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Go West Young Mensch! The Rise and Decline of the Jewish Community of Carbon County, Wyoming (U.S.A.)

By Steven C. Dinero

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I. Introduction

The frontier has long been recognized as a geographic space "on the edge" of something else, somewhere else, another plane or place of seemingly greater power or significance. The frontier is "the end" as it were, that fringe which, for whatever reason, humanity reached but then, could simply go no further. Indeed, only the heartiest of souls make it out to the frontier and, for that matter, only the strongest manage to remain there and thrive. But just as spaces have edges, so too does society itself. And just as there is a mainstream, dominant discourse of held ideas and beliefs, there are those who feel that they reside on the social periphery. In the present era, communities might strive toward inclusivity, embracing those who are somehow "different." But history tells another tale. To be different from the majority is to stand out on the margins of society itself, a position which, over time, can be more than a bit wearing.

It is within this context that this study is situated. The community under discussion was comprised of a small yet significant group of immigrants to the United States who had long lived as "peripheral peoples." Thus they determined that their destinies belonged as far from their origins as might be possible. Coming predominantly from Russia and Eastern Europe at the turn of the 20th century, this group of predominantly Ashkenazic Jews (that is, Jews of Germanic background who generally spoke Yiddish, a language comprised with aspects of both Hebrew and German) made their way across the Atlantic to New York, and from there on to Chicago and other major cities of the U.S. But they did not stop there. Rather, they continued their journeys across the continent to the farthest fringes of the west and, via Denver or Cheyenne, eventually found their way to Carbon County, Wyoming and the town of Rawlins – one of the most remote, peripheral outposts one might encounter at that time.

It is apparent that overall, this select group was not particularly observant from a religious point of view. Indeed, by definition, urbanity and close proximity to one another is inherent in the daily practice of Jewish life. Numerous examples bear out this contention. If one seeks to follow the basic tenets of an observant lifestyle a handful of rules come into play. Ten Jewish men are required to create a traditional *minyan* (quorum), which is needed in order to carry out a number of rituals and prayers. On Sabbaths and holidays no vehicles may be used, thus requiring that basic amenities are walking distance from one's home (prayer space, for example). Almost all foods (most especially, meats) must be prepared in a specific manner prior to cooking and consumption; these rules are even stricter during Passover week.

The list goes on. But in short, Judaism is a very urbanizing faith system by its very nature, drawing community members to live, work, play and pray together in close proximity with one another. To live in a remote, rural environment is possible but, by definition, suggests a willingness to compromise on many if not all of these regulations.

This needn't suggest that those who relocated to the periphery were no longer connected to their Jewish roots or heritage. What it does suggest, however, is that like the non-Jewish community of Carbon County, those who found a home in such an area were particularly noteworthy, facing challenges and obstacles

Author: Ph.D. e-mail: director@carboncountymuseum.org

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which even their brethren in Wyoming's centers did not fully experience.

And yet, for about a century (roughly 1880-1980), a significant number found other ways to express their Jewish identities. Many worked side-by-side, married within families, and offered support and mutual comfort whenever it might be needed. And some did indeed observe, to the degree that this was possible.

In this regard, the study concludes by attempting to answer one key research question: While the arrival and development of a small Jewish enclave in Carbon County in the late 19th century may seem improbable, so too does its rather rapid demise in the late 1980s and early '90s. What happened – if anything specifically – to precipitate the wholesale departure of the Jewish community from the county during this period?

II. An Overview of Jewish Immigration to the Wyoming Territory (1880-1920)

The history of Jewish migration to Wyoming can be traced to a number of interconnected developments that developed concomitantly during the years just before and after the turn of the 20th century. It is difficult to designate which is cause and which is effect, but it is possible to say that these historic developments, when combined, created the conditions necessary to push the new immigrants from Eastern Europe and Russia west – if only for a brief period in time.

Pressures coming from Russia and throughout Eastern Europe that facilitated the initial push to America during this period are well-known. A substantial literature has developed over the decades documenting the struggles experienced by communities across the pale of settlement that at one time extended across much of what are today the countries of Poland, Belarus, Russia, and Germany. Though Hitler would not rise to power until 1933 anti-Semitic acts, pogroms, poverty and other threats to the Jewish community were pervasive in late 19th century Europe and are well-known and documented (Wolin, 2000: 24). As a result, wave-upon-wave of largely ill-prepared new immigrants began flowing into the United States, the greatest numbers arriving beginning in the early 1880s (Marcus, 1993: 432). In that decade alone, over 200,000 Eastern European Jews were received.

The vast majority of these immigrants sought to stay in New York, where their ships had come into port. Still, conditions of overcrowding combined with rising anti-immigrant sentiment across the country (including the halls of the government in Washington) created cause for concern. Those Jews who were already in the U.S. felt ill-prepared in many cases to help absorb the newcomers. Some felt that the influx would be better served in Palestine, and wondered aloud why they hadn't fled there (Marcus 1993, 432-33). While they sought to help their fellow Jews, many felt overwhelmed and anxious with the task of trying to absorb so many into their already stressed communities.

One solution, albeit a less than ideal one, was to encourage the newcomers to move beyond the New York area. An initiative of Jewish colonization was developed whereby new immigrants were encouraged upon their arrival to continue on to other parts of the U.S. where they might live with greater autonomy in what amounted to "kibbutz-like" agricultural settings (that is, communal farms designed around Socialist ideals). Marcus (1993) explains that though such a solution may sound odd to the ears of the late 20th century Jewish ideal, this idea gained significant traction at the time. Some of these locations were to be found in the rural areas of the East Coast (such as southern New Jersey), but most often the newcomers were sent west to the Dakotas, Oregon, Kansas, and beyond (Marcus, 1993: 434). Marcus notes that it didn't take long for many to realize that these efforts were "a failure" (436). But the draw of new opportunities out west, especially for young Jewish men recently arriving from the crowded towns and cities of Europe, offered hope and possibilities that, for some at least, was actually quite exciting and attractive.

Wyoming offered an option as well. In the late 1860s, the Union Pacific railroad had expanded west across the southern part of the Territory as it connected Cheyenne, Laramie, Rawlins, Rock Springs and several smaller communities along the way. Not only were Jews involved in the building of the line as it moved westward towards its eventual connection with the eastbound line at Promontory Point, Utah, but merchants similarly sought to take advantage of the opportunities opened by this new transportation link. In this regard they were no different than the rest of the men who also hoped to take advantage of the UPRR to improve their fortunes along the expanding rail line (Hallberg 1989).

The turn of the century era was, according to Wolin, a "boom" period for Eastern European Jewry's movement to Wyoming (2000: 14). The railroad provided inroads into the southern part of the Territory and newly developing State. Meantime Jewish colonies, which had initially been envisioned in the 1880s, eventually began to materialize as well. The Jewish Agricultural Industrial Aid Society (later known as the Jewish Agricultural Society [JAS]) and similar resettlement organizations began to develop and fund initiatives primarily in the eastern region, first at Huntley (1906; see Hallberg 2015, Krampner, 2011; Vanderpoel 1997) and later at Chugwater (1910; see Massion, 2017). Wealthy Jewish philanthropists such as Baron Maurice De Hirsch (a renowned European banking magnate) donated millions for such "Jewish farming" efforts; in the case of the JAS, De Hirsch operated a fund of $2.5 million (equal to over $76,000,000 in 2020) to support this work.

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There is no doubt that the settlement of European Jewish families thousands of miles from what was once "home" in an unfamiliar environment was, to say the least, a speculative venture. As will be discussed in the case of Cotopaxi, Colorado (see below), the idea of placing a handful of Yiddish-speaking families in the American heartland with little preparation was somewhat ill-conceived. In the case of Platte County where the Chugwater settlement was developed, for example, settlers arrived with little more than the shirts on their backs. Many had to start out literally from scratch, building homes, barns – everything really – with no previous knowledge or experience of the land or environment to which they had been sent (see Images 1 and 2).

Further, while the land was certainly good for the raising of hard winter crops such as wheat, it was appropriate for little else (Thompson, June 23, 2019). As the immigrants explained in a 1913 letter (Massion 2017; [*translated from Yiddish*]):

> We are 35 Jewish farmers and our present crop was to give us a good return and entice other Jews to come and be farmers. We didn't have a good crop but after thinking about it, it wasn't so bad…Our Jewish colony is happy and we're predicting good crops next year. One thing is holding us back. We're missing horses and machinery…Another thing we are missing is milk cows. The sad thing is that we have to wait to earn a living from crops. At the same time, our Christian neighbors are making a living from cows and poultry. But I want to remark that our Jewish farmers raised a lot of hens…

In short, the new settlers were dependent upon cash crops for much of their livelihood.

Harsh winters and drought challenged the newcomers at every turn. Surely this life was better than what they had left behind in Europe, but still, it had its difficulties; Massion (2017) even notes that despite the small size of the colony, desperation at times prevailed; theft of crops and livestock from one another was a relatively common occurrence.



Image 1: Barn built by settler Hiram Massion and his siblings and their spouses. They all lived together in the barn until they had houses to live in on their own homesteads (Photo by the author, July 2019)]

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Image 2: Janousek Homestead: (Left to Right) Ed Janousek, Joe Janousek, Jimmy Krisl, Rudy Krisl, Joe Kaspar (seated) ca 1912. Courtesy Chugwater Museum]

The colony at Huntley, Goshen County, fared no better. Initially, fourteen families were sent from the Pittsburgh area to this region of eastern Wyoming not far from Torrington. At its height, 56 Jewish families would make the colony their home (Vanderpoel, 1997: 8). Again, the goal was the same as that in Platte County: well-intentioned philanthropists on the East Coast believed that by growing such "agricultural Utopias," they might serve to relieve urban congestion that was resulting from the rapid immigration of refugees fleeing the turmoil in Europe. But here too such romantic idealism could not compensate for the poor soil, lack of water and other challenges that the families faced upon their arrival (Hallberg 2015, Hallberg 1989, Vanderpoel 1997).

Still, one cannot help but feel that though these philanthropists may not have fully thought out every logistical aspect of the settlement initiative, the idea itself of encouraging this movement West was not all that far-fetched as it may now seem, particularly given the communal nature of the cultures that these Jewries were fleeing. The JAS that sponsored Huntley, for example, had a sister organization in Czarist Russia that had similarly sought to encourage Jewish agricultural settlement in the 19th century – albeit in Siberia (Vanderpoel, 1997: 4). As Hallberg (1989: 18) notes:

> There is no doubt the concept of free land was both an attractive and desirable objective. Positive images associated with working and owning land meant the possible realization of the yeoman heritage idealized in popular and classical literature. For immigrants, land ownership was a symbol of wealth heretofore denied them.

By 1912, over 100,000 Jews were living in the Far West, having fled "persecution, poverty and discontent" back in the troubled lands of Eastern Europe (Wolin, 2000: ix). That year yet another colonizing effort, the largest ever to be tried in Wyoming, was proposed, but this project never came to fruition (Hallberg, 1989). By then, given the experiences at Huntley and Chugwater most especially, it was evident that the colonization movement was already in decline. Within a few short years, Wyoming's Jewish farmers would begin to give up and walk away, moving to Cheyenne and other larger urban areas (Massion, 2017).

Not surprisingly, the majority of the pre-WWI Jewish population was living not in small agrarian environments but rather in the region's growing hubs where opportunities continued to expand. In towns large and small all along the railroad most especially, Jews occupied a number of diverse occupations in retail, tourism and professional work. And following the turn of the century, the level of Orthodoxy and observance rose as well; many of the newcomers showed greater interest, for example in following the dietary laws, attending synagogue and in participating in holidays and other traditional activities (Hallberg, 1989: 25).

And yet, given the circumstances of the small population involved and the distances between

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communities, compromises would become a way of life. The difficulties of living in small Jewish communities can, by definition, create a certain level of emotional discomfort, if not guilt (Wolin, 2000: 51). The question of Jewish identity and assimilation similarly presented additional challenges. Such issues have long provided the foundation for existential quandaries throughout the diasporic Jewish community. Still, one might offer that in the case of Wyoming, where the Jewish population has held steady at only about 1,000 people between 1899 and 2019 ("Jewish Population"), such questions and fears were especially acute.

And yet, the community not only persevered, but thrived. The following cases provide examples of how one such Jewish community was able to develop and grow – despite the inherent challenges of its remote, peripheral location.

III. The Case of Carbon County, WY: Jewish Life in an American Wilderness

There is no doubt that moving out to the Wyoming Territory at the turn of the 20th century was not for just anyone. The Territory had only formally organized in 1869. By the late 1800s and early 1900s, only the hardiest of souls considered leaving the relative comfort of the East for the West, passing by the opportunities which hundreds of miles of rich Midwestern lands had to offer. The dream of more land, more opportunity, and extraordinary freedom drew only a select breed. This was all the more true of Jewish pioneers, for life outside of the urban enclaves of New York and Chicago, living amongst others with shared beliefs and values, was especially challenging.

What follows are the stories of a random sample of individuals and families who relocated to Carbon County during this period. Though chosen with no specific agenda, they well-represent a variety of different aspects of Jewish life on the fringes of Wyoming's frontier. Census records, ship manifests, military and family records, and similar pieces of historic records and documentation were used in order to isolate this small group with the single guiding principle that each, in one manner or another, identified themselves as part of the Jewish People. It should be noted that Jewish identity as discussed below is *not* ascertained by any form of religious practice. On the contrary, Jewish identity may be expressed in a multitude of ways across a spectrum of indices: cultural, linguistic, historic, and so on. Observance may be a part of this list but is not in any way a requirement. Rather, as will be seen below, Jewish identity was expressed in Carbon County in a manner which was in many ways different from what one might see in other parts of the urbanizing U.S. during the twentieth century. And in this regard, it is the contention here that the cases presented below are both that much more unique – and that much more compelling.

The Jews of Carbon County: A Series of Case Studies

The Jews who came to south-central Wyoming were, by and large, not seeking to find one another. Rather, they were seeking the opportunities that this land had to offer during a very unique period in the history of the growth and development of this region. At times they did find one another and small pockets of "Jewishness" were briefly formed; at others, lone individuals managed as best they could. Still, as the following stories reveal, those Jewish immigrants who came west did little to in any way change the High Desert; conversely the land did well to change those who came, melding them in so many ways into "Americans," largely, albeit not entirely, indistinct from their non-Jewish neighbors.

Carl Goldstein (d. 1879) – The "Mysterious Jew Freighter"

According to all of the historic documents consulted for the study, the earliest Jewish presence in Carbon County appears to begin only a few decades into the settling of the region in the 1870s, a time when the population of the County as a whole barely reached 1,500. This does not mean that Jewish pioneers weren't present earlier, of course, but if so, they made little effort to be identified as "Jewish."

The first mention of anyone who can be identified as having Jewish heritage was a merchant by the name of Carl Goldstein. Overall, Goldstein's life remains something of a mystery. Despite persistent efforts, virtually no information can be found concerning how he came to live in Carbon County. Indeed, he might easily have gone unnoticed were it not for being involved, if only tangentially, in one of the most notorious events in the region's storied history.

The records indicate that Goldstein became a naturalized American citizen on September 17, 1868. Even this piece of evidence is brief; it merely notes that he came from "Russia-Poland," and that his citizenship was approved in the small Iowa town of Keokuk. The town, located midway between Chicago and Kansas City on the Mississippi, served as a point of departure for Union soldiers heading south during the Civil War. The town was a central point of activity in the region throughout the late-1860s.

But in truth Goldstein only gained notoriety and the attention of scholars when, in the late 1870s, his work is repeatedly mentioned in the context of the events surrounding what later came to be known as the "Meeker Massacre." In fact, he is identified in several instances in both primary and secondary sources as a "Jew Freighter" (Rankin, 68), an "Israelite" (History of Clear Creek, 146; The American Citizen), or, more cryptically, a "mysterious old peddler" (Meschter, 210). Regardless, several facts about Goldstein are clear. It is apparent that he and a young associate, Julius Moore, sold supplies out of Rawlins to soldiers and White River Ute Natives alike along the Wyoming-Colorado frontier

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in the latter part of the 19th century. In the autumn of 1879, the two found themselves caught up in a conflict from which they would never escape.

According to a number of sources, Goldstein and Moore probably had no idea that they would find themselves in the middle of great danger. In late September, conditions in the region had reached an obvious boiling point. Rev. Nathan Meeker, Indian agent for the White River Agency, an Ute reserve established by the American Government in an attempt to settle the Native people of the region, had long sought to establish better relations with the local Native community. But the efforts at White River had met with mixed results.

Meeker's agenda was mostly centered upon encouraging the development of agriculture in the area (as opposed to the traditional horseback-based hunting tradition of the Ute). In theory such efforts might facilitate better relations between the Native and White populations. Moreover and perhaps more to the point, such policies would allow for greater White expansion and settlement into new western territories while further constraining Native land-use claims. And yet, the Natives made for poor farmers. Famine and hunger began to spread throughout the region. Rather than to compromise with the recognition that his efforts were failing to fully gain traction, Meeker increasingly sought succor from local troops based in the nearby Wyoming Territory to secure the reserve in order to quell any Native dissent.

It was clear then by the fall of '79 that a confrontation between the Ute and the American Government representatives was inevitable. Given that throughout the summer the Utes had been preparing for violence, securing ammunition and gathering men, it was apparent that an attack was imminent. And yet on the fateful days in question, Goldstein and Moore walked into a situation with little awareness, apparently, of what lay ahead of them.

The two were *en route* from Rawlins southwards to the White River Agency south of Baggs, Wyoming. Meantime several bands of Utes were headed toward the Agency. Mounted on horseback, the Ute headed out of a region known as Milk Creek towards Coal Creek. Eventually they reached the Agency where, according to reports (Rankin, 76), a massacre of major proportions took place. Meeker, his wife and family members, and several others perished in the fighting. For those in the know, the attack was hardly unexpected. Explains Meschter (210):

> The entry of [U.S.] troops into their reservation could mean only one thing to the Utes and they reacted, violently, on September 29, 1879. Nathan Meeker and all of the white men at the Agency were slain...

After about a week or so upon conclusion of the fighting at the compound, the troops that had been in charge of protecting Meeker and his family began to disperse and head back north to Wyoming. On October 8, these troops came upon the dead bodies of Goldstein and Moore and their ruined wagons at a spot called Stinking Gulch (Rankin, 83; Echoes, 2014). It was clear that the Ute had reached the camp along their way to the Agency and, in some sort of encounter, had killed the two men. Goldstein had been shot twice in the shoulder, and was left 30 feet from his wagons lying in the sage in a gulch six miles from the Agency. Moore took two bullets to the chest and was hacked up with a knife or hatchet (American Citizen, 1879; Rankin, 76). According to Rankin (76), "the Indians robbed the wagons of blankets and such articles as they could pack with them, and set fire to other supplies, such as flour, salt pork, etc. They drove Goldstein's [horse] teams along with the government loot." In addition, losses to Goldstein's traveling store included a gun, ox chains, oxbows, and 44 chickens (Kinnaman, Personal files).

W. B. Vickers, a renowned journalist at the time, provided some additional information about these events only days after they occurred (History of Clear Creek, 146):

> On Monday, October 13, [1879], just two weeks after the first battle, two couriers arrived at Rawlins from what had been the White River Agency, and reported that Gen. Merritt had reached the Agency on the 11th. On his way he found many dead bodies. Among others, he found the body of Carl Goldstein, an Israelite, who left Rawlins with Government supplies for the Utes at White River Agency. He was found in a gulch six miles north of the Agency. He was shot twice through the shoulder and was about two miles from his wagons. A teamster names [sic] Julius Moore, formerly from Bainbridge, Mass., who was with him when he left Rawlins, was found almost one hundred yards from Goldstein with two bullet-holes in his breast, and his body hacked a mutilated with a knife or hatchet.

Goldstein was buried by the troops who discovered him. The marker, posted a half-mile from where they met their deaths, lists his name along with eight others who died that day. While not exactly ideal, this is perhaps better than the name that appears next to Goldstein: noted as an "Unknown Teamster" this is a reference to Julius Moore, the Massachusetts youth who was also killed that day.

It is certainly coincidental that the very days during which the events described above occurred corresponded directly with the Jewish High Holidays in 1879. While Goldstein was camped on the frontier on September 27 and while the Utes were securing ammunition in preparation for the inevitable encounter at the White Agency, the Jewish world celebrated the holiest day in the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. By September 29 the U.S. troops had begun to make their entrance into the Agency and the Utes were similarly preparing to meet them with full force and by the 30th, the conflict was under way.

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The holiday of Sukkoth, the Feast of Booths commemorating the Israelites' time spent in the desert following the Exodus, began the evening of October 1, and continued until the evening of October 3, 1879. Goldstein was, by then, most certainly dead – and in all likelihood had been oblivious to these celebrations. Indeed, though there is no doubt that he was recognized near and far as a unique resident of Carbon County, what makes Carl Goldstein so very noteworthy is surely not his religion but rather, his involvement – albeit in a most ill-fated manner – in one of the most notable events in the history of the Wyoming and Colorado territories.

Emanuel Harris Saltiel (1844-1900) – A Man Without a Country

The story of Carl Goldstein's untimely death might be summarized as "being in the wrong place at the wrong time." Quite a different story with quite a different lesson might be told concerning the Jewish businessman, Emanuel Saltiel. Unlike Goldstein, who could have easily lived his life in obscurity, a considerable amount of information is available about Saltiel. It could even be said that he has developed a bit of a following since his death as some have sought to, in effect, cleanse the record concerning his life in general and, most especially, his less than savory behaviors toward his fellow Jews. If one separates the myth from the man, however, a story comes to light of, at the very least, an active businessman who lived a colorful life filled with exceptional intrigue.

Far more is also known about Saltiel's family background than about that of Carl Goldstein. His ancestors have made exceptional efforts to trace their family history. What becomes clear is that this was no ordinary family of Eastern European peasants; rather, it is apparent that this family, coming from Sephardic (that is, "Spanish," southern European lineage), was well-educated and learned and, as a result, provides an exceptional story relative to those that typify the more common Jewish-American immigrant experience.

To this day, the majority of American Jews are overwhelmingly Ashkenazic in origin. Indeed as of 2012 the American Jewish population was just slightly over eight million; of these, roughly 72% had Eastern European origins while only 6% identified as either "Sephardic" or "Italian," (a similar though slightly separate category of Jews today centered in such cities as Rome and Florence). But more, Emanuel's immediate family hailed from Bath, a small community in the United Kingdom 185 kilometers from London. The family resided in and around London going back some generations. During the period in question (1900), the Jewish population of the U.K. was quite small, home to only about 250,000 Jews. The number in the U.S. was significantly bigger, home to about 1.5 million, but again, predominantly of Eastern European origins. In other words, Emanuel Saltiel's family of origin was unique in various ways, not least of which was the degree to which its members appear to have been exceptional amongst their peers throughout the centuries.

His father, J. John Saltiel, (b. 1822), was the son of Isaac Abraham Saltiel (1766-1836) and Hannah Saltiel (1781-1849). Hannah's father was Abraham Moses; little more can be found about him in the sources. But on the Saltiel side, records go back much further. Isaac's father, Yomtov Isaac Shaltiel (Sephardic Jews, unlike Ashkenazic, Eastern European Jews, name their children after themselves even while they are still living), was born in 1741 and lived to 1807. His wife, Deborah Abraham Saltiel, was born in 1745 and died in 1821. And though records do not tell us more about her, there is yet more about Yomtov. His father, Isaac Eliahu Shealtiel, (b. ca.1713-1790), appears to have had connections to Livorno, Italy, though he too raised his family in London. There is little mention of his wife Luna Rachel's background (d. 1777), however.

And yet, family members have been able to trace this extraordinary story back further still. Isaac Eliahu's father, Eliahu Elias Shaltiel Gracian (b. ca. 1690-d. ca. 1740) was in fact of Greek/Cretan origins, as his name implies. Though it is uncertain where in Greece he was born, records indicate that he died in Thessaloniki, a town in northeast Greece.

Though the details begin to get sketchy at this point, it is apparent that Eliahu Elias's father's name was Isaac Shaltiel Shaltiel Gracian. No information is known of when he was born or died, though this had to be sometime in the mid-17th century. But what is known is that again, a connection is found to Livorno where, according to family research, it is believed that he was born. His father Yehuda, was, it appears, a physician, though little more is known. But his father, Emanuel Yehuda, is believed to have been born in 1518 in Barcelona. The line becomes extremely thin at this point, but still, some information may be discerned from the sources. Emanuel Yehuda's father, known as Shealtiel Gracian Shealtiel II, was the son of Shaltiel Gracien of Barcelona I. And finally, the line ends with Solomon Shealtiel Gracien, (b. 1311) who died ca. 1391 in Gerona, Spain.

Emanuel Saltiel's mother's name was Jane Breina Harris (1826-88). Her mother, Rachel Hart Harris, was born in Aldgate (Middlesex) in 1786. Her father's name was Emanuel Harris, but little is found about him in the records. As such, little more is known of his mother's side of the family, unlike the extraordinary amount of information that is to be mined on his father's side.

The Spitalfields (Middlesex; U.K.) census of 1861 indicates that Emanuel's mother (age 59), her mother (age 75), and he lived together under one roof with Emanuel, age 16, performing the occupation of

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"warehouseman." But this followed a tumultuous period in the family's life. John and Jane had married in May 1843. A year later, unbeknownst to Jane, John married a second wife, Harriet Bates Davison. He was found out, tried, and sent to prison for one month. But only a few months thereafter Emanuel was born, the son of John and Jane. And yet, John would have two more children, both with Harriet, one in 1845 (Elizabeth, whose baptism records of April 19, 1846 show that her parents are Harriet Bates and Alfred Jacob, though her surname is indicated to be Saltiel) and another in 1848 (Alfred, whose baptism records of April 30, 1848 show that his parents are Harriet Bates and Alfred Jacob, though his surname, again, is Saltiel).

Emanuel's father, John Saltiel, died soon after these events in 1850 at the age of 28, leaving behind three toddlers with two different wives. The Stepney (Middlesex) census of 1851 records that 25 year-old Harriet Saltiel lived alone with her two small children, 5 year-old Elizabeth and 2 year-old Alfred, and worked down at the London docks to support her small family.

As for Emanuel himself, much can be said here as well. These early troubles in his childhood led, perhaps, to only greater drama later on in life. On the one hand Emanuel was quite clearly an energetic and talented fellow, able to develop considerable business acumen as well as to access training in engineering with an expertise in mining for precious metals. And yet his personal and professional life was, to say the least, similarly complicated like that of his family of origin. Only a few years after the 1861 census was taken Saltiel, at the age of 21 and after having immigrated to the U.S, is documented as having been caught up in the Civil War in a most extraordinary way.

As extensive research reveals (see Unrau, 1973), these events suggest his affairs tended to be particularly complicated, often involving a certain level of dishonesty and manipulation. In brief, he was conscripted into the Confederate Army soon after his arrival in the U.S., apparently against his will. Eventually he was captured by the Union Army in Georgia and jailed in Louisville, but was eventually freed. He then expressed willingness to serve on the side of the Union and showed an interest in relocating to Indian Country (111). He was sent out to Ft. Laramie, Wyoming Territory, where he passed himself off as a "Sergeant Joseph Isaacs" from New Orleans. The ruse apparently worked and in fact, the men at Ft. Laramie did not catch on to his treachery for a long while (119-20).

However, he did not get along well with all of his comrades, most especially his superior officers. In the summer of 1865 he was young, intemperate, and not always willing to hold his tongue. As such, he had a tendency to rub his fellows the wrong way and, in time, to find himself again jailed, this time on charges of mutiny, sedition, disloyalty and desertion (116-17). His record of having initially fought on the Confederate side of the War surely did little to help his case. But his circumstances were further complicated when it was finally revealed that in truth his name was not "Joseph Isaacs" but Emanuel H. Saltiel and that he was, in fact, not an American southerner but an Englishman.

The charges against Isaacs/Saltiel were largely trumped up and unfounded and in time, he escaped from the situation unscathed. Still, why would someone adopt a pseudonym and "by chance" end up serving on both sides of the same war? Clearly his involvement had little if anything to do with ideology, the abolition of slavery or other concerns of the day. Rather, Unrau speculates that it was apparent from the outset that Saltiel had assumed that he was free from conscription into the War because of his English origins. And yet, much to his chagrin, he found out otherwise. Once drafted, he seemed to believe that he could weasel his way out of the situation through creative deceit and duplicity. In this regard then he was not only young and naïve but, perhaps, a bit too self-assured. As such, were he guilty of anything, it was for being, perhaps, excessively ambitious, outspoken and even a bit too cocky (Unrau, 1973: 130).

Not long after his bizarre experiences in the War, Emanuel decided that it was time to marry. According to the Episcopal Diocese of New York Church records his first marriage, to Elizabeth "Lizzie" Melvina Wolfe (b. ca. 1856-1922), began on May 26, 1870. He was 25; she was by all indications, 14 or 15, though on the marriage certificate the age listed for her is 20. He lists his address as E. 109th Street in New York. He listed his occupation at this time as an "Editor," though for what publication – if any – is simply unclear. Elizabeth too resided in New York at the Grand Hotel on Broadway though she was from New Orleans (where they had likely met), the daughter of James Monroe Wolfe and Caroline Gates Wolfe, both of whom were born in the Netherlands.

Two similar, albeit different, censuses taken ten years later in 1880 in St. Louis, Missouri, and Fremont County, Colorado, offer additional information concerning this family. According to the St. Louis census, it does appear that the couple's eldest son, John (1871-1948), was in fact born when Elizabeth (identified in this census as "Melvina") was in her mid- to late teens. In the Fremont County census however, ages and even names are changed. Emanuel, who is listed in Missouri as a 30 year-old miner, is listed as a 35 year-old miner in Colorado. "Melvina" is listed as 24 years old, her birthplace as New Orleans, and her parents are listed as having come originally from the Netherlands. But in the Colorado census, her name is listed as "Elizabeth," her age is listed as 30, and she is listed as having come to the U.S. from England.

One might surmise that these are two different Saltiel families who just happen to have connections to England, New Orleans, and the Netherlands, and whose

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household heads in both cases just happen to be miners named "Emanuel Saltiel." Possibly, until the children's names are noted. In Missouri, in addition to John (age 10), Henry (age 7; 1874-1950) and Mary (age 4; b. 1876) are listed. In the Colorado census John is listed again (age 10), as well as Henry (age 8) and Lucy (age 6). It is unclear why Adelaide (1876-1924) is not listed in either census, nor why Mary is excluded just when Lucy appears; still, all five of these names are those of the children of the "E.H. Saltiel" under discussion, confirming that both censuses refer to his family, but with different names and ages in different locations though in the very same year.

Like many things in the life of Emanuel Saltiel, it is unclear when and why the marriage to Elizabeth dissolved. Regardless, she returned east around 1881; the census of 1895 reveals that by then she and her eldest son, Henry, resided in Newark, New Jersey. She never remarried and, as late as 1912, lived alone in Ridgefield Park, NJ, where she worked as a secretary. She died there ten years later, in 1922.

Meantime Emanuel was on to his next adventure. By the early 1880s, as the second of the two censuses noted above confirm, he was firmly entrenched in the west, ready to begin a new enterprise. He created the Jewish colony of Cotopaxi, Colorado in 1882. The colony was as much a "business" as it was a "town," advertised, for example, in the Eighth Annual Volume of the *Colorado State Business Directory* (1882) as "The Cotopaxi Town Company" of Fremont County, complete with "mountain views", easy access to Denver, regular mail and telegraph services, and offering "Special inducements to parties who desire to locate and build" (http://www.cotopaxi-colony.com).

As noted in the Chugwater and Huntley cases, the creation of Jewish utopias in the west during this period already had precedent. Nonetheless Saltiel, it appears, did not truly seek to provide Jewish immigrants with a genuine opportunity in a "New Jerusalem" upon their arrival west. Rather, the con was rather simple though quite sophisticated at the same time. In brief, Saltiel approached the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) in New York with an offer to settle new Jewish immigrants in his town in Colorado. This offer came at a time when, as noted, immigration was a highly charged issue in the U.S. Saltiel's offer seemed fair and timely; with 200,000-300,000 Jews fleeing Russia alone to the East Coast due to pogroms, the situation was dire and ripe for some sort of a solution.

HIAS gave Saltiel $10,000 (the equivalent of about $250,000 in 2020 dollars) to bring these immigrants west. According to the "Chieftain" (1970) he succeeded in bringing about 20 Russian Jewish families to his colony on the Arkansas River beginning in 1881 and arriving, finally, in 1882. At its height, a total of about 65 people lived there (https://www.cotopaxi-colony.com). And yet, the supposed "utopia" blessed with rich farmland that had been promised to the colonists was nothing of the kind. Rather, the land was rocky and impossible to farm; even potatoes were difficult to grow in the poor soil. The twelve small houses that comprised the town were barely habitable.

The immigrants were essentially trapped, as the colony was miles from any town of significance. They had limited knowledge of the land and nowhere to go. And so they did their best in their new home; they converted one of the buildings into a Chasidic synagogue and sought kosher foods which were sent from Denver 240 km to the north (signs that, despite their circumstances, they wished to be as observant as possible) and, during the short duration that the town existed (1882-84), celebrated a number of *simchas* (joyous events) including three weddings. The funeral of one adult and some infants who died soon after birth (referred to simply as "Baby X" or as "The Child of X" in the Cotopaxi Cemetery) further affirms that this small group managed as best as they could, living – and even dying – as observant Jews miles from their lands of origin.

It is fairly evident in retrospect that Saltiel's goal was to use this plan as a ploy for creating an easily pliable labor force for the mines that he was developing in central Colorado at the time. As the colonists' farming efforts failed and as circumstances in the town felt increasingly "hopeless" (Chieftain, 1970) two of the community's leaders were sent as emissaries to Denver to seek help from the Jewish community at large. They brought back representatives who, according to reports, were "horrified" by what they found. Upon their return to Denver they collected funds, clothing and medical supplies to be sent back to Cotopaxi. Meantime community members in Denver also contacted HIAS in New York to report about what they had found. Soon thereafter the colony was disbanded, with most families relocating to Denver.

And what of Saltiel? In the midst of the dubious circumstances at Cotopaxi, documents show that he married again on February 14, 1883 in Pueblo, Colorado (120 km east of the colony) this time to Fannie Shelvelson (1857 -1922). The marriage license reveals that a justice of the peace presided at the ceremony. According to the 1880 Syracuse, New York census, Fannie was born in 1857, the eldest in a Polish Jewish immigrant family that included three sisters, a brother, and (at that time) her 50 year old mother. Now three years later, she was living in Colorado with her new husband, business entrepreneur Emanuel Saltiel.

Not a great deal more is known about this marriage. No children resulted and the marriage was brief (Kinnaman, Personal files). Court documents reveal that it wasn't until June 22, 1891, that the divorce was finalized. But in rather extraordinary fashion, Fannie remarried not even a month later, on July 14, 1891 to Jeremiah (Jerry) McLene, a hotel keeper originally from

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Alabama. The Denver ceremony was presided over by a minister. And indeed, the 1900 federal census reveals that less than a decade on, Fannie had created a new life in Chicago where she, now age 39, resided with her new husband, age 35. The couple, it seems, remained childless.

Fannie remained in Chicago until her death in January 1922, at the age of 65. She was then buried in the Congregation Emanuel cemetery back in Denver, with no recognition of her marriage to Saltiel – or McLene for that matter. The name on the headstone simply reads "Shelvelson."

And though the Cotopaxi land ruse had come to an end, this did not mean that Saltiel's scheming had as well. Still, his activities were catching up with him. In June 1897, *The New York Times* reported that Saltiel, along with other business partners, had been indicted earlier that year in a scam involving "securing forged deeds to valuable real estate and then borrowing money upon these worthless papers." Wanted as an accomplice to the scheme which had connections in Chicago, Denver, and Butte, Montana, Emanuel finally fled Colorado for Wyoming.

Saltiel relocated to the Seminoe district of Carbon County, about 80 km by horseback from Rawlins. The area was known for iron, coal, and other mineral investments. Saltiel manufactured pig iron for example, a crude material used throughout the building industry. He also created a post office at Seminoe, and appointed his new young wife Annie to run it (Kinnaman, Personal files).

Annie Phalen (1868-1942), Saltiel's third wife, was born in Boston, the daughter of Irish immigrants. It is unclear where Emanuel met Annie or when they were married. But what is certain is that she was rather young in comparison to him; John, Emanuel's eldest son, had been born in 1871 while she was born in 1868. Still, the marriage must have been quite short, and this time not due to divorce.

In January 1900 Emanuel died suddenly at age 56. According to news reports his son Henry, who had relocated from New Jersey soon after the completion of the 1895 census, carried the body on muleback to Rawlins. There were no Jews to speak of in the town at that time and all the churches initially refused to accept the body as Jewish burial rites differ significantly from those of the Christian churches (for example, traditionally the body is not embalmed but rather, is buried soon after death before decay can begin). Finally, the Episcopal Church agreed to take Emanuel and carry out the needed preparations. Rasmussen Funeral Home completed the work (*Carbon County Journal*, January 13, 1900).There is no record of Emanuel Saltiel's burial site in the Rawlins Cemetery. In the Episcopal Church records however, there is a notation that he was in fact buried by the Church. Under the heading "Date of Baptism" the Rev. E. R. Dodd, the officiant who carried out the ceremony that January day, simply wrote "a Jew."

Following Emanuel's death, Annie and Henry lived together in Rawlins for several years. They were born only six years apart though, according to the 1900 census taken soon after Emanuel's death, they record that they were separated by only four years (30 and 26). While this could have been a simple mistake, these errors continue throughout their time together. By 1910 they reported being ten years apart in age (Annie 42, Henry 32). In this census she is said to be working on a farm (ranch) while he was working in mining as a contractor.

By 1920 – twenty years following Emanuel's death – they continued to cohabitate. At this point they now reported a 21 year age gap (Annie 51, Henry a very young 30). At this point Henry worked for Union Pacific. But by 1930 in the midst of the Depression, things apparently changed. At this point, Henry was, for the first time, listed on the census as the head of the household. As for ages, the gap had now narrowed (Annie 64, Henry 51). In this census Henry was listed as a laborer for the telephone company – but noted that at the time he was unemployed. Annie was working, however, as a "servant" in a private home.

By 1940, Annie Saltiel lived alone in Rawlins. Her recorded age, according to the U.S. census taken that year, was 70 years old. Two years later – 42 years after her husband had passed – Annie died. She was buried in a Catholic service by Rasmussen Funeral Home, and buried in the Rawlins Cemetery. Henry died eight years later, and also was buried at Rawlins with Catholic services.

Though he lived there only briefly, Emanuel Saltiel was clearly an exceptional figure in the annals of the history of Carbon County's Jewish immigrant experience. And yet, while he may come across as bigger than life, one can't help but come away feeling as if he was somewhat of a tortured soul. It appears that he was never at ease, and that to his dying day in the Seminoe hills, his cons and schemes most certainly got the best of him. In many ways, he almost comes across as an "Ebenezer Scrooge"-like character – without ever having had the benefit of the visits by the three specters.

Perhaps a quote in Unrau (1973) taken from a letter written by Saltiel in 1865 to a cousin offers one of the best insights into the man that one might ever hope to find (132; emphasis added):

> I have never passed a happy day since I left London…and have been the victim of fortune, sometimes elated by unlooked for success and at other times despondent at the breaking down of my best laid plans…[but] the American nation is really a wonder and it is proof to all the world that *man does not want a king to govern him*.

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To be sure, Saltiel wanted nothing more than to do things his way, regardless of who got in his way, rules be damned. His cleverness got him just so far. But in the end, perhaps not far enough.

Isadore Alia Bolten (1885-1951) – An American Success Story

Reviewing the story of Emanuel Saltiel, it is difficult to come away feeling anything but a certain degree of antipathy towards the man. Quite the opposite is true of Isadore Bolten, a Russian Jewish immigrant who came to Carbon County not long after Saltiel's passing. In some ways his story, it seems, is the antithesis of that of Saltiel. Bolten's life was an almost stereotypical "rags to riches" affair (Kinnaman, December 11, 2018).

Israel Boloten was born in Mogeloff Province, Russia on March 28, 1885. He grew up in a peasant family in White Russia, where he experienced a difficult childhood. At the age of 18 months his father, an officer in the Czar's army, sent him to live with an uncle after his mother passed away. He was given no formal education, though he did learn a trade – shoemaking.

He arrived in New York alone on March 13, 1907 at age 22 on the ship *Smolensk* from Libau, Latvia with no knowledge of English and, according to the ship manifest, $5 in his pocket. His occupation was denoted as "shoemaker." The 1910 Federal census form indicates that his name was "Isadore Balatin," and his 1917 WWI draft card still used the name "Boloten." But in time he determined to change his name because, according to his friend Ferry Carpenter some years later, he thought the name was "too Jewish" (Beeler, 1985). By the 1920s "Bolten" was his official name.

Upon his arrival in New York, he continued on to his final destination, Chicago, where he secured a job at the Marshall Fields Department Store making $12/week. He took classes at night, and also spent time working on a dairy farm in nearby Wisconsin (Kinnaman, Personal files).

Not surprisingly, it took some years for Bolten to get on his feet. By 1910, he had continued west to Routt County, Colorado where, as a young man in his late 20s, he claimed a homestead which he began to farm. In 1916, he purchased his first car (Beeler, 1985), a sign that, slowly but surely, he was adjusting to his new life in the United States.

Initially his interest had been in the area of cattle ranching, but he struggled; by the end of WWI he found himself $60,000 in debt due to the challenges of holding cattle in the rough and rugged Colorado terrain (Kinnaman, Personal files). It was then that he determined to try sheep ranching instead. And yet, as the sheep population grew in the late 1800s and early 1900s in Routt County, competition with ranchers still struggling to hold cattle became increasingly acute. Bolten found himself in the center of conflict and controversy; neighboring cattlemen killed off dozens of his sheep, the carcasses "piled high," as men literally fought for their livelihoods during this era of anxiety and resource scarcity (Beeler, 1985).

And yet, Bolten persevered. He stuck with the sheep business, despite the odds against it and in time, became extraordinarily successful at sheep ranching. By the early 1930s he had expanded his ranching into Carbon County, Wyoming. Increasingly he spent more time there, owning extensive ranches in the county. He owned a home in Rawlins, and though he retained land in Colorado, made increasing investments in Wyoming because the grazing lands of the Red Desert – dominated by long cold and windy winters with plentiful snow – were particularly conducive to the raising of sheep. He was also viewed as a "progressive" when it came to agriculture; he raised wheat in Carbon County, a practice which, at the time, was unheard of. In time he was able to turn $50,000 worth of profits from wheat on land that had at one time been considered "worthless" (Beeler, 1985).

By the late 1930s it was apparent that Isadore was having considerable success in his ranching businesses. And yet, like any successful entrepreneur, he always sought to grow his business. In 1938 he bought 3 American bison (buffalo) which also now grazed on his Carbon County ranch. It was unclear why Bolten wanted to own these animals; this would not become apparent for some time (Kinnaman, Personal files) as WWII was about to take its toll throughout the country.

It was only in the 1940s that Bolten was able to further expand his Carbon County enterprise. In 1946 he purchased 80,000 acres (125 miles^2) of ranchland in the County. By this point, he held 20,000 head of sheep, 2,000 cattle and, curiously, 35-40 head of buffalo (Kinnaman, Personal files). Soon, the residents of Rawlins would learn what Bolten would do with these animals.

In 1947 he began sponsoring "buffalo hunts," during which thousands of spectators paid him a fee to come and watch as a handful were chosen to race about his ranch, only to be shot (at rather close range) by a "hunter" armed with a bow and arrow (see Image 3). Though popular, these "hunts" also attracted a great deal of criticism as well, both locally (see Image 4), and even in the national press (Stars and Stripes, February 15, 1947). Stated Kinnaman (December 11, 2018) who actually witnessed one of these "hunts" as a child:

> Each year people could go out to his ranch and shoot a buffalo with a bow and arrow. But really [they were so tame that] you could just walk up to one of them and whack it on the head. So it wasn't much of a "hunt." We went on one once. And no, I wasn't too impressed.

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Image 3: Private photo of the Bolten "Buffalo hunt" later published in *The Feathered Shaft*, Vol. 1(1), May 1947 (Photo courtesy the Carbon County Museum)

Bolton held these "buffalo hunts" for a few years and in truth, they did enjoy popularity.

While the public's reaction to these hunts may have been mixed, Bolton's place in Rawlins's society at large was very positive, and continued to grow as word spread of his various activities in the community. He had married Ethel (Etta) Fuicks (1878-1973) in 1926, a woman originally from Chicago. Ethel was the second-youngest of seven children. Her family was of German Jewish background. Her father, Jacob (1839-1920), had come to the U.S. from Prussia (Germany) with his family in about 1865 and, according to the Federal census of 1880, worked in Chicago as a clothier. He was the son of YakelFuiks and Rachel Pollach Fuiks.

There is some uncertainty about when Ethel came to live in Rawlins. One source suggests that she had gone west in 1900 at the age of 21 or 22, not long after her mother, Hanchen (Hannah; 1839-1887) Markovitz, passed away (Kinnaman, Personal files). But this does not totally agree with other documentation. The 1900 Federal Chicago census places Ethel at her father's home along with a number of other adult siblings. At the time she was 21 years old. And yet curiously her mother – who died in 1887 – is also listed, though her birthdate is denoted as being 6 years later than it should be (September 1845 rather than September 1839); her age is listed as 54 (she died when she was 48).

By 1920 the Federal Chicago census seems to be far more clear (if not, honest); it again includes Ethel in Jacob Fuiks's household, as well as three other adult sisters. She was then 40 years old and still single. But she quite clearly had not, contrary to Kinnaman's information, yet moved away.

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Image 4: The Bolten "Buffalo hunt" lampooned, February 9, 1947. Image courtesy *The Denver Post* and the Denver Public Library

The truth of the matter is that from all indications, Ethel did not go west until after her widowed father's death at the age of 81 later that year (1920). No information can be found to indicate when this move occurred, or what prompted this decision. But by the time of their marriage in 1926, Isadore was 41 and Ethel was a bit older, 48. While such an age difference means little in the 21st century, it may have been an issue in early 20th century Rawlins, at least if census reports are any sort of indicator. In the 1930 Rawlins census, for example, Isadore is said to be 45 years old – his correct age – but Ethel, it is written, is said to be 40. That would mean that she was born in 1890, 3 years after her mother's passing (in the 1880 Chicago census her correct birth year is indicated). In the 1940 census, Isadore's age is listed as 55 – again his correct age given that he was born in 1885. But here Ethel is listed as being only 3 years younger, 52. Were that the case, she would have been born in 1888 – once again *after* her mother's death.

That said, Ethel Bolten was a well-respected resident of Rawlins for some years. She served as a librarian at the local library in the Osborne Building on Cedar Street. Though Isadore became a man of some means over the years, he often referred to their marriage as his "greatest asset." They had no children, and his formal education was, as noted, limited at best. Still, the couple made considerable contributions to local youth initiatives, as well as to educational programs throughout the county.

Bolton also made a conscious effort to improve his social standing in the community in order to better reflect his growing wealth. He hoped to join the Masons, one of Rawlins's most active and prestigious orders at the time. Such groups were especially attractive to Jews at this time; they facilitated fraternal relationships with non-Jewish businessmen and additionally, many of the rituals and verbiage used in their activities were found upon Old Testament foundations ("Jews and Freemasons" 2003).

However, Bolten initially found that joining was more difficult than he might have anticipated due to the attitudes of some in those days. "A Masonic Lodge [didn't] like to take a great number of Jewish people

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generally," noted Beeler. Still, he was not to be deterred. "Isadore got acquainted with everybody and finally a petition went around to be broadminded and to take Isadore in" (February 14, 1985).

As April 1951 approached, Isadore and Ethel Bolten planned to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. Isadore did not live, however, to see that day (Pilot, February 22, 1951). On February 16, 1951, he died at his home at 315 West Maple Street at the age of 66. His body was sent to Chicago, where a Jewish funeral was conducted. He was buried in the Jewish Graceland Cemetery where Ethel's family was also interred.

When Bolten died, his estate was valued at about $2,000,000, equal to about $20,000,000 in 2020 dollars ("Tread of Pioneers," 2019). Isadore left the City of Rawlins a gift of $100,000 – the equivalent in 2020 of nearly one million dollars – as a trust for future generations of the town's children. A park was created in his honor which exists to this day. According to town officials, Bolten's gift was conditional; only interest from the gift may be spent while the principle must remain untouched. Still, between the year 2000 and 2019 alone, the city was able to spend over $30,000 on equipment in the park without ever touching the initial investment provided by Bolten.

Ethel lived another 22 years after Isadore's passing. She died in 1973, and was also interred in the Graceland Cemetery alongside her family members. Ethel Bolten was 94 years old.

Isadore Alia Bolten took full advantage of the opportunities that America had to offer. But to the extent possible, he contributed as well. He was highly regarded by his fellows and, though he was known to be a competitive businessman, he also had a reputation for honesty and fair play. In this regard he left a legacy which, to this day, is still remembered fondly in the streets of Rawlins. As he acknowledged (Pilot, February 17, 1951):

> I've been most fortunate. There was nothing for me in Russia– absolutely nothing. I had the whole world to move about in, but some kind destiny pulled me to America. It is remarkable that there is a place in this distressed world where a penniless alien, knowing not a world of the language, can work out a place for himself. I would be grateful to America even if she had given me nothing—but she's been kind to me beyond my fondest dreams. I am truly grateful and I do love this country of ours.

In this regard Bolten well-symbolizes the story of many of the Jews of Carbon County, Wyoming and indeed, of the history of America. It is a story of promise, of devotion, and above all else, of love between a man and the land he came to call *beit'i* – my home.

Elias Mosher and the Kramish Brothers – The Heart of Rawlins's Business District

Contemporaneous with the era described above, the small railroad town of Rawlins was slowly but surely growing and developing in the high desert of the southern Wyoming Territory. The town was founded in 1868 with the coming of the Union Pacific railroad. And with the railroad came opportunities for merchants of all kinds who located throughout the town's business district along Front Street, Cedar Street, and the numbered streets that linked them.

Among those merchants who came west in the late 19th and early 20th centuries to make their fortunes in the heart of Carbon County was Elias Mosher (1869-1949). Mosher's father, Meilach Rabinowitz (1851-1916), had brought his wife Slava (Sylvia) Dobkin Rabinowitz (1850-1915) and the rest of his Yiddish-speaking family to New York from Russia in about 1890. Not long after arriving in the U.S., Elias chose to go by the new, (perhaps more American) name of "Mosher" while the rest of the family retained the name "Rabinowitz."

Soon after his arrival in America, Meilach established himself as a successful businessman in the city's growing fur industry. Elias worked in his father's business initially; in time, Mosher headed west (Kinnaman, Personal files; *The History of Wyoming*, 1918). Initially, he found work in Superior, Wisconsin, where he worked for about five years for the Webster Manufacturing Company, a firm that made chairs. From there he moved on to similar work at the company's headquarters in Kansas City. After that he moved again, this time to Gillett, a small mining town in Teller County, Colorado (today, a ghost town abandoned in the 1940s).

The decade between the family's landing in New York and Mosher's arrival in Colorado was obviously quite a busy one as he sought to build his business experience and "find his fortune." He sought, too, to have a family. On July 22, 1899, Elias married Estella Clendenney, a dressmaker from Saginaw, Michigan, in a civil ceremony in Gillett. According to the marriage registry, Mosher was 28 and Estella was 26. A year later, the 1900 Federal census shows that the two still lived in a rental in the community. The census also indicates that his occupation (and for that matter a centerpiece of his life's work), was that of "merchant of men's furnishings." In August 1901 the couple had a son, Albert (d. 1965). Later that year the three relocated again, this time to Rawlins.

In many ways, it might be said that Mosher's business successes truly begin with this decision to relocate to Carbon County. He opened a men's clothing and furnishing goods store in the Osborne Building on Cedar Street in 1902, specializing in everything from suits to shoes to hats. The shop was extensive, and dominated the block (see Image 5). At the height of Mosher's success, he and his shop became well-recognized fixtures in the heart of the town (*The History of Wyoming*, 1918):

> [The store is] a well-equipped and well stocked establishment and enjoys a merited reputation for the

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integrity of his business methods and his fair dealings, his reputation in this direction being known from coast to coast. His high standards have made him popular wherever he is known and he has a circle of friends almost coextensive with the circle of his acquaintance…

[Mosher has] one of the finest stores in the state and enjoys an extensive trade, but more than that, he enjoys a well-earned reputation for the thorough reliability of his methods. He has never been known to take advantage of the necessities of his fellowmen in any trade transaction and his reasonable prices and earnest desire to please his patrons have won for him a very gratifying patronage which is growing year by year. The increase in his trade has necessitated the enlargement of his quarters and he has now doubled the space of his original store, making it unquestionably the finest equipped store in the state in this line.

Though successful in business, Mosher met with challenges not long after moving to Rawlins. Estella took what the family thought would be a short trip back to Gillett in the fall of 1903. According to the Rawlins Republican (November 14, 18, 1903), she had gone to visit with her parents, only to suddenly take ill and die. Elias attempted to reach Gillett by train after receiving a telegram about her ill condition, but arrived too late. A Christian funeral took place and she was buried in the town cemetery.

Eleven months later on October 3, 1904, Elias married Doris Larson, a 26-year old saleswoman of Norwegian and Swedish ancestry whose family resided in Colorado. Elias was 32 and Doris was 26. The wedding, officiated by Rev. C.W. Longren, took place in Longmont, Colorado. He and Doris had three children in the years that followed: Helen (1907-1987), Sarah (1912-2003); and Frances (1914-1984).



Image 5: Elias Mosher's Store in the Osborne Building on Cedar Street, Rawlins. (Photo courtesy the Carbon County Museum – No. 2008.1008.1)

Much like Isadore Bolten, Mosher sought to raise his social standing by joining fraternal organizations. Unlike Bolten, however, there is little mention in the sources that he had difficulty doing so, though Bolten's Jewish identity may have been more apparent to some (he had married a Jewish wife, for example). Be that as it may, Mosher was both an Elk (to this day an active group in Rawlins) and also a Mason, rising in the ranks to "thirty-second degree of the Scottish Rite" and also held the position of "a Noble of the Mystic Shrine" (*The History of Wyoming*, 1918).

By the 1920s, Elias Mosher had gained recognition across Rawlins society. Interestingly, he was involved in external activities as well. In the mid-1920s, the *Jewish Publication Society of America* enjoyed a global membership of over 9000 (JPSA, 1923-24; 1924-25). Of these, six representatives resided in Wyoming in 1923-24; during the 1924-25 period, Wyoming had four members. In both years, Elias Mosher was among this small group of members.

It does not appear that Elias was involved in any other Jewish activities. Still, this membership itself is

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notable given the era, his other civic involvements, and his remote residence. It may also foreshadow his decision when, in 1925, he sold his very successful business to Arthur R. Couzans and J. H. Jacobucci (Kinnaman, Personal files) and opted to leave Rawlins altogether. The Mosher family relocated to Long Beach, California, whereupon Elias retired from work. By 1930, the Federal census indicates that he was 60 years old and resided along with Doris (age 51), Sarah (18), Frances (16) and Ida Williams, a 55-year old live-in maid of Welsh background originally from Maine. Their daughter Helen (23) had already married by this time (August, 1928); she would later divorce and would, by the census of 1940, be living once again with her parents.

Elias Mosher died in California in 1949 at the age of 79. He is lies beside his wife Doris of 45 years in a mausoleum in Forest Lawn Memorial Park 1,600 km and a world away from Cedar Street and the Osborne Building where, a century ago, he brought life to Rawlins – and Rawlins gave back in kind.

Brothers Louis (1887-1943) and Max Kramish (1896-1942) lived and worked in Rawlins during virtually the same period as Elias Mosher. Both were born in Poland to a Yiddish-speaking family, and immigrated to the U.S. with their widowed mother in 1909. According to the 1910 Federal census the two men, ages 22 (Louis) and 15 (Max), lived in Denver with their mother Etka (b.ca. 1865-1911, age 44, who also went by Yetta), and siblings Morris (25) and Isadore (also known as Israel; age 13) and Rose (11).

Only a year after the census was taken, Etka passed and was buried in Lakewood, Colorado. Thereafter the family began to split. By 1920 Isadore ("Izzie") worked in a factory. He lived with his eldest brother, Morris, who was working in the building industry. The two were lodgers in a Denver boardinghouse. A few years after his mother's death, Louis married Tillie Geller, an American-born native of New York, on December 19, 1915.

Meantime, both Louis and Max relocated to Rawlins. Louis opened a store at 317 West Front Street, Rawlins, where he sold "gents clothing." Louis purchased stock from Arthur Cohen, a local businessman who ran the Wyoming Toggery (a clothing enterprise), as a foundation for his business in the early years (Kinnaman, Personal files; Rawlins Republican, Dec. 1, 1925).

Louis's business did well for some years. By the late 1920s, he decided to move his store to Spruce Street (see Image 6), a part of the Lincoln Highway, where greater growth was now occurring in Rawlins. He remained at that location for about 16 years. At one point however, a fire damaged the store (Kinnaman, Personal files) and Louis was never able to recover. Soon thereafter, he sold the business and retired.

Max Emil Kramish's life paralleled his older brother's in numerous ways. He married Anne Kaufman (1900-1962) in Denver on January 14, 1923 in a Jewish ceremony when she was 22 years old. Not unlike the Kramishes, Annie's family had emigrated from Russia in 1890. According to the 1905 census Annie, like Tillie, was born in New York. At the time she was one of 8 children ranging in age from 3 to 20, 2 boys and 6 girls. In 1905 her father Morris was 50 and her mother Sarah was 40. By the 1910 census, the two eldest children had left home while six children still remained. However, the family had by this point relocated to Denver and two sons, young Morris and Harry, were working as printers to help support the family.

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Image 6: Louis Kramish's Storefront, Spruce Street, 1935. (Photo courtesy the Wyoming State Archives; Miller-Meyer Collection, P68-2/236)

Like Louis, Max opened a clothing store on Front Street, Rawlins, specializing in "gents' furnishings." Initially, the store was only moderately successful. In time weak sales combined with an occasional robbery and petty vandalism (Rawlins Republican; Oct. 20, Nov. 3, 1921) forced Max to file for bankruptcy. He sold his business's stock for $600.00 and, in 1923, reopened in the Osborne Building on Cedar Street. There, he maintained a very successful and popular business (despite additional break-ins; Rawlins Republican, August 25, 1925; Dec. 1, 1925) for 18 years (Kinnaman, Personal files).

Both brothers were highly regarded and respected during their years in Rawlins. Both were family men: Max had three children, Arvin, Aron, and Yvette and Louis had five, Aaron, David, Morris, Simmie and Leonard. And in the early 1940s, both relocated back to the Denver area after leaving Rawlins, where they had spent all of the professional lives. In 1942 Max Kramish was living in Aurora, Colorado when, at the young age of 45, he passed away. A year later his brother Louis, with whom he had spent most of his life, passed as well. Louis Kramish was 56 years old.

During the early decades of the 20th century, names like "Mosher" and "Kramish" were household words in Rawlins, Wyoming. Elias, Max, Louis and their adult sons were active throughout the community, and a visible presence in civic and related activities. Truly this era was the "Golden Age" of a Jewish presence in Carbon County. Soon, the decline would begin as family-after-family would depart – like these families – for Colorado, California, and beyond.

The Itkins and the Semrycks – The Jewish Contribution to Rawlins's Hospitality Industry

In the mid-20th century a group of Jewish families made Rawlins their home, albeit temporarily. Not surprisingly, they lived together, worked together, and some of their children married during the few decades that they resided in Carbon County. Perhaps the "grandfather" of this group, renowned for years throughout the Rawlins business community, was Morris "Mose" Itkin (1901-1982). Indeed, decades after his death he was still remembered as being "real good for the city" (Kinnaman, December 4, 2018).

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Mose's brother, Albert Itkin (1889-1970), came to the U.S. first before bringing over his other family members. Initially he traveled by way of Philadelphia to Galveston, Texas in 1910; he then continued on to Kansas City where he served as an electrician's apprentice and, by 1912, made his way to Rawlins. Soon after he reached Wyoming, Albert succeeded in bringing his sisters, his mother Freda, and Mose to the U.S. as well. Mose arrived in 1913 at the age of 12.

In 1915, Albert opened a ladies clothing store in Rawlins. The store was formerly owned by Abraham Kaplovitz (1876-1958), a Jewish immigrant and tailor of women's clothing from Russia who had come to the U.S. via New York in May, 1893. According to Kinnaman (Personal Files), Kaplovitz had gone bankrupt just prior to this change of ownership.

Kaplovitz's wife Bessie (1893-1962), an Itkin sister, continued to manage the store under its new ownership. Still, the arrangement only lasted a few years. By 1920 Albert, his mother and the Kaplovitz family had all relocated to Colorado where they resided together for a brief period. By 1930, the Kaplovitz family had all relocated to Los Angeles; Albert remained in Denver, living alone and working in a local billiard hall before eventually marrying in his 30s and having one son, Alvin.

Albert worked in other realms in addition to the clothing store. He paired up with Aaron (A.R.) Lichstein (1880-1960) another Russian Jewish immigrant, in the operation of a billiard hall on 4th Street, Rawlins (see Image 7). The partnership only lasted a year or two (1917-18) before the two split. Soon Aaron purchased the Manhattan Café, and also added a soda fountain to the pool hall (1919). In 1920 Aaron briefly employed Albert again to work at the billiard hall, though soon thereafter Albert departed Rawlins for Colorado. Meantime Lichstein's business activities continued to thrive, as he made a number of other purchases around the town throughout the early 1920s.

Moseltkin lived with Aaron Lichstein and his family for a number of years. In 1922 when he was 21 and working for the Union Pacific Railroad as an inspector, he married Lichstein's daughter Ida (1904-1977) in the Lichstein home.

Mose went on to be an active member of the Rawlins community, becoming involved in both local business and civic pursuits. He recognized early on that the era of the automobile was beginning to expand; in 1913 the Lincoln Highway had opened, cutting across the entire U.S. including Carbon County. (In 1956, Interstate 80, which connects Teaneck, NJ outside of New York City to San Francisco, would further contribute to Rawlins's existing role as a stopover for truckers and tourists alike.) Recognizing the possibilities offered by Rawlins's changing economy and role as an American crossroads, Mose bought and ran an auto repair garage and service station, as well as the Bridger Inn on Cedar Street. He also got financial support from a group called the *West Rawlins Development Corporation* to build and operate the Bel Air Inn on the Lincoln Highway (Moore, March 21, 2019). Like other Jewish businessmen discussed above, Mose also joined the Masons. In the early 1930s, he achieved the honor and title of "Master of the Blue Lodge."



Image 7: Token from A.R Lichstein's Pool Hall. (Object No. 1986.601.0031, Carbon County Museum)

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Mose and Ida had two children. Melvin (1927-1979) is still remembered fondly in Rawlins. Like his father, he was an active Mason. He worked in the Advertising Department of the Rawlins Daily Times, as well as at his father's service station, and was known to be friendly and helpful. And yet, some also recall that something seemed a bit "off" about Melvin (Kinnaman, personal communication, Dec. 4, 2018):

> [Mose's] son, Mel, was really worried about things being clean all the time. He had a garage, you know, for cars. But he didn't want the station to get dirty, so he would work on the cars outside the station, out on the street.

In and of itself such behavior isn't all that extraordinary. Sadly, however, the story of Melvin Itkin came to a tragic ending (Rawlins Daily Times, May 31, 1979). As Kinnaman (personal communication, Dec. 4, 2018) explains:

> Then, sometime in the '70s or '80s – really I can't remember – he committed suicide. No one talked about that sort of thing then. But that's what happened. By then [May 1979] Mose was a widower…They had graveside services for Melvin in Cheyenne.

Mose and Ida also had a daughter, Bernice Eva Itkin (1923-2003). Born and raised in Rawlins, she met Alex Semryck (1920-95), a geologist from Wichita who had come to Carbon County to work on a geophysical crew exploring for oil in the region. Both of Alex's parents, Ben Alter Semryck (1895-ca. 1954) and Bessie Singer (1893-1981) had immigrated to the U.S. from Poland and Russia (1902 and 1912, respectively) to Kansas, where they raised Alex with his older sister, Evelyn. Ben Semryck was a self-employed grocer in Wichita. During most of the time that they lived in Kansas, Bessie's mother Jennie also resided with the family. The first language of all three of the adults in the home was Yiddish with a mixture of Polish.

Alex was a WWII vet who had served in Europe, including the Battle of the Bulge. While living in Rawlins, he was active in numerous business and civic pursuits; not only was he a professional geologist, but he also was co-owner along with Mose of the Bel Air Inn, and served on the local Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Commission, the City Council, the Wyoming Association of Municipalities, and also served as director of the Bank of Commerce.

Bernice and Alex had two adopted sons Ben Jeremy Semryck reached adulthood and eventually moved to Norman, Oklahoma and later, the Denver area (Moore, March 21, 2019). Little is known of the second son, who passed away at a young age.

The marriage ended in divorce. In March 1975 Bernice married Malcolm "Smitty" Smith in a small ceremony in Reno. Alex also remarried in 1981. His new spouse similarly was, like Bernice's new husband, not Jewish. Bobbye Jean Semryck (b. 1933), however, made it clear in a 2019 interview that she and Alex lived as Jewishly as was possible in Rawlins at that time (Semryck, March 27, 2019):

> We went to synagogue in Cheyenne, but mostly just at Passover and the high holidays. We spent time with our friends there, Mildred and Harry Smith. They owned the *Hitching Post Inn* [known locally as "Wyoming's 'Second Capitol" due to the number of powerful visitors, including political dignitaries, Hollywood actors and others who visited and the number of significant meetings held there over the decades; see Castaneda, 2012)]. We did all the celebrations with them. We really didn't know all that many Jewish people in Rawlins – we spent all our time there [in Cheyenne.]

The Semrycks' friends the "Smiths" were actually the "Schmutzes." The name translates as "dirt" in English and so, the family, Jewish immigrants from Russia, changed it soon after arriving in the U.S. In 1927, family head Peter Smith started the Cheyenne hotel as the *Lincoln Auto Court*, comprised of 24 guestrooms, a service station, a grocery store and one bathroom. Management was then handed down in 1946 to Pete's son Harry, who improved the hotel significantly; he also changed the name to the *Hitching Post* (Castaneda, 2012).

Harry was introduced to his Mildred, his wife, on a blind date arranged by her uncle at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena in 1941. Together they improved and ran the family business and welcomed guests from far and wide for several years. In time the *Inn* became one of the most famous landmarks in the entire state of Wyoming. In 1982 Paul, Harry's son bought the hotel from his father, who died just months later. Paul, who had at one time worked as a bellboy at the hotel, would run it until his death in 2006. By 2010, the *Inn* was a shell of its former self; a massive fire that fall gutted the place and, though it reopened briefly, the *Inn* closed for good in the fall of 2017.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Alex Semryck was the last of a dying community. While Jewish families had come and gone to Rawlins and some of the small surrounding towns of Carbon County throughout the decades since Carl Goldstein first arrived in the late 1800s, by the 1990s there were virtually no Jews in the area who sought to practice their Judaism or, to any great degree, actively identified as members of the broader Jewish community. Indeed, the challenges of living Jewishly in Rawlins were acute. As Alex himself stated to Wolin (2000):

> [The Itkins] were observant within the limits of what was possible, living in Rawlins. For many years, Mrs. Itkin had her [kosher] meat shipped Railway Express from Denver, which was an ordeal. Very often it would come spoiled, and they could ill afford thewaste. Eventually, just in desperation, she gave up and started using non-kosher meat… Yes, I eat [non-kosher] cheeseburgers, but to this day I'm plagued with slight feelings of guilt. But it doesn't deter me from eating cheeseburgers.

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Alex then concluded with what is most assuredly the universal dilemma of, perhaps, every Jew living in Diaspora (*galut*) even today:

> I grieve for the fact that assimilation is almost universal. Here I am, a man that eats *traif* [non-kosher food], that doesn't lay*tefillin* [pray in the traditional manner] that attends religious services [only] two or three days per year, and yet I insist that I am Jewish. What have I done to demonstrate that I am Jewish?"

Five years after his wife's passing in October 1977 and three years after his son's, Morris "Mose" Itkin died on January 26, 1982 at the age of 81. T the time of his passing he was remembered as "a pioneer in Rawlins business establishments…for his integrity, his honor, and his civic pride" (Rawlins Daily Times, January 27, 1982). He was interred at Mt. Sinai Jewish cemetery in Cheyenne with his wife and son Mel by his side. His daughter Bernice is buried in a Jewish cemetery outside Denver; her second husband Malcomb is buried in Missouri.

Alex Semryck died in a nursing facility in Rawlins on April 18, 1995 at the age of 74. According to the obituary published in the *Casper Star-Tribune* (April 20, 1995), he was cremated. No services were ever held.

IV. The Exodus and Other Concluding Thoughts

The cases discussed above were chosen randomly from among the various Jewish families and individuals that at one time called Carbon County home. And yet it is apparent that the story of the Jewish presence there was in truth the story of the County (particularly Rawlins) itself. For centuries Jews have tended to be an opportunistic minority; Jews relocate away from dangers and threats which have tended to be quite numerous throughout history and towards what they perceive to be possibilities for growth and opportunity. The problem of course lies in the fact that Jewish religious practice by definition forces the community to the periphery providing (seemingly) one of two options: live only in ghettoized neighborhoods where there are numerous other Jews, or live in the non-Jewish Diaspora, forced to surrender any hopes of retaining Jewish observance – and with it, the embedded identity that such observances foster.

The Jews of Carbon County sought to find a middle ground solution to this dilemma. Clearly they were able to benefit widely from the economic boom period fostered by the coming of the Union Pacific rail line. Whereas initially they took advantage of whatever new opportunities existed there, in time the entrepreneurial spirit of the community took hold; they went from being "consumers," benefitting from whatever was already there to being "producers," contributing new capital and growth in virtually every economic sector within which they were involved.

While in the final analysis, one might postulate that what pushed the Jews of Carbon County out, forcing them to move on to other regions to the south and west, would be the social forces inherent in the challenges associated with maintaining religious observance in an isolated locale, this was not the case. Rather, these Jews moved on for the very same reasons as their non-Jewish colleagues and friends. The population of Rawlins in 1880 was a mere 1,451; by 1980 the town flourished, and had grown to its largest size ever, 11,547. But by 1990, the collapse had begun, and accordingly the population shrunk to 9,380, down 19%. This economic contraction – and a resulting loss of population – continues to the present day.

Thus the very economic advantages and attractions that had once drawn Jewish entrepreneurs to this region constricted by the late 1980s to the point that once again, it was simply time to move on. And so, as an opportunistic minority always seeking a better life for themselves and their families, they did just that.

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