Second, the Chicago agency had some understanding of the need of Jews to live relatively near one another in order to establish a community that could meet their social and cultural needs. A critical mass of settlers from any ethnic group is required to sustain ethnocultural forms over time, but the religious requirements of traditional Judaism made this a particularly serious issue for Jewish homesteaders. Traditional Jewish law requires the presence of ten men, a minyan, to conduct important religious services, especially the stringent rule of memorializing dead relatives by reciting a prayer in a minyan three times a day for eleven months after and on annual anniversaries of the death.



Δ = TOWNS WHERE HOMESTEADERS WERE PLACED BY CHICAGO SOCIETY

○ = OTHER JEWISH SETTLEMENTS

FIG. 2. Location of Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society Homestead Placements and Other Jewish Settlements, 1900-1908, North Dakota.

Government land policies conflicted with the needs of Jewish law, however, by prohibiting the creation of a densely populated settlement similar to the Jewish village, or *shtetl*, of Russia. The homestead laws allowed each individual to claim a quarter section but did not permit the consolidation of separate titles into a collective settlement. Dispersed homesteads and poor transportation made cultural maintenance difficult for all ethnic groups but worked a particular hardship on observant Jews.<sup>10</sup>

The placement of thirty-nine JAAS-sponsored farmers and their families near Wilton in Burleigh County is instructive in explaining the Society's policy.<sup>11</sup> The settlement began with the location of the Barskey and Brown families in 1900. In 1901, the JAAS placed four families—a total of eighteen people—on homesteads near Wilton. Another four families—fourteen individuals—took up land in 1902. The year 1903 saw the greatest number of JAAS-sponsored Jewish immigrants moving to North Dakota. A total of fifty-eight farmers were sent west that year, nineteen of them, with thirty-three family members in tow, to Wilton. Another six applicants left Chicago in 1904 for Wilton, bringing with them an additional twelve family members. In 1905, two more farmers headed to Wilton with ten members of their families; and in 1906, the last year the JAAS sent anyone to Wilton, two farmers headed west with eight family members.

Some of the male homesteaders were sent to North Dakota alone. When the Chicago Society placed an individual on a homestead it did not expect to isolate him on the prairie; each one was included with a group of other homesteaders placed in the same area in the same year or was located where other homesteaders had settled in earlier years. Frequently the individual homesteader had left his family in a city in the eastern United States or in the mother country, Russia or Rumania. After he had built his first buildings and earned some cash from the sale of a crop, the homesteader sent for his family, using the cash to pay their way. Harry Pollack, listed as a single male homesteader, went to Wilton in 1903 with JAAS

assistance. By 1908 he had brought his family, his wife, four sons, and mother-in-law, from Rumania to join him at the homestead.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the Jewish immigrants placed in Burleigh County, two other sizable settlements developed in North Dakota in the first decade of the twentieth century. Originating in Minneapolis, both settlements were founded on the same idea that prompted the New York and Chicago groups' agricultural activities: farming was a way to advance the immigrants' position in America as well as to ward off anti-Semitism directed at all Jews in response to the crowded conditions of the new immigrants.

In 1904 sixty Minneapolis families took up claims in Ashley, McIntosh County, North Dakota, in the south central part of the state, where German-American Jews had already established themselves. Other Jewish immigrants joined the fledgling community from New York, assisted by the Industrial Removal Office. In what appears to have been a public relations effort, the settlement called itself the Sulzberger Colony after Cyrus Sulzberger, a prominent trustee of the Baron de Hirsch Fund. Although the settlement made frequent and heavy demands on its agencies, the Sulzberger Colony was the favorite Jewish homesteading settlement of the Baron de Hirsch Fund Trustees. The Colony achieved something of a flagship status in the annals of the New York Society as a result of its early success in establishing a Jewish farming community on the North Dakota plains.<sup>13</sup>

The cordial relationship between the Sulzberger Colony and the Baron de Hirsch Fund agencies encouraged the farmers to ask assistance in sending to them relatives who were badly needed to work the farm or keep house and to help satisfy the requirements of religious law. Letters from McIntosh County farmers requested the IRO to send all types of people to them: "My old mother in New York wick [sic] is not able to make a living for herself . . . wants to come to me to stay." "Mr. Isaac Cohen, my cousin . . . hasn't the means of making a living [and] there is enough work here for many people." "My cousin just arrived in New York is

homeless [sic] and without work. I have plenty of work for him to do." If the family member could prove a desperate need, the IRO loaned the individual the cost of travel to North Dakota.<sup>14</sup>

Laborers who were sent west to work on homesteads also had the chance to become established farmers themselves. The IRO had sent Sam Schwartz to work in Minneapolis in 1905. In 1908 he reported that he was "a farmer in North Dakota" having joined the Russian-Jewish immigrants who had left Minneapolis for the Sulzberger Colony. Ed Gimble wrote that not only could he find work for his friend who had a family of eight, but he also had "160 acres of land to contest for him." Solomon and Abraham Pomerance went to McIntosh County from New York in 1908 and a year later reported that they were "farming for others." The Pomerance brothers were working toward establishing a permanent home where they and their parents, then in Brooklyn, could live and prosper. The IRO sympathized with the Pomerance brothers and, indeed, much of the agency's work was predicated on the hope that every person removed from New York would attract others to the same location to begin a new life and to help establish a critical mass of Jewish settlers in the area.<sup>15</sup>

The other major settlement of Jewish homesteaders in North Dakota was located in Bowman County, in the southwest corner of the state. In 1908, fifty Jewish families migrated together from Minneapolis to take up homestead claims in the county. Unlike other settlements of Jewish farmers, the Bowman County group appeared to have enough resources of its own to establish the settlement independently of the Chicago or New York Societies. Jewish farmers in Bowman County considered homestead commutation a way to acquire land quickly and cheaply. After living on a quarter section homestead for nine months, they commuted the claim by purchasing the land at \$1.25 an acre.<sup>16</sup>

Much had been made of the idea of locating Jewish immigrants on "free land" but the opportunity to become a farmer on a North Dakota homestead was far from free. Everything

associated with turning the prairie into farm land was costly. At the going estimate, equipment to till the land required an initial capital outlay of \$1120 dollars: "\$600 for four horses, \$100 for wagon, \$80 for harness, \$60 for breaking plow, \$45 for disc harrow, \$30 for drag harrow, \$105 for drill, \$100 for house." Additional funds were required for harvesting equipment, finding and maintaining a water supply, and fencing for livestock. Environmental conditions elevated the costs of farming because expected crop failure had to be provided for in a region with frequent droughts, early frosts, and a short growing season. The Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society estimated that a homesteader could begin the new life with \$600 in cash. The New York Society put the minimum cost at \$1000—as much as \$1500 if the family had no farm workers besides the father—a sum that was triple the \$481 average annual wage of an industrial operative in 1903. Clearly, the new homesteader needed a large supply of money, especially during the first year, if the claim were to prove at all worthwhile.<sup>17</sup>

Jewish immigrants sent to North Dakota commonly lacked the necessary funds to set up a homestead. New homesteaders reported their fate to their benefactors: "Arriving at North Dakota I commenced farm work. I spent my last cent lately . . . Money is necessary to plow. I would buy a team and so advance my self." Records of the Jewish homesteaders settled in North Dakota by the Chicago Society in 1902 revealed that individuals' securities—buildings, tools, and livestock—ranged from \$90 to \$920 (\$475 being the amount most frequently reported), all well below the \$1100 needed to get a foothold on the land.<sup>18</sup>

Financial constraints and crop failures were not restricted to Jewish homesteaders, but as their native-born American neighbors realized, Jewish homesteaders did have a distinct advantage over other settlers. Both the Chicago and New York Jewish Agricultural Societies provided loans to Jewish homesteaders for the purchase of equipment and other needs.<sup>19</sup> Mrs. J. C. Osborn wrote an article for the popular magazine *Overland Monthly* about her family's five



years on a North Dakota homestead. She recalled that her neighbor, a Russian Jew,

had just as bad experiences or worse. Still he borrowed enough to settle all his obligations, from the Jewish Benevolent Association, at a very low rate of interest, two, or at most three percent. The Scandinavians borrowed from Scandinavian friends or relatives in older States. The same with the Russians—all had friends to help them. We Americans, in America, had no one but the loan companies, whose interest was 12, or at least nine percent.<sup>20</sup>

The financial support of the Jewish agricultural agencies was a critical factor in the early years of the homesteading experiment. From 1900 to 1910, the New York Society made three hundred loans totalling \$149,013.12 to 151 farmers in North Dakota. With the assistance of the agencies, the homesteaders' condition improved dramatically. Rabbi Levy reported that three farmers from Rumania homesteading in Burleigh County in 1903 used the money loaned to them by the Chicago Society to make improvements to their homesteads representing a value of \$1200. Photographs in the Annual Reports of the Chicago Society indicate that some of the farmers who received such assistance were able to struggle successfully on the land for several years after their initial placement. The Widow Greenberg, who began the life of a homesteader in 1902 with \$90 in securities, was photographed four years later with her four children in front of her clapboard farmhouse, improvements made with the financial support of the JAAS.<sup>21</sup>

#### DIFFICULTIES IN HOMESTEADING

Traditional Jewish culture's stress on family meant that a Jewish woman's homesteading experience was restricted to her role as wife, mother, sister, or daughter. The Jewish agricultural societies did not place individual Jewish women on homesteads unless they filed claims adjacent to their husbands' or, like the Widow

Greenberg, had brought their children with them. Although Jewish women may not have had as strong a heritage of single women homesteading as women from other ethnic groups, Jewish women's contributions were critical to the success of their families' homesteads.<sup>22</sup>

Farming experience, like money, was often in short supply among Jewish homesteaders. Needleworkers and peddlers comprised the majority of the Jewish immigrants from New York who were sent out to become farmers. Even the few who had been farmers in their native country found their knowledge quickly tested by the different agricultural conditions found in North Dakota. Many of the women who accompanied the men to North Dakota homesteads did not have the experience necessary to make the venture a success. Like their male relatives, Jewish women's experience had been restricted to the market life of the Russian shtetl or urban neighborhoods in America. The Jewish agency officials also lacked knowledge or experience of farming and living conditions on the semiarid upper Plains, making it impossible to communicate with potential homesteaders about what they might expect to find or to assist them with problems.<sup>23</sup>

Few conveniences to ease the burden of domestic duties were available to the farm woman of that era. For women who had lived their lives in the relatively greater comfort of established villages or ghettos, life on a primitive and isolated homestead could be overwhelming. Any money that accumulated in the family's coffer was channeled into farm improvements. Arriving at the structure her husband had called home during his four years alone on the homestead, Mrs. Turnoy found "a sod house with a rough, splintered floor, a crude homemade table with two benches . . . fashioned from planks, iron bedsteads with sagging springs, and a blackened kitchen range. The well was in the valley at the foot of the hill upon which [the] house stood." Stunned by the sight of the place she "wrung her hands and wept." Not every Jewish woman felt such profound discouragement. Mrs. Pollack, the wife of a homesteader placed by the Chicago Society in 1903, had been reared

in a less sheltered environment than her neighbor, Mrs. Turnoy. Her simpler start in life made her "better able to cope with life of a pioneer woman" and added to her ability to contribute to the success of the homestead.<sup>24</sup>

Experience, unlike money, could not be borrowed, but the Jewish agricultural societies did find ways to help Russian-Jewish farmers and their families learn more about their choice of work and life. In 1908, the JAIAS discerned the need for educational efforts to help Jewish farmers learn the rudiments and solve the problems of farm life. The Society began to publish *The Jewish Farmer*, a Yiddish agricultural monthly newspaper, in May 1908. The paper's aim was straightforward:

To provide for the non-English reading Jewish farmer expert advice on agricultural subjects not otherwise available; to supply him with a publication to which he can turn for sympathy and encouragement; to furnish him with a medium for the expression of his feelings and aspirations; and to bring him inspiration through keeping him in touch with his fellow tillers of the soil.<sup>25</sup>

As an educational tool and a public forum, the paper would provide much needed information to Jewish homesteaders.

*The Jewish Farmer* excerpted articles from a variety of sources—*Practical Farmer*, *New England Homestead*, *American Agriculturalist*, *Rural New Yorker*, and Department of Agriculture bulletins. Special articles related the experiences of farmers elsewhere. A question and answer column allowed widely dispersed farmers to share problems, advice, and suggestions while a "Hints to Housewives" column offered the same type of exchange for farmers' wives. An English page was added in the fall of 1908 to attract the attention of Jewish farm children, who were encouraged to make use of the latest agricultural bulletins published by the federal and state governments and to air their views on agricultural subjects. *The Jewish Farmer* also introduced children to books on Jewish history and culture and

suggested places to which they could write for additional information and free agricultural and educational magazine subscriptions.<sup>26</sup>

Farmers' associations were initiated by the New York Society in 1908 to establish producers' cooperatives, to teach improved farming methods, and to arbitrate disputes. The associations also provided a place and purpose for meetings among farmers in a specific region and promoted social as well as vocational exchanges. In this single year 187 farmers organized into Jewish agricultural associations in eight North Dakota counties.<sup>27</sup>

The farmers' associations and *The Jewish Farmer* were ethnic aid organizations that encouraged Jewish homesteaders to appreciate and perpetuate their heritage in a new environment. The JAIAS considered its educational efforts to be even more important than the financial support it provided since they touched the lives of all Jewish farmers whether or not they received financial assistance from the Society. Above all, the connections made through the paper, the farmers' associations, or by the assistance of the Jewish philanthropists promoted cultural identification among Jewish homesteaders.<sup>28</sup>

#### CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

Besides the tasks that fell upon every homesteader, Jewish immigrants had the added responsibility of maintaining the religious and cultural life of the observant Jew. Traditional Judaism required that the home be kept kosher and that the Sabbath and all religious holidays be observed with ritual precision. Yet some cultural adaptations were necessary if the faith were to survive in any fashion on the North Dakota prairie.

Without a kosher butcher, Jewish families introduced dietary innovations. To maintain a relatively strict kosher diet, some Jewish homesteaders learned to slaughter and butcher meat in the prescribed way, keeping a special knife for the purpose. A vegetarian diet was an option for those who would not use meat that had not been ritually slaughtered while others took the

extreme measure of altering the diet completely. When a Mr. Mendelson brought Sara Thal a crate of pork and asked the Jewish woman to cook it, she balked. But the lack of other food-stuffs challenged the practicality of her faith. "In time," she confessed, "I consented."<sup>29</sup>

Keeping important religious holidays required innovative adaptations to environmental obstacles. Observances of the autumnal New Year High Holidays found Jewish farmers traveling great distances to meet at the largest homestead in the region, creating a little synagogue on the prairie for the duration of the religious services. Passover required especially careful planning. Before winter confined them to the homestead, the Turnoy family sent a list of Passover items they would need to a relative in Chicago. In the spring, Father Turnoy traveled to the railroad station at Wilton—one day down and one day back—to pick up the crate of supplies while the rest of the family cleaned the house in preparation for the holiday.<sup>30</sup>

Much of the burden of cultural maintenance fell to women. Pious Jewish homesteading women faced significant obstacles to their role of transmitting Jewish tradition to the next generation. North Dakota offered "no synagogues, no rabbi, no kosher butcher, and no cheder (Jewish elementary school) for [the] children." Without the traditional institutions of the shtetl available to her, a Jewish woman had to find other ways to keep the faith alive in her children. Burleigh County homesteaders, responding to the insistence of Jewish women, made arrangements for Rabbi Julian Hess from Bismarck to live among them on a rotating basis to teach Hebrew to the children, do the ritual slaughtering of animals, and perform other Jewish rites.<sup>31</sup>

Urban Jews also recognized the importance of transmitting culture and traditions to the next generation of Jewish farm children. Rabbi Ben Papermeister of Grand Forks traveled as far as two hundred miles away with a horse and wagon to visit Jewish families throughout the state. The Rabbi "was also a mohel (circumciser) and would serve the Jewish farm families in this

function when he went out to visit them." The JAIAS subsidized the work of the Jewish Chautauqua Society to keep the spark of Judaism alive on North Dakota homesteads. The latter group sent North Dakota farm families reading materials in Hebrew, Yiddish, and English on Jewish history and religion and monitored the work of such traveling rabbis as Ben Papermeister from Grand Forks and Julian Hess from Bismarck.<sup>32</sup>

The dispersal of settlements among Jewish homesteaders fostered creative adaptations of culture and religion. Reading material could replace the rabbi, diets might change to provide necessary nourishment, and rigorous observance might be relaxed, but occasionally elements of traditional Jewish culture survived the transition with little modification. In a heroic gesture to enable his wife to keep the religious requirement, or *mitzvot*, of the monthly purifying bath, Harry Turnoy built a *mikveh*—a ritual bathhouse—for her. The same windmill that pumped water into the animals' trough and the family's well pumped water into the cement structure. Considering both the expense of building materials and the scarcity of water, Turnoy's project indicated the extraordinary measures one man was willing to take to keep the ancient tradition alive.<sup>33</sup>

Jewish family life was hard hit by the serial dislocations of moving first to America and then to the isolated North Dakota homestead. The psychological and physical adjustments of relocation could tear apart the fabric of family life. No formal program developed to assist immigrants in reconstructing this vital element of Jewish culture, for although Jewish agencies encouraged the step-migration of additional family members, they financed the trip only in very special cases. Women's work of maintaining the integrity of the family created intense emotional strain when the family had been broken by migration. Mrs. Turnoy, who had had to leave her mother behind in Russia, often lamented her fate, crying, "God is punishing me for deserting my mother," while Mrs. Pollack adjusted more easily to North Dakota because her mother

had come with her. In the most severe cases of homesickness and loneliness, neighbors observed that "the wife and mother [was] seemingly making no effort to keep up house and home."<sup>34</sup>

The pain of family dislocation for Jewish immigrants was complicated by the fact that men and women went to the homestead with different motivations and expectations. When Harry Turnoy surveyed his homestead he saw "a promised land, free from anti-Semitism and degradation." His wife, though, "felt trapped, betrayed, helpless."<sup>35</sup> Peretz Hirshbein, a Yiddish poet and playwright raised in North Dakota, recalled the despair that crowded into a couple's life on the open space of prairie:

There is no song in the fields of North America, and therefore it is sad there. It is sad in the fields of North America because there are no women there.

Here a woman's place is in the kitchen . . . but not in God's blessed fields. In this country field work is done by men. Women know nothing of going about with sickles on their shoulders and looking through the grain to see if their loved ones will appear in the golden sea of sheaves.

There is no love play in the corn fields, and in the wheat fields love does not sing.<sup>36</sup>

The frustration at the amount of work to be done, the difficulty of performing the tasks, the lack of a mutual sense of purpose, and the separation of work roles that kept husbands and wives apart was felt strongly by homestead families. The order and serenity of the Pollack house became a refuge to the Turnoy children whose parents had constant arguments over the father's decision to homestead.

#### ABANDONING THE HOMESTEADS

Highly favorable reports of the condition of Jewish homesteaders in North Dakota publicized by the Chicago Society had attracted the attention and support of the Baron de Hirsch Fund in 1901. That year, the New York agency

provided a loan to eighteen Jewish farmers in North Dakota to purchase a threshing machine to share among themselves. By 1903 it was clear to the New York agency that the Chicago group had greatly exaggerated their claims of success. The Society found that few of the farmers placed by the Chicago group between 1900 and 1903 "appeared to have gained any foothold whatsoever." In fact, the New York agency reported that "of the eight carefully selected families whom we enabled to take out claims in North Dakota, only one has remained." In 1904, the JAIAS reported that its loans to North Dakota farmers that year "were not for the increase of holdings or for the purchase of additional stock or machinery, but mainly for the purpose of keeping the farmers from starvation and for relieving them of debts." The rate of homestead abandonment was high. The de Hirsch Fund directors took great pains to discourage further homesteading efforts while continuing to provide loans to those already in North Dakota, hoping that the initial hardships of pioneering might eventually be overcome. Placements of immigrants by the Chicago Society on North Dakota homesteads fell off rapidly after 1903 (Table 1).<sup>37</sup>

In 1910, the peak year for the Jewish farming population in the state, after ten years of battling the environmental and cultural odds against its success, the Jewish homesteading movement in North Dakota could count 250 farms, peopled by 1200 individuals. The preceding decade had seen numerous Jewish homesteaders come and go. Those who persisted long enough to be counted in the 1910 census had made the cultural, physical, and psychological accommodations necessary to survive and preserve some aspects of their cultural identity.<sup>38</sup>

Like many of their neighbors, the Jewish homesteaders joined in the rapid depopulation of rural areas that took place after 1910. Having completed the requisite five-year period of residence, homesteaders were able to "prove up" their claims and acquire the deed to their land. Once the homesteader held the title to 160 acres and had realized the promise of land ownership, the farm became a source of capital that

could be put to other uses. The four homesteads in Burleigh County that had constituted young Sophie Turnoy's neighborhood began to empty shortly after the homestead claims were proved up. On a visit to the old neighborhood in 1917, Sophie and her friend, Sarah Edelberg, saw the four farmhouses of the Turnoy, Edelberg, Luper, and Pollack families standing shadowy and ghostlike on the empty prairie. The Turnoys and Edelbergs had set up shops in the railroad town of Wing, North Dakota; the Pollacks and Luper had moved back to Chicago.<sup>39</sup>

Many, if not most, Jewish farmers and their families who had struggled for five years found that selling their land gave them the chance to get back to a more familiar way of life. Jewish

homesteaders sold their farms to larger wheat farmers who had the technology, capital, and labor to realize an economy of scale in growing cash crops of wheat, flax, barley, and oats in the area. By 1920, the average farm size in Burleigh and McIntosh Counties, where the bulk of Jewish farms were located, was 552 and 563 acres, respectively, approximately three and one-half times the size of a government homestead. Accordingly, the average value of a farm in Burleigh County was \$19,802, and in McIntosh County, \$21,922, while the average value of Jewish farms was \$7188.75. Furthermore, land prices were not based on the appraised value of the acreage but on the agricultural productivity anticipated by large-scale farmers. By selling

TABLE 1.  
LOCATION AND YEAR OF HOMESTEAD PLACEMENTS IN NORTH DAKOTA BY THE JEWISH AGRICULTURISTS' AID SOCIETY OF CHICAGO.

Placement Site	YEAR OF PLACEMENT								
	1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908
<b>BURLEIGH (69)</b>									
Andrews		1	4	2	2	3	2		
Bismark		1	4						
Cromwell			1	3					
Ong				3	3		1		
Wilton	2	4	4	19	6	2	2		
<b>McHENRY (27)</b>									
Balfour			5	11		3			
Velva			4			2			
Wagar				2					
<b>MORTON (19) (Included present day Morton and Grant counties)</b>									
Cannonball			2	1					
Fallon				5	1				
Mandan			8	1	1				
<b>McLEAN (9) (Included present day McLean and Sheridan counties)</b>									
Coalharbor					2				
Underwood					1				
Washburn					5			1	
<b>BOTTINEAU (8)</b>									
Antler						1			
Ely				2					
Russet				5					
<b>RAMSEY (4)</b>									
Benzion	1								
Endmore						2			
Iola	1								
<b>WARD (2) (Included present day Ward, Montrail, Burke, and Renville counties)</b>									
Banner		1							
Palermo				1					
<b>McINTOSH (2)</b>									
Lehr				2					
<b>BOWMAN (2)</b>									
Gascoyne									2
<b>LaMOURE (1)</b>									
Kulm				1					
<b>TOWNER (1)</b>									
Perth		1							
<b>TOTAL (144)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>

their homesteads to the larger farms, savvy homesteaders could capitalize on the income potential of the land. The financial incentive for a Jewish farmer to sell was strong, particularly in the light of general dissatisfaction with farm life felt by Jewish homesteaders.<sup>40</sup>

The extension of the Northern Pacific Railroad through northern Burleigh and Kidder counties in 1912 (Fig. 3) created a number of new towns in which Jewish farmers could invest the capital they had raised by selling their homesteads. Instead of viewing railroad depots as shipping points for their produce, Jewish farmers saw the depots as marketplaces in which they could pursue a more familiar trade, free from the difficulties of farm life. When Wing, North Dakota, was established in 1912, many Burleigh County homesteaders set up businesses there to serve travelers, railroad workers, and farmers. Before the track had been laid, Mr. Sacks, a former Jewish homesteader, had built and opened a general merchandise store in Wing. As a young man with a wife and little children and no one to help with the farming, he found the store a far easier way to make a living. Harry Turnoy bought a lot close to the Wing railroad station and set up a butcher shop. The Edelberg family, who had taken a homestead with the aid of the Jewish agricultural philanthropies in 1905, also moved to Wing where Mrs. Edelberg opened a bakery across from the Turnoy butcher shop. Other Jewish merchants in Wing established the first shoe store and harness shop. Jews were also the first merchants to open shops in the railroad towns of Tuttle, Arena, and Regan.<sup>41</sup>

Some homesteaders found farming attractive though too difficult to pursue in North Dakota without the support of a closely settled Jewish community. When a period of drought began in 1917, the number of farmers on free government land in North Dakota was, the JAIAS reported, declining rapidly. The Society found that some of the settlers who were leaving changed only their location, not their vocation. Former North Dakota homesteaders were relocating themselves among Jewish farming communities in the eastern and midwestern states,

where the climate was more hospitable and the surroundings more congenial to their needs. Interestingly, six settlements in Saskatchewan and Manitoba were begun by settlers who had had their first experience on government homesteads in North Dakota.<sup>42</sup> The climate of these two Canadian provinces is, of course, similar to that of North Dakota. So why the move? Anxious to populate their western lands, Canadian authorities surpassed the American government in offering incentives to prospective settlers. Exemption from military service and expanded liberties to practice their religion and culture were especially attractive to cultural minorities establishing farming settlements on western lands in North America. Jewish farmers from North Dakota found the Canadian government's willingness to provide cultural institutions more critical than improved agricultural conditions in this case:

The educational and communal life in the Canadian settlements is fairly satisfactory. The Government provides rural schools . . . Religious education is looked after by a Hebrew teacher, who is usually also a shohet (kosher butcher) and the general ritual practitioner.<sup>43</sup>

Many Jews who wanted to remain farmers resettled in communities in which ritual life was

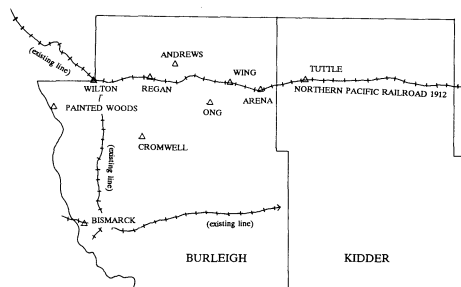


FIG. 3. Burleigh County, North Dakota, 1918, including Northern Pacific Railroad (1912) and towns created by Jewish farmers/merchants.

less difficult than it had proved to be in North Dakota.

Jewish immigrants had high hopes for their children in America. Parents wanted children to learn a skilled trade or to prepare for a profession and also to have a proper Jewish education. Farmers and small-town entrepreneurs alike often found the best solution not in building the necessary institutions on the prairie but in sending children to live with friends or relatives in larger cities to the east or by relocating the entire family where cultural supports were already established. The Schwartzes, usually the only Jewish family in Belfield, North Dakota, closed their family store and returned to Minneapolis where "the older children were confirmed, and the boys had bar-mitzvahs."<sup>44</sup>

A measure of the decline in Jewish homesteading activity in North Dakota after 1910 was the dramatic drop in loan activity and seasonal labor placements in the state. Loans made by the New York Society to cover seasonal needs of farmers fell from a peak of sixty-three in 1911 to four in 1920. The JAIAS Farm Bureau, established in 1908 to introduce Jewish immigrants to the farming life and to provide a labor pool for Jewish farmers to tap during harvest seasons, placed only one laborer in North Dakota after 1910. Jewish farmers and entrepreneurs in North Dakota no longer requested loans or housed seasonal laborers because few were involved in farming there.

The general reduction in agricultural activity in North Dakota between 1910 and 1920 had a more profound impact on Jewish settlers than other ethnic groups. Farmers from other ethnic backgrounds were able to recreate or accommodate their cultural requirements and remain as farmers in North Dakota, many still living in their rural farming communities today.<sup>45</sup> By 1927, over 75 percent of the two thousand Jews in North Dakota lived in the state's five largest population centers—Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, Devil's Lake, and Minot. The other quarter lived in two dozen smaller towns where the Jewish population ranged from fewer than ten to fifty. Assuming that farming was the principal occupation of those Jews who resided in

places where they numbered fewer than ten, the farming population had decreased from 1200 in 1910 to not more than 250 in the 1920s.<sup>46</sup>

#### CONCLUSION

The JAIAS argued that their efforts to support agricultural enterprise among Jewish homesteaders had been successful even if few Jews actually stayed on the lands they had homesteaded:

The value of the movement should not be judged entirely by the numbers of Jews on farms. Migration to the farms is followed by migration to neighboring towns and villages. If removal of congestion is an end to be desired, then this incidental result is by no means insignificant.<sup>47</sup>

Those Jews who left the farm but stayed in the area had succeeded in escaping the urban ghettos. Ironically, financial support of the Jewish philanthropists that brought immigrants to the homesteads also allowed them to leave. The Jewish agricultural societies enabled Jewish homesteaders to capitalize their claims and move off the land to more attractive occupations. The brief sojourn of Jewish homesteaders on the North Dakota prairie failed to produce any tradition of Jewish farmers on the Great Plains, but the experiment did allow homesteading immigrants to acquire assets they would not have had had they remained in urban ghettos. Local legends of North Dakota towns hold that many of the Jews who had been part of the early settlements of their communities went on to other parts of the country to do very well, and some even became famous. The Jewish homesteading effort in North Dakota is an important example of the strength of ethnocultural ties among American immigrant groups who homesteaded on the Great Plains.<sup>48</sup>

Continuing reminders of the presence of Jewish homesteaders in North Dakota are the small Jewish cemeteries scattered across the state.<sup>49</sup> Often the first institution established by Jewish communities, a cemetery was a sign of

an intended settlement. The tombstones are at once a tangible symbol of the failure of the general effort to create a tradition of Jewish farmers in North Dakota and of the success of those Jewish settlers who persisted long enough to make this permanent mark on the land. The legends about Jews who left to become famous suggests that the good intentions of the Jewish agricultural philanthropists were not completely lost. Jews who left the congested cities to take up homesteads did improve themselves socially and financially. For those who took the risk and suffered the hardships long enough to acquire title to the land, proving up meant moving up.

#### NOTES

I am grateful to Professor Donald Worster for his guidance and direction in the preparation of this article.

1. Joseph Kaminer, 20 March 1908, Baron de Hirsch Fund Papers, Box 105, American Jewish Historical Society, Waltham, Massachusetts (BDHF papers). Most of the original Yiddish letters sent to the Baron de Hirsch fund offices by immigrants were translated into English upon receipt by the Baron de Hirsch Fund staff. I have used the English language translations of these letters and other archival material. The spelling or grammar of manuscript letters or their translations used in this paper have not been changed.

2. William C. Sherman and Playford V. Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1988), pp. 393, 398-99; Paul Voisey, *Vulcan: The Making of a Prairie Community* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), see especially pp. 36-52. Voisey's study of the settlement of a region of southern Alberta documents the practice of small scale land speculators using homesteads to accumulate capital for other purposes.

3. Robert Alan Goldberg, *Back to the Soil: the Jewish Farmers of Clarion, Utah and Their World* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1986), pp. 4-5; Morris U. Schappes, "Jewish Mass Immigration from Eastern Europe, 1881-1914," in *The Sociology of American Jews: A Critical Anthology*, edited by Jack Nusan Porter (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978), p. 16.

4. Samuel Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund: The Americanization of the Jewish Immigrant* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1935), pp. 10, 148, 184; Naomi W. Cohen, "The Ethnic

Catalyst: The Impact of the East European Immigration on the American Jewish Establishment," in *The Legacy of Jewish Migration: 1881 and its Impact*, edited by David Berger (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 132; Gabriel Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers and the Story of the Jewish Agricultural Society* (New York: L.B. Fischer, 1943), p. 26; Leonard G. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," *The American Jewish Year Book, 1912-1913* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1912), p. 74.

5. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, p. 10; Leo Shpall, "Jewish Agricultural Colonies in the United States," *Agricultural History* 24 (1950): pp. 126-27, 145; Uri D. Herscher, *Jewish Agricultural Utopias in America, 1880-1910* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1981), pp. 24, 115-21.

6. In addition to Shpall and Herscher cited in note 5, the history of Jewish agricultural colonies in America is documented in W. Gunther Plaut, "Jewish Colonies at Painted Woods and Devils Lake," *North Dakota History* 32 (1965): 59-70; Lois Field Schwartz, "Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota," *North Dakota History* 32 (1965): 217-32; Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, pp. 388-406.

7. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, p. 129; Abraham R. Levy, "Central North Dakota's Jewish Farmers in 1903," edited by Norton B. Stern and William B. Kramer, *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 11 (1978-79): 6.

8. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, pp. 46-47; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 21; Levy, "Central North Dakota's Jewish Farmers," p. 4.

9. John C. Hudson, "Migration to An American Frontier," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66 (1976): 255; Frederick C. Luebke, "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 8 (1977): 409; Robert Jordan Lazar, "From Ethnic Minority to Socio-Economic Elite: A Study of the Jewish Community of Fargo, North Dakota" (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1968), p. vi; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 220. Hargreaves saw the dry farming movement as "primarily a promotional campaign" to attract settlers to the Upper Plains. See also Warren A. Henke, "Imagery, Immigration and the Myth of North Dakota, 1890-1933," *North Dakota History* 38 (1971): 412-91 for a report on the promotional activities of the state Immigration Commission's effort to attract settlers to North Dakota.

10. Luebke, "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains," p. 407; Frederick C. Luebke, "Regionalism and the Great Plains: Problems of Concept



and Method," *Western Historical Quarterly* 15 (1984): 33-34; Hargreaves, *Dry Farming*, p. 491.

11. Information on Jewish placements to North Dakota was compiled from the table "Jewish Farmers Settled Since the Operation of the Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society" in the JAAS *Report for the Year 1908*, pp. 65-72.

12. Ibid.; Sophie Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora: Memoirs of a Jewish Homesteader* (Berkeley, CA: Alternative Press, 1984), pp. 43-45.

13. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 94; Herman J. Levine and Benjamin Miller, *The American Jewish Farmer in Changing Times* (New York: The Jewish Agricultural Society, 1966), p. 23; Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, p. 393.

14. Samuel J. Rabinowitz, 19 June 1907; Joseph Kaminer, 20 March 1908; Joseph Peller, August 1909, BDHF Papers.

15. Sam Schwartz, 8 September 1908; Ed Gimble, June 1908; Solomon and Abraham Pomerance, 8 June 1909 and 3 July 1909, BDHF Papers; Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, p. 204.

16. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 95; Bessie Halpern Schwartz, "My Own Story," in *The East European Jewish Experience in America*, edited by Uri D. Herscher (Cincinnati: American Jewish Archives, 1983), p. 156; Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, pp. 396-97; William C. Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1983), pp. 19-20.

17. Hargreaves, *Dry Farming*, pp. 519-20; JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1903* (New York, 1904), pp. 10-12, 35; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part 2* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975), p. 172.

18. Usher Graff, 19 March 1907, BDHF Papers; JAAS, *Report for the Year 1902* (Chicago, 1903), p. 28.

19. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 70.

20. Mrs. J. C. Osborn, "Five Years on a Homestead," *Overland Monthly* 72 (September, 1918): 252.

21. JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1910* (New York, 1911), p. 8; Levy, "Central North Dakota's Jewish Farmers," p. 11; JAAS, *Report for the Year 1906* (Chicago, 1907), p. 22.

22. JAAS, "Jewish Farmers Settled," *Report for the Year 1908*; Glenda Riley, *The Female Frontier: A Comparative View of Women on the Prairie and the Plains* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988), pp. 29-40. Riley notes that Jewish settlement in the West was done by locating or bringing families together.

23. Levine and Miller, *The American Jewish Farmer*

in *Changing Times*, p. 15.

24. U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Social and Labor Needs of Farm Women, Report No. 103* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1914); JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1920*, p. 42; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 12, 35-36, 44.

25. JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1908* (New York, 1909), p. 30.

26. Ibid., pp. 30-31; *The Jewish Farmer* 6, no. 2 (February, 1913): 52.

27. JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1909*, p. 43.

28. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, p. 139; JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1909* (New York, 1910), p. 43; Luebke, "Regionalism and the Great Plains," p. 34; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 71.

29. Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, p. 56; Schwartz, "My Own Life," p. 159; "Sara Thal," in Kenneth Libo and Irving Howe, *We Lived There Too: In Their Own Words and Pictures—Pioneer Jews and the Westward Movement of America, 1630-1930* (New York: St. Martin's, 1984), p. 286.

30. Schwartz, "My Own Story," p. 169; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 89-93.

31. Paula E. Hyman, "Culture and Gender: Women in the Immigrant Jewish Community," in Berger, *The Legacy of Jewish Migration*, p. 163; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 70-72, 91; Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*, pp. 53, 112.

32. Henry and Lea Fine, "North Dakota Memories," edited by Norton B. Stern, *Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly* 9 (1977-78): 336-37; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 96; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, p. 72.

33. Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, pp. 392, 293; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 64-65. Jewish law contains 613 mitzvot, religious commandments prescribing rules for right living. Most of the mitzvot apply to both men and women although some are gender specific. While it also pertains to men who are ritually unclean, the mitzvot relating to purifying baths applies most often to women who are considered unclean from menstruation until immersion in a mikveh.

34. Hyman, "Culture and Gender," p. 163; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 44-45; Osborn, "Five Years on a Homestead," p. 175.

35. Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 35-36.

36. "Peretz Hirschbein," trans. Eleanor Robinson, in Libo and Howe, *We Lived There Too*, pp. 286-87.

37. Joseph, *History of the Baron de Hirsch Fund*, p. 133; JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1903* (New York, 1904), p. 11; JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1904* (New York, 1905), p. 12; Davidson, *Our Jewish Farmers*, p. 26.

38. Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 95.

39. JAAS, "Jewish Farmers Settled," *Report for the Year 1908*; Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, pp. 393, 394, 398-99; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 131-32. The Edelbergs, Pollacks, and Lupers were all placed on homesteads by the Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society.

40. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920*, vol. 6, part 1, *Reports on Agriculture*, "North Dakota County Table 1—Farms and Farm Property, 1920," pp. 626, 628; Hargreaves, *Dry Farming*, pp. 381, 413; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 245; JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1920*, p. 31; Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*, p. 112.

41. Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, p. 393; Fine, "North Dakota Memories," p. 338; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, pp. 83, 127; Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*, p. 53.

42. JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1917*, p. 9; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 52; Hargreaves, *Dry Farming*, p. 381.

43. James M. Richtik, "Competition for Settlers: The Canadian Viewpoint," *Great Plains Quarterly* 3 (Winter 1983): 42-43; Robinson, "Agricultural Activities of the Jews in America," p. 53.

44. Lazar, "From Ethnic Minority to Socio-Economic Elite," p. 65; Fine, "North Dakota Memories," pp. 335-36; Trupin, *Dakota Diaspora*, p. 135; Riley, *The Female Frontier*, p. 39; Schwartz, "My Own Story," pp. 174-75.

45. See Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*.

46. "Jewish Population of the United States, 1927," *American Jewish Year Book, 1928-29* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1928), p. 191. Loan information compiled from the JAIAS *Annual Reports, 1910-1920*.

47. JAIAS, *Annual Report of 1924* (New York, 1925), p. 13.

48. Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, p. 393; Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*, p. 53.

49. Sherman and Thorson, eds., *Plains Folk*, p. 393.