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MYRON BRINIG'S BUTTE: JEWS IN THE WIDE OPEN TOWN

by

PAMELA WILSON TOLLEFSON

B. A. University of Montana, 1990

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements


for the degree of

Master of Arts

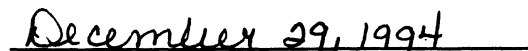
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1994

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Tollefson, Pamela W., M. A., December 1994

History

Myron Brinig's Butte: Jews in the Wide Open Town (187 pp.)

Director: David M. Emmons 

This study inter-weaves three related stories: the unique experience of the Jews in the wide open mining town of Butte, Montana and their important role in the town's progress; the nature of the early copper boom days of the town; and the personal story of Butte author Myron Brinig and his Jewish family taken from his novels and personal writings.

Brinig's Butte books, oral histories, and the writings of former Butte residents, establish the wide open nature of the old town. With wide open gambling, drinking, and a large red-light district, turn-of-the century Butte seemed an unlikely place to establish the continuity of Jewish faith. However, Jews succeeded very well in Butte and formed a religious community. They flourished in business and supplied much needed goods to the community. Butte's Jewish community, in the absence of any significant anti-Semitism, circulated in social, political, and fraternal arenas without restrictions and donated time, talents, and capital to the town.

Using B'Nai Israel cemetery records, the 1920 Manuscript Census, mortuary records, oral histories, and city directories, a database of 980 former Jewish residents was established. The results were queried to discern settlement patterns, average age of death, parents' origin, individual birthplace, and occupations. Findings indicate that from 1879 to 1920, the average Butte Jew lived within nine blocks of the city center, worked in retail sales, and lived at least five years longer than his Catholic neighbors. Most were of Russian origins.

Brinig chronicled the rise of the great mining camp while relating the story of his colorful Jewish family within the context of the wide open town. Through an examination of his writings, an intimate and important look at the struggles of one Western Jewish family emerged as they grappled with assimilation, religious and traditional challenges, and the weakening of family ties, in early Butte.



To my children and life's impetus, Seth, Bob,  
Sarah, Nathan, and Kimberly - for time and all  
eternity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express appreciation to my committee, particularly David Emmons, who helped me organize my thoughts, and Earl Ganz, who introduced me to the writings of Myron Brinig. Special thanks for financial and moral support to the women of the P.E.O., the Calkins Research Fellowship Committee, the Hammond Research Committee, George Rudolph, and Connie Ostrovsky. To all those who generously shared their memories and papers, I thank you. Thanks to my son, Bob, who offered his computer expertise. Finally, appreciation to my parents, especially my father who taught me to reverence history.

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## INTRODUCTION

It was a time when everything was wide open, bawdy houses, dance halls, gambling dens, hop houses. Wide Open Town, 37.

This study examines the interaction between a wide open mining town in the West and the diverse group of Jews who settled there. More specifically, this paper focuses on the Jewish community of Butte, Montana from pioneer settlement through about 1920, with special emphasis on the writings and memoirs of Butte author Myron Brinig pertaining to his Roumanian Jewish family.

Myron Brinig spent fourteen of his most formative years in Butte before leaving for Columbia University with the intention of becoming a writer. Though Brinig's books were categorized as fiction, they possessed an undeniably autobiographical nature. During his long career as a novelist, he frequently drew from his memories and experiences as a boy growing up in a colorful Jewish family in the world's greatest mining town.

Of twenty-one novels constructed during his lifetime, those based on Butte earned him the highest praise. Rabbi Benjamin Kelson said of Brinig, "He knows the city and the

Jews who live in it, and those of his novels that deal with the town in which he grew up are generally regarded as among his best."<sup>1</sup> These books - Singermann, Wide Open Town, This Man is My Brother, The Sisters, Footsteps on the Stairs, and The Sun Sets in the West - included many real stories of the city, its people, and events around the turn of the century corroborated by historical facts, Brinig's memoirs, and his personal interview.

However, in taking into consideration just how closely Brinig portrayed his boyhood town, it should be noted that he *hated* Butte. "Butte made him angry," said Brinig observer, Earl Ganz. Myron choked on the proletarian atmosphere and perceived the town as anti-intellectual, stifling, "a hard, bitter place."<sup>2</sup> The overwhelming theme of his mining town books became how the town affected people. Here Myron's dislike of Butte was most evident, because his novels were largely critical of the city. Nonetheless, he owned a deep fascination for Butte and its residents, and both remained popular literary topics.

This study, however, does not intend to represent a literary critique of Myron Brinig's books, though some of that, it will soon become apparent, becomes unavoidable. Rather, it examines in part the historic value of Brinig's writings as they pertain to the uniqueness of the Jewish experience in Butte, Montana around the turn of the century.

"Butte," noted one historian, "managed to combine the

presumed chaos of the frontier with the confusion of industrialization."<sup>3</sup> The city had a uniquely bawdy character, even by mining camp standards and especially by Victorian era mores. Ethnically diverse, corrupt, and booming, Butte life challenged the average mortal.

Some historical circumstances, upon first examination, strain credulity. Such is the unlikely picture of Jews in the untamed West. The great writer Sinclair Lewis called the presence of a family like the Brinigs in Butte a "contrast."<sup>4</sup> So typically thought of as a product of the Old Testament or of old Europe, Jews seemed out of place mingling with the rougher elements of a mining camp. However, upon closer examination, perfectly sound reasoning guided the Jews West. The West appeared wide open for smart businessmen, and Jewish business acumen was no secret. Jewish merchants became a major source of stability in Western communities, providing the goods and credit necessary for growth.

Jews in Butte, particularly the Reform group, succeeded admirably in business, joined fraternal organizations, and in many cases, became active in politics. They suffered little from anti-Semitism, lived and worked with gentiles, and actively served their community.

Success, though, was not without a price. Struggling against the same forces that eroded Judaism nationwide, Butte's Judaic community found over time a lessening of

observance among themselves and more especially among their children. Without an ethnic neighborhood to cling to, the process of assimilation only accelerated. Jewish voices once raised in triumph and hope over new-found American freedom, by the early twentieth century, found reason to hesitate and waiver. The *yeshiva* and Talmud were displaced in importance by picture shows, popular culture and the exigencies of making a living. The Faith that grandparents had fervently clung to, lost much of its appeal in the context of America, especially in the West.

Using his own family as a model in his first novel, Singermann, Brinig illustrated the conflicts and struggles of an Orthodox Jewish immigrant family in a mining town called "Silver Bow" as they faced Americanization and religious challenges. Moses and Rebecca Brinig came to Butte in 1900 to take part in the mining town's prosperity. Moses, an outwardly simple yet inwardly complex man, opened a men's furnishing store on East Park Street and supported his seven children by selling goods to miners. Moses and Rebecca, the miners, Butte's Jews, the predominantly Irish population, and the color and taste of the old town were the ingredients of a Brinig novel.

Like all novelists, however, Brinig mixed truth with exaggeration for the sake of story. He recreated dialogue from memory or imagination, and mingled his own personal feelings and remembrances with that of his characters.

perhaps the family patriarch, Moses Brinig, when captured and isolated on the flat pages of a novel, represented a composite of "the Western Orthodox Jew," a caricature mingled with true life and taken from Myron's imagination. Evidence indicates, however, that Myron's portrayal of Moses was more accurate than not. Myron's personal memoirs testify to the truth of many stories he related about his parents in his fictional novels. A creative nature may have led him to embellish, but probably not to fabricate.

Brinig served all of Butte to the world *au jus*, that is, in its own gravy, and his readers loved it. All things considered, his books revealed private struggles mixed with an ethnic candor, all based on actual observances. His writings provided a unique opportunity to observe in detail the passage of an era and a people within it. For this reason, Brinig's Butte novels can be viewed as much more than simple historical fiction. To the extent that the Brinig family can be viewed as a prototype of the Western Jewish family, and that old Butte was the prototype of the bawdy mining town, the Butte books take on greater importance. Brinig becomes the most important literary chronicler of the wide open town and the Jewish experience so intertwined with the town's history.



## ENDNOTES

## INTRODUCTION

1. Rabbi Benjamin Kelson, "The Jews of Montana" (Master's thesis, Montana State University, 1950), 108.
2. Ginny Merriam quoting Earl Ganz in, "Who is Myron Brinig and Why Aren't We Reading Him?" The Missoulian, 25 May 1991, B-1.
3. David M. Emmons, The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 72.
4. "A Letter From Sinclair Lewis," The New York Herald Tribune, 4 Feb. 1932.

## CHAPTER I

### FROM EUROPEAN *SHTETL* TO AMERICAN MINING CAMP: NEW EVALUATIONS IN THE WEST

How shall we sing the Lord's  
song in a strange land?  
Psalms 137:4

With their arrival in America, the Brinig family became a part of the great migrations of Eastern European Jews between the 1870's and 1914. A combination of tyranny, poverty, and lack of opportunity for Jews in Eastern Europe made migration to America significantly attractive.

After the late eighteenth century, most Jews in Eastern Europe fell under the yoke of anti-Semitic Russian policies which typically denied them civil rights and citizenship. Conditions under the Russian Tsars, though never pleasant for Jews, became particularly onerous during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855), with the passage of over six hundred anti-Semitic royal decrees. These included conscription laws which committed Jewish boys to twenty-five years in the Russian army. Eastern European Jews also suffered confinement to the "Pale of Jewish Settlement" in Poland, Lithuania, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine. Relatively untouched by the modernizing world, Jews within the Pale choked on economic restrictions, intellectual stagnation,

and extreme poverty.<sup>1</sup>

Tsar Alexander II attempted to alleviate the condition of the Jews in certain modest ways, such as reducing terms of military service to five years. However, his assassination in 1881 resulted in violent outbursts against the Jews, or *pogroms*, in southwestern Russian towns and settlements. These sporadic and dreaded demonstrations brought the destruction of Jewish properties and sometimes loss of life. Ultimately, fear of pogroms, overpopulation, and poverty within the Pale inspired the exodus of over two million Jews, or one-third of all Eastern European Jewry.<sup>2</sup>

Though not a part of the Pale of Settlement, Jews from the Brinig's Roumanian homeland suffered much the same basic anti-Semitic treatment as Polish and Russian Jews. During the reign of Nicholas I, those who hoped to escape tsarist oppression poured over the border into Roumania from Russia and Poland. The rapid influx of over 200,000 Polish Jews into the little nation led to anxiety-inspired anti-Semitic activity as Jews "succeeded in taking over a disproportionate share of large business, banking, and especially saloon-keeping and money-lending." Attempts to improve Jewish conditions came in 1866 with a proposal at the Constitutional Convention suggesting "gradual emancipation for Israelites" to prepare them for eventual citizenship. Roumanian leaders, however, delayed the new freedoms realizing Roumania would become a magnet for

oppressed Jews who "would enter in enormous numbers if distinctly better treated." The largest emigration of Roumanian Jews began in 1899 after pogroms broke out during a famine. A full one-third of Roumania's Jews eventually departed for other lands.<sup>3</sup>

The majority of Jews who left Europe for the United States settled in urban areas, particularly New York City. The city's attraction for immigrants stemmed from its "open to all" vast commercial possibilities and reputation as the nation's credit and banking center. New York City's Lower East Side became a "Jewish cosmopolis," and by 1915, nearly 28 percent of the population of New York City were Jewish.<sup>4</sup>

German Jews, for the most part, entered the United States much earlier than their Eastern European cousins. The German Jewish migrations of 1772-1870 peaked in 1848 for a combination of reasons, including the push of unstable economic and revolutionary events in Europe, and the pull of American opportunities. The Germans, already socially and financially well-established upon arrival in the United States, tended to be respected, socially prominent, and easily assimilated. "The Jews of the older migrations," remarked one scholar in reference to the Germans, "have through intermarriage and through complete taking over of the customs of the land...so adjusted themselves that the divergence between them and the general population is hardly to be noted."<sup>5</sup> Bringing with them commercial skills gained

in Europe, the German Jews appeared "among the best organized of the newcomers."<sup>6</sup>

Unassimilated Eastern European Jews, unlike their German cousins, were considered culturally and religiously backward from generations of confinement within the Pale of Settlement. "It is the Russian Jew who particularly impresses himself as a Jew," said one philosopher.<sup>7</sup> Though concerned with preserving the traditions of the past, practicing Orthodox Jews understood that participation in a new and gentile world promised to be costly to the continuity of their faith.<sup>8</sup>

What Jews risked losing included a system of beliefs that defined them as a people. Judaism's basis as an ancient religion arising from a covenant made between Abraham and his descendants with their God, cast the Jews into their role as God's "chosen people." Since Moses' descent from Mount Sinai, the Jews bore the burden of obedience to a strict set of laws covering everything from diet, to conduct on the Sabbath Day, and family government. With both ethnic and cultural traits mingled with deep religious traditions, Judaism transcended the realm of mere religion and might well be defined as an ethno-religion.

Why did God chose the Jews? The principle of "chosenness" is a mystery even to the Jews and usually left to the indefinable will of God. But being "chosen" required remaining apart and unblemished from the world.<sup>9</sup> Biblical

warnings to the Jews against mingling with unbelievers were explicit. Intermarriage would bring cultural confusion and idolatry. Said the prophet Nehemiah:

23 In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things?...even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?<sup>10</sup>

Likewise, the prophet Ezra reacted strongly to inter-relations between Jews and other peoples.

1 ...the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands....

3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished.<sup>11</sup>

In the shelter of the Jewish *shtetl*, or community of Eastern Europe, gentile influences remained outside the confederation. Like-mindedness brought comfort from the sense of persecution and danger outside the womb of the

group. Within the *shtetl*, people bound together by spiritual ties and language retained a sense of shared destiny. But in the new world of the American city, this sense of Jewish community and identification diminished under social pressure.<sup>12</sup> Historian Irving Howe explained,

Pressures of the city, the shop, the slum, all made it terribly hard to stay with the old religious ethic. The styles and rituals of traditional Judaism had been premised on a time scheme far more leisurely, a life far less harried than urban America demanded.<sup>13</sup>

The process of assimilation in the new land required, in many cases, a change of name, a new language, a clean shaven face, a different diet and modern clothing. The patriarchal order faced new and unheard of challenges. Observance of Sabbath and Feast days relaxed considerably with the passage of time.

In its most extreme form, Americanization required newcomers to

divest themselves of their old characteristics, and through intermarriage and complete taking over of the language, customs, hopes, [and] aspirations of the American [culture] obliterate all ethnic distinctions.<sup>14</sup>

Not surprisingly, older Jews resisted being stirred into the proverbial "melting pot." Anxious parents, who felt little incentive to move away from the protective ethnic enclave, tried to preserve some semblance of tradition among their children. The inevitable could be resisted only temporarily.<sup>15</sup> The younger generation grasped

American customs with gusto, even if that meant accepting a diluted form of Judaism. Sociologists agree that "the religious lives of second and third generation new immigrants were generally less conventionally pious than the lives of most first generation new immigrants." The immigrants' children, in many cases, "rebelled against their parents' piety which seemed old-fashioned and stifling, [and] frequently expressed their rebellion by shunning traditional religious expressions." For example, younger Jews were more likely to work on the Saturday Sabbath, an ordinary work day for their gentile neighbors.<sup>16</sup>

Business associations and growing prosperity increased contact with non-Jews. Over several generations, the Jew "resemble[d] his Gentile neighbor or colleague more distinctly than he [did] his immigrant forebears..."

The immigrants - and more especially their children - steadily advanced into the society through a remarkably rapid process of acculturation and upward mobility that brought most Jewish families into the middle class within the span of one generation.<sup>17</sup>

Ironically, the traditional Jewish reverence for learning and desire to educate their children accelerated the Americanization of their youth. Public schools became the greatest "vehicle of assimilation" for the younger generation.<sup>18</sup> One social worker predicted public schools, would be "one of the most efficient agencies for the assimilation of the men of the new immigration..."<sup>19</sup>



Not everyone was pleased with the cultural assimilation of the younger generation. Philosopher Isaac Berkson condemned the influence of schools for driving a wedge between the generations and making a mockery of tradition.

the public school graduate grows up to know that he must despise his parents with their poor knowledge of English, that he must be thoroughly conversant with the batting averages, and that he must possess a large quantity of Americanism - 100 per cent at least!<sup>20</sup>

Of necessity, Judaism needed to be re-defined in the face of blurring ethnic distinction. An address delivered by Rabbi Montague N. A. Cohen to the Reformed B'Nai Israel Congregation in Butte entitled, "Race, Nation, or Religious Community--What is the Jew?" illustrated this need for a clearer definition of Judaism in America. "Even today," Cohen said in 1909, "the Jew is by Jew and non-Jew called indiscriminately Hebrew, Israelite, and Jew. Hebrew refers to nationality by language, Israelite expresses race; whereas Jew is concerned with religion."

The American people composed of many races of "old and derived species," remarked Cohen, resulted from an evolutionary process of amalgamation of various immigrant bloods. Cohen theorized that a Jew cannot be a racial type because intermarriage has obliterated any racial purity from the old Semitic tribe. Neither can a Jew be a member of a nation, because "the Jew is a man of many nations." Jewishness, he concluded, denotes religious identity and

this religious solidarity would ensure the continuity of the Jews as a "religious entity" - a people separate and apart.<sup>21</sup>

Jewish solidarity, however, was an elusive issue. The Jewish community was plagued internally by deep divisions on social and religious issues. Unlike their German counterparts, Eastern Europeans, who eventually constituted 85 percent of all Jews in America, came here penniless, socially backward, and religiously stubborn. Yiddish speaking Russian Jews with flowing caftans, long beards, derby hats, Prince Albert coats, and gold hoop earrings embarrassed the German Jews who chose to minimize their differences in a predominantly Christian land. Though the Germans were not unsympathetic towards their backwards cousins, they were somewhat culturally imperialistic. Their answer to the "problem" of their impoverished Russian co-religionists was to re-model them after their own image.<sup>22</sup>

Beyond the split engendered by social and class differences, the Jewish community separated company over religious issues as well. In his study of Montana Jews, Rabbi Benjamin Kelson referred to this struggle as a "religious disagreement, based partly on the social cleft..."<sup>23</sup> The majority of German-American Jews favored the Reform persuasion of Judaism and its more relaxed observances, while many Eastern European Jews, who for the most part tended to remain Orthodox, condemned the Reform

group for watering-down Judaism. So diversified were the Jews on such a variety of issues that Berkson warned against any attempt to define Jewry as a unified entity:

From any point of view that one might measure the Jews, their economic or social status, synagogue affiliation, attitude toward religious, educational, social problems and even toward the important question of the perpetuation of their own group identity, a great range of divergences will be found...Far from being closely welded together, they have no central organization, and no ecclesiastical unity.<sup>24</sup>

On the other hand, Berkson noted a tendency among the Jews to set their differences aside in the face of persecution, adversity, or danger. Jews, whether Reform or Orthodox, German or East European, shared a

certain unity of consciousness, perhaps almost a feeling of family kinship...the tendency to marry within the group; to become awakened in the face of what may be regarded as common dangers, pogroms, blood accusations, slander of the Jewish name, [and] to organize readily for the relief of Jewish suffering.<sup>25</sup>

If the persecution of Jews by Christians in Europe had drawn them closer, preserving and strengthening Judaism, ironically, an increased acceptance and an embrace of brotherhood by their gentile neighbors, especially in the Western States, brought about a weakening of Jewish solidarity and religious observance.

\*\*\*\*\*

Followers of Judaism were drawn to the American West between the years 1848 and 1890, migrating for the same reasons as other opportunists and adventure seekers. Yet Jews found added incentives for moving westward. What Jew, with fresh memories of past persecutions, could resist the attractiveness of a region where "everything was just beginning and in the process of becoming...where the foundation of the structure of the new state of necessity implied the acknowledgment of the common origin of all men and their common right to equality..."<sup>26</sup> They moved West to escape old prejudices and "to start a new life, not to repeat the patterns of the past." Indeed, the Western Jewish experience has been characterized by a remarkable "discontinuity" from Jewish life in Europe that contrasts with the "notable continuities" in the Jewish centers of the East.<sup>27</sup>

Another important incentive for moving to western areas came in the form of social participation and acceptance on new levels. Away from the East, collective Jewry found a higher level of equality in society, for "the West welcomed experienced pioneer Jewish merchants, even electing them to public offices out of proportion to their numerical significance." One writer explained the social success of German Jews in the West as "the happy union of America's economic needs [with] the industry and attributes of the Jewish peddler and shopkeeper." Their arrival in terms of

place and time coupled with valuable skills and enthusiastic participation in community building, gained them an open-armed welcome.<sup>28</sup>

California became known as "the most multiethnic instant commonwealth in the nation's history" because of the variety of peoples that migrated there during the gold rush years of 1849-1852.<sup>29</sup> By 1877, 84 percent of Jews who chose to settle in the West settled in California. As a result, the coastal state held more communities where Jews resided than any other, with San Francisco second only to New York City in Jewish population.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of a large population of Jews, surprisingly few incidents of anti-Semitism were reported on the coast. Of course, anti-Semitism did exist on the frontier, as migrants brought with them old intolerances, yet the nature of anti-Semitism softened considerably with the movement westward. California newspapers in Sonora, Sacramento, and other gold rush towns printed an occasional stereotypical article or editorial regarding the Jews. But for every attack several came forward to defend.<sup>31</sup> Responses to printed slurs came swiftly. One unidentified reader responded:

Whilst there may be found many disreputable characters among [the Jews], we believe the proportion to be no larger than is to be found among other classes. We know men of worth and great probity of character who are Jews, and we do not conceive that their particular persuasion, their belief, militates against honest and correct principles...I was very much astonished, not at the

editor of the Index, but that such an article should appear in a newspaper which bears the stamp of 1851. Such an article would have done very well a hundred years ago, or in the time of the Inquisition.<sup>32</sup>

Likewise in Oregon, "few overt instances of discrimination against Jews were recorded," and if a newspaper or vaudeville comedian used stereotypes, vigorous complaints from local Jews resulted in quick apologies.<sup>33</sup>

Though some may have clung to old stereotypes, anti-Semitism in the West was not brazen in nature. One Jewish writer in California bragged,

there is very little [anti-Semitism] on this Coast...We do things differently here, and it is pleasing to note the genuine fellow feeling that exists between Jew and Gentile, more especially in country resorts...And this we must say, that there is more freedom from bigotry and fanaticism on this Coast than anywhere in the world.<sup>34</sup>

This relative lack of anti-Semitic behavior in the early West has been noted by more than a few scholars.<sup>35</sup> Explaining why the American West offered such ready acceptance resurrects arguments for the validity of Frederick Jackson Turner's old theory regarding the democratic nature of the frontier where he "linked American democracy to American geography with an almost metaphoric simplicity."<sup>36</sup>

Perhaps the pioneering experience and challenges faced on the frontier discouraged discriminatory behavior. One contemporary observer wrote, "Look for your real democracy west of the Mississippi!...Pioneering, that laborious

prelude to prosperity, breeds brotherhood. [The pioneers] have mellowed under 'the one touch of nature' that makes 'the whole world kin.'"<sup>37</sup>

As California placers diminished, some gold seekers, Jews among them, left the state and trekked to Colorado, Nevada, Utah, Montana and other western mining states. These Jewish pioneers have been described as "transmigrants who moved in successive stages and who were apprenticed to American life along the way."<sup>38</sup>

Perhaps the travels of David H. Cohen best illustrated the restless spirit of the early Jews. A German by birth, Cohen came to America as a skilled tailor. However, the lure of mining led him on a meandering journey through the western states. He mined in California mining camps such as Jackson, Sierra, Rabbit Creek and finally La Porte, where he bought a billiard hall. He then left for British Columbia, later returning to La Porte, then on to Virginia City, and Austin, Nevada; Salt Lake City, Utah, McClernan Gulch, and Helena. Finally he settled in Butte as one of its first citizens.<sup>39</sup>

Jews took part in the settling and pioneering of the state of Montana from earliest times, attracted by stories of wealth and adventure. Pioneer Jacob Osenbrug, for example, told how tales of the snow-capped mountains and buffalo hunts in Utah and Montana led him West in 1880.<sup>40</sup>

The early Montana Jews shared certain characteristics.

Many were Confederates who came to Montana immediately after the Civil War to establish businesses. Henry Jacobs of Mississippi fought in the Confederate Army and came to Montana in 1866. Leopold Marks, Jacobs' business partner, was also a Confederate Jew. David Cohen, Sr. lived in Vicksburg and New Orleans and came to Helena in 1865. Louis and Herman Gans lived in Mobile, Alabama and arrived in Helena in 1866.<sup>41</sup>

The overwhelming majority of Montana's earliest Jews were of German-American origin, though this changed with the influx of Eastern Europeans in the twentieth century. The German Jews had experience in boom-town areas throughout the state. David Cohen, Sr., Henry Jacobs, Rueben Sabolsky, David H. Cohen, and Meyer Genzberger once resided in the little boom-town of Virginia City. Others followed mining successes and failures in camps from Bannack to Virginia City, Diamond City, Last Chance Gulch, Deer Lodge, and other small settlements before settling in Butte.<sup>42</sup> While "succeeding in good times, [and] failing in bad, they rapidly learned to cope with the strange and unfamiliar."<sup>43</sup> No doubt such preparatory adversity proved valuable to those who chose to live in young Montana territory.

In his study of Montana's Jewish communities, Kelson estimated at least twenty-four Jews resided in Virginia City after 1863, enough to establish a small "Hebrew" cemetery with six or seven barely distinguishable graves now covered



with lichen. As placer mining in Virginia City failed, many Jewish families left for Helena and later to Butte when new placer deposits were discovered.<sup>44</sup>

Helena's placer boom brought thousands stampeding for gold. Of this number, 160 Jewish men came to Last Chance Gulch primarily between the years 1865-1871. One study reported seventeen of the twenty local dry goods stores were Jewish-owned by 1867. Another study located over fifty Jewish merchants, peddlers, barbers, and miners in Helena's City Directory of 1868.<sup>45</sup>

In 1866, one year after the Civil War and one year before Montana became a territory, Helena's Jews organized a Hebrew Benevolent Society for the purposes of aiding the distressed of their faith and obtaining land for a Hebrew cemetery. Helena's Jewish community broke ground for a Reformed Temple in 1890 and dedicated the building the following year. The Jews of Last Chance Gulch served as the religious prototype for the Butte community from earliest times. Their Hebrew Benevolent Society became a model for the one established in the copper mining town a full fifteen years later in 1881.<sup>46</sup>

Before the efforts to organize in Helena and Butte where the first strong Jewish communities emerged, religion played a lesser role in the lives of Montana Jews than good citizenship in the struggling communities. Furthermore, Jews who chose to scatter further away from these two

communities to remoter areas in Montana grew isolated from their co-religionists, lost much of their religious distinctiveness and became "characterized by their role as settlers, as pioneers, rather than as Jews."<sup>47</sup> Mining camps attracted Jews who set aside religious concerns, at least temporarily, for the sake of making a living. Only after business was well established did pioneer Jews undertake to erect synagogues and send for Rabbis.

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Butte was a mere village of two or three hundred people when the first Jewish residents arrived. Undoubtedly, these Jewish pioneers could not have foreseen the evolution of the tiny mining camp into an industrial mining center nor the important role they would play in the town's progress.

The history of Butte's Judaic community began with the arrival in 1875 of wanderer David H. Cohen and Sam Alexander, believed to be the first Jews in the camp. In 1876, the year of Custer's defeat, Abe Cohen came to Butte at the age of seven years with Dooley Jacobs, the son of Butte's future mayor, Henry Jacobs. In 1877, H. L. Frank, another future mayor of Butte, and David Cohen, Sr. settled in the young mining town.<sup>48</sup>

The camp that David Cohen, H. L. Frank and others entered in the 1870's existed only because of the vast

mineral wealth there that demanded a town be erected on the site. The city that resulted differed in nature from any other mining camp in the West in terms of size and endurance.

Butte's history can be divided into three eras, each named after the precious metal of the most recent boom. Gold, silver, and copper eras followed in rapid succession in the decades 1860 to 1880. Discovery of gold on Silver Bow Creek in 1864 came just at the time that the placers in Virginia City and Bannack began to dwindle.<sup>49</sup> The new camp boasted "almost every gulch, bar, sag and hill yielding pay."<sup>50</sup> By 1867, the gold placers in Butte had nearly been worked to their limits, and the camp, together with the little neighboring village of Silver Bow, faced the same fate as other boom towns.

Rich silver deposits discovered in 1875 revived the camp temporarily and ushered in another era of prosperity.<sup>51</sup> However, the real wealth of the mining camp had not yet been discovered. As the price of silver collapsed in 1893, the silver era appeared to be at an unfortunate end.

In 1882 Marcus Daly, later owner of the huge Anaconda Copper Mining Company, deepened his Anaconda silver mine and discovered a vein of nearly pure copper. Daly's famous find began the most important and enduring mining boom in Butte - the copper era. His discovery coincided fortuitously with an exponential increase in the demand for copper wire for

electrification and improved methods of copper smelting.<sup>52</sup> By 1905, forty copper mines in Butte reportedly produced 40 percent of all copper products in America.<sup>53</sup>

The environmental consequences of mining and related industries made Butte an unpleasant vista. Rapid deforestation during the copper era composed one facet of the environmental problem. Separating copper from raw ore demanded huge amounts of cord wood. Sawmills in 1884 supplied neighboring Anaconda with 300,000 cords of wood.<sup>54</sup> In 1881 alone, seven companies in Butte and Silver Bow consumed 5,000 cords of wood per month while twenty-five hoisting works used another 3,000 cords. Combined with private consumption, a grand total of 10,000 cords of wood monthly were utilized in Butte for fuel purposes alone. Estimates in 1882 projected consumption would double in the coming year.<sup>55</sup>

Extensive burning of wood and smelting of ore created a gaseous stench of smokey fumes of legendary proportions in the city's air. "In one thing the city of Butte is very rich," remarked an old-time resident,

in a great amount of gaseous sulphur smoke which is composed of carbon, sulphur and arsenic elements...which of course is quite poisonous...sometimes it will accumulate so thick and dense, that a person is not able to see what is going on across the street.<sup>56</sup>

Actor Eddie Foy, who visited Butte while performing at the raucous local Comique club in 1882 and 1883 noted:

The town was emphatically in the raw when we arrived. It was the muddiest place I ever saw....[it] was common to see people with sponges and rags tied over their mouths and noses.<sup>57</sup>

Not surprisingly, lung disease became especially common in the city. Indeed, the consequences of noxious air proved devastating to humans. Residents suffered from a diversity of respiratory ailments. One claimed, "Butte suffers sometimes terrible with coughs and sneezing spells, and sometimes the dreadful pneumonia germs are infesting the city of Butte." He continued with high exaggeration, "there are about 60,000 persons sneezing, coughing, spitting, hawking, sniffing and also swearing in concert."<sup>58</sup>

Bad air affected plant life as well. There was a time in Butte "when grass would not grow...[and] house plants could not live if a window was left open..." Even shamrocks sent from Ireland died from sulphur fumes - though typical of Butte's ethnic rivalries, blame fell on a nearby Cornish colony. The barrenness of the city led one resident to remark in 1905 that it was the only city of 65,000 people anywhere without a shade tree.<sup>59</sup>

A 1907 article in Craftsman Magazine illustrated a more melodramatic view of the town's appearance. Entitled "Redeeming the Ugliest Town on Earth," the author, Helen Fitzgerald Sanders explained:

Six years ago Butte, Montana, bore the undisputed title of the ugliest town on earth...the hand of man had turned

vandal here, and in ruthless quest of copper, shafts were sunk, smelters arose, clouds of sulphur smoke killed the last bud and sprig, and the hills stood naked, lean and stripped. The approach to the city from the East bore a startling likeness to Dante's description of the outlying regions of Purgatory...[and] the likeness of the Inferno itself...streams of molten slag burned the heavy darkness...when the slag was dumped, [it] completed a scene of picturesque horror.<sup>60</sup>

Exaggeration considered, residents and visitors alike agreed that Butte was a physically ugly town "surrounded by barren hills and unsightly mine dumps, thick with smelter smoke."<sup>61</sup>

At night, however, the city seemed to lose its harsh appearance. A local physician noted, "When the passenger approaches the city at night, the impression is wholly different, and he exclaims with joy, for the eye sees nothing but beauty." The outsider's first impression of Butte, "included horror by day and joy by night...tragedy and romance in the very look of the place..."<sup>62</sup> In the evening, the ugliness covered with lively lights gained Butte the name of the "Jewel Box of America." It seemed that the town's fascination and beauty came from its nightlife.<sup>63</sup>

On Saturday night, miners had money to spend on vice, and Butte generously complied. "Many a young man was seduced away from godliness on Saturday night," wrote Myron Brinig.<sup>64</sup> Brinig referred to Butte as a "wide open town." As the copper era emerged, the town became more bawdy, sleepless, and vice-troubled, with twenty-four hours of

unrelenting activity. The needs and wants of a young male mining population composed of a diversity of ethnic groups were met day and night. One early resident said, "I don't think there was a store in this town ever locked the door...open twenty-four hours...this was quite a wide open town." Unrestricted opportunities for gambling included, "black jack, slot machines, horses, dog racing..."<sup>65</sup>

Restaurants and Chinese noodle parlors did business around the clock to feed three shifts of miners. Saloons remained open in the evenings, and "bars, cafes and brothels never closed their doors."<sup>66</sup>

Before continuing about the rowdy nature of old Butte, it should first be noted that serious settlers, legitimate businessmen, and hard-working families also came to settle in Butte, swelling the population to 100,000 in the early century. Residents of all different ethnic backgrounds fought to make Butte a place to raise their families. In spite of all the testimonies of vice and corruption, Butte was more than just a town of brothels, gamblers, and miners. "Butte was much more...the vast majority lived meaningful lives in comfortable homes, far removed from the seamy side of the camp. Despite the rawness, virtue, fidelity, love, honor and loyalty in abundance, were there, too."<sup>67</sup>

Those who cared about preserving tradition tried to remedy or overlook the city's faults and established sacred institutions. Jews built a temple and a synagogue and

celebrated Jewish holidays. The large population of local Irish Catholics and other Christians built beautiful churches. In 1894 the town boasted,

in the matter of churches and all moral agencies, such as temperance lodges and charitable societies, Butte is in the forefront, having seventeen churches representing a cost of half a million dollars. The school property is valued at a quarter of a million dollars, and five thousand children attend school within the city's limits.<sup>68</sup>

However, the town had more than its share of an unsavory element including gamblers, criminals, and prostitutes.

Butte's famed red light district and bawdy houses have been the subject of much appraisal. The district reputedly rivaled, in terms of size, those of the Barbary coast of San Francisco. The area was rumored to have been built by mining magnate Marcus Daly and served the purpose of entertaining his miners during their leisure hours.<sup>69</sup> Entering the red light district, or "thoroughfare of the underworld," appeared to one visitor "like a street leading into hell, and parts of it would cause one to close one's eyes."<sup>70</sup>

Myron Brinig's father owned a store just around the corner from the red light district of town, and the Brinig boys from a very young age watched the "dizzy blondes, bromidic brunettes, [and] rampaging redheads" from "down the line," as the district was popularly known.<sup>71</sup> Covering an area of several blocks, the infamous district spanned "both



sides of Galena street from Main to Wyoming, [the] alley east of Main between Galena and Mercury and Paradise alley from Wyoming west, also Little Terrace..." A contemporary observer counted 160 "cribs" or small one story shacks with only a front window and door, "where the cheaper whores enticed their trade from the streets and alleys by tapping on windows to attract attention." Several fancy parlor houses also existed in the district run by madams such as "May Malloy's Irish World," or "Blonde Edna's Wyoming street Brothel."<sup>72</sup>

Charlie Chaplin, who performed in Butte in 1910, remembered most vividly the image of the district from his sojourn there.

The red-light district of Butte, Montana, consisted of a long street and several side streets containing a hundred cribs, in which young girls were installed ranging in age from sixteen up - for one dollar. Butte boasted of having the prettiest women of any red-light district in the West, and it was true. If one saw a pretty girl smartly dressed, one could rest assured she was from the red-light quarter, doing her shopping. Off duty, they looked neither right nor left and were most respectable.<sup>73</sup>

Brinig explained that the younger and prettier prostitutes who attracted more business resided in a series of brick houses of twenty rooms each while the older and less attractive women were relegated to the cribs. The cribs each sported the name of the occupant in fancy lettering over the door or "showing through ruby-colored glass" in the window. Jacob Geltz, lunch cart owner and

self-appointed social observer, described the prostitutes as "poor, Good-forsaken creatures..." Said one local physician, "I do not believe, ...any of those women were there of their own volition. Some tragedy sent them there."<sup>74</sup>

With a large and active red-light district so close to respectable businesses and families, the city made several weak attempts to curb the prostitution problem for the sake of propriety and appearance. On January 1, 1903, one of several moral tides passed over the town and a city ordinance required the front doors and windows of the cribs boarded shut. Sidewalks were laid in back and business continued as usual, this time from the alleys. The result of these frequent moral waves satisfied all parties involved. The underworld obtained more "criminal latitude. The reformers were satisfied. The city not deprived of its revenue, the respectable of their rents, [nor] the policemen of their graft." Mercifully, the cribs were forced to close early in the century and became unlikely booths for the sale of produce and groceries. Some of the larger houses, however, continued to operate.<sup>75</sup>

Butte did not lack laws and ordinances against vice. "The state of Montana makes and passes just as good laws as any other state in the Union, but the laws here as a rule are seldom enforced." Perhaps this explains why in 1886, of the fourteen individuals charged with murder, none were

convicted. Weak enforcement of local laws and ordinances caused confidence in the police to diminish. In 1905, the forty-five members of the police force were described as "too slow to even catch the smallpox." As a result, the wide open town gained a reputation for crime. "Butte city," said Jacob Geltz, "is almost as black as it could possibly be painted, and it is full of corruption of all kind."<sup>76</sup>

Steadfast Jews, including Moses and Rebecca Brinig, gave consideration to the future of their religious tradition in Butte as it grew and gained a reputation for vice and corruption. How could morality be instilled in Jewish daughters when school girls in Butte powdered their faces and rouged their lips? How could the work ethic be preserved in young boys when the so many young men of Butte supposedly drank "great quantities of intoxicating liquors almost continuously...also using morphine and...smoking cigarettes..."<sup>77</sup> Would Jewish children practice their religion in this remote mining town so isolated from other Jews? Would their sons marry *shiksa* girls because of a lack of good Jewish girls from which to chose?<sup>78</sup>

The specter of intermarriage was very real. Jews were vastly outnumbered in Butte and the town became increasingly ethnically diverse as the population expanded. Mayor Henry Jacobs expressed prophetic concern in 1879 that the first year of the city's existence would be "beset with dangers and troubles owing to the large influx of immigration."<sup>79</sup>

As Jacobs predicted, Butte grew into one of the most ethnically diverse towns in the West, with Irish, Cornish, Canadian, German, Eastern European, Italian and Finnish immigrants attracted to the mining city by good wages. The 1910 census of Silver Bow County indicated twenty-four different nationalities, less than one-third born in the United States. A physician making a report on "the alien situation" in Butte in the First World War officially estimated at least forty-seven different nationalities in Butte.<sup>80</sup>

Unlike their co-religionists from larger cities of the East, Butte's Judaic community had no Jewish district in which to avoid non-Jew, or *goyish* influence.<sup>81</sup> Larger ethnic groups in Butte created their own ethnic enclaves. The indisputably dominant local Irish population lived in Dublin Gulch and Walkerville. One Irish priest said, "living in Butte is about like being in Ireland."<sup>82</sup> Irishman Marcus Daly recruited fellow countrymen to work in his mines and was credited as the one who "made Butte an Irish town." Local Finns lived in Finntown, and Italians congregated in Meaderville, but the Jews lived in a scattered pattern around the business district.

In spite of great diversity, European immigrants in the frontier West managed a strained mutual acceptance or tolerance of one another. A token day of tolerance, reportedly designated in Butte by some unknown group, aimed

at promoting the seemingly impossible task of uniting the religious and ethnic goulash.<sup>83</sup>

On the other hand, racial differences could not be so easily overlooked in the mining city. Typical of the cultural and racial prejudices of the day, Brinig wrote, Butte was a "white man's town"... therefore, "no Chinamen [and] no niggers" were welcome.<sup>84</sup> Butte may have been cosmopolitan as one writer warned, but "thoroughly American to the core."<sup>85</sup>

Butte's Chinatown lay between Montana and Main Streets spanning Galena and Mercury. In 1879, Butte had enough Chinese residents to occupy the concerns of the first Mayor and City Council. To deal with the language barrier between the city and the Chinese population, the Council hired an interpreter named "Chinaman Joe."<sup>86</sup> Excluded from mining, the Asians earned a living by washing laundry, peddling vegetables, tailoring, and running restaurants. Noodle houses proved so popular, that in the evenings "a person has hardly room enough to stand."<sup>87</sup>

The Asians in the wide open town also gained a reputation as opium peddlers. A City Council proposal, which became Ordinance #18, outlawed opium smoking dens in the town in 1879; but, like prostitution and so many other vices, it continued unabated.<sup>88</sup> "[The] lousy Chinks are washing laundry in the front rooms and peddling dope in the rear." Yet, a man looking for entertainment, as Brinig so

blatantly put it, would not be too proud to smoke "opium with the Chinks and the dope fiends."<sup>89</sup>

Besides being racially and culturally unsuitable and non-Christian, labor interests feared that Chinese willingness to work for low wages would undermine union efforts and jeopardize white workers. In 1882, William Owsley won election as mayor on a platform of "Down with Chinese Cheap Labor." Two years later a circular was posted ordering the Chinese to leave Butte. Boycotts over the next twelve years aimed at making Chinese "as rare in Butte as a cherry tree."<sup>90</sup> The Butte Daily Miner illustrated the public mood on the issue. The proprietor of the Revere House hotel placed the following advertisement: "Mr. Bogk desires it to be mentioned that he employs only white help, and that he is heartily in accord with the sentiment of the people that *the Chinese must go.*"<sup>91</sup> Damaged financially by labor organizations many Asian businesses were finally driven out of town.

It should be noted that although Jews were also non-Christian business owners, they suffered no persecution from their fellow Butte residents. Some have suggested that the Chinese acted as a lightning rod for persecution drawing attention away from Jews. However, this does not account for the acceptance Jewish residents enjoyed where no Chinese population existed.<sup>92</sup>

Indians seemed to have remained aloof from the scenes

of the wide open town. In fact, the 1910 census listed only one Native American in Butte. Brinig recalled that "Indians didn't come to Butte much," and when they did, it was primarily to attain goods or sample local whiskey.<sup>93</sup> They did, however, camp on the outskirts of town. Sadly, the Indians' poverty forced them to rely on the white population in Butte in a most degrading way. The Butte Miner in July 1898 reported in a rather derisive manner a tribal war that broke out near Timber Butte between two tribes over territorial rights to the main garbage dump.

A tribal war has broken out between the Cree and Chippewa Indians both of whom camp on the Flat. Each claims it has an exclusive franchise to plunder the Butte dump for such things that are edible or wearable or sellable. The Dump, it seems, will support one tribe but won't support two tribes.<sup>94</sup>

Perhaps the only commonality the ethnics of Butte shared beyond their agreement to exclude non-whites, was their brotherhood in the dangerous occupation of mining. In spite of their differences, miners worked with amazing comraderie as long as those considered racially unsuitable remained out of the mines. This prejudice became obvious during the First World War, when white miners reportedly walked off the job after a group of Blackfeet Indians was hired.<sup>95</sup>

Not many Jews worked as miners, but those who did seem to have been accepted without prejudice. This underground brotherhood stemmed from their mutual dependence on one

another in their hazardous line of work. Every day hardrock miners descended into the earth at 400 feet per minute risking life and limb in a very real way. Poor ventilation in the lower depths promoted lung diseases and inhalation of poisonous gases and dust. One report claimed that 50 percent of miners were affected with silicosis from breathing dust. Beyond this, danger of cave-in, falling cages, dynamite accidents, and fire made mining a frightening occupation with one in thirty miners disabled and an average of eighty killed each year.<sup>96</sup> By 1908, metal mining earned the dubious honor of the occupation with the highest fatality rate of all industrial jobs.<sup>97</sup>

All this gave most miners what one study called, a "fatalistic attitude." Rarely planning or saving for the future, a large portion of this mostly single male population became free-spending gamblers and drinkers who spent their money in brothels and saloons to escape from the anxiety of a precarious life.<sup>98</sup> The number of saloons in the city around the turn of the century is unknown, but old-timer Jacob Geltz guessed there was one "for every day of the year."<sup>99</sup>

Taken collectively, the vice, crime, barren landscape, and bad air, according to one scientist, caused a "peculiar mental condition" among the residents. The brain of a person in contact with local minerals, he explained, became metallic, and the Butte people were "not wholly



responsible," for their behavior. Living conditions in early Butte, in the opinion of some contemporary observers were not entirely "conducive to mental, emotional, and physical health."<sup>100</sup> Potent substance abuse, loneliness of being a stranger in a foreign land, despair over unmet expectations in the West, and a variety of health disorders and problems made life more precarious in Butte.

One study revealed suicides in Butte ranked high when compared to the national average. Between 1907 and 1914, 155 men and women took their own lives in the city. This measured two and one half times the general suicide rate for the United States in the same time period and twice the rate of all urban areas of the country. Deaths by suicide for young males between the ages of 15-19 was thirty times the national average in Butte, while the rate for women of the same age exceeded the national rates by an astonishing sixty times.<sup>101</sup>

In searching for an explanation for suicidal despair in Butte, a local doctor noted, "In early days *disappointments that led to dissipation* caused many to take their own lives, and many unknown by name who had drifted West sank under the weight of sorrows and now sleep in this spot."<sup>102</sup> In the mining city, "external factors--such as climate, holidays, mine shutdowns, and labor strife" did not alter the suicide rate, but "day to day economic distress, poor health, and overcrowded, unhealthy, and often impersonal living

conditions" appear to have played a large part in the number of suicides.<sup>103</sup>

Surviving in the mining city meant survival in the natural selection of old-fashioned Social Darwinism. Many flourished-some could not survive. In the absence of state welfare programs and security plans, if health failed, the future held only poverty and inactivity. Before taking his life, one man told a friend, "A miner with consumption [is] better off dead."<sup>104</sup>

If one could not succeed in Butte with all its rumored wealth and opportunity, there was no other place to go. But, that was part of the gamble of the western mining camp. "That's Silver Bow for you," Brinig wrote in one of his novels, "One day you got plenty of everything you want, an' the next you're starvin' to death...anything is li'ble to happen in this town."<sup>105</sup>

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Was the Jewish experience in Butte unique? Did it differ in essential ways from that of Hester street on the Lower East Side of New York City? Butte's Jews certainly possessed more economic and social freedom. Kenneth Libo compared the Jewish experience in large cities such as New York to that of those in small towns and found

...Lower East Side Jews were primarily wage earners, while Jews who went beyond were far more likely to be aspiring entrepreneurs willing to settle wherever they could go into business for themselves...<sup>106</sup>

When Myron Brinig was asked if he felt his novel Singermann, about his Jewish family in Butte, could have been set in the Lower East Side of New York city, he bristled,

No, no. Not Singermann. It couldn't possibly have been set on the Lower East Side...because the way the people react to their surroundings is much different in the far West than it is on the East Side. There is a different climate, different types of people and a feeling of being a part of a new world which is quite different from the feeling of being on the East Side. You're here in a mountain town surrounded by miners and not many Jewish people and so your reactions are going to be different.<sup>107</sup>

Brinig's apparent geographic determinism cannot be completely dismissed. Again, latent Turnerianism comes into play. Moses Rischin hypothesized that for Jews at least, geography was indeed linked to democracy and played a key factor in the Western Jewish experience. The "loose-jointed" nature of western society offered more ready social participation. Indeed, American Jews behaved as if the West was "the most American part of America."<sup>108</sup>

The wide open town was unmistakably unique in character, and residents could not avoid being altered in some way by their presence there. Thus, the uniqueness of the Jewish experience in Butte stemmed from environment. Butte shaped people differently. The history of Butte's

Jewish community, therefore, can only be understood in the context of the story of the wide open town.

## ENDNOTES

## CHAPTER 1

1. Irving Howe, World of Our Fathers (New York: Book-of-the-Month Club, 1993), 5-9; Moses Rischin, The Promised City: New York's Jews, 1870-1914 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), 19-26. Rischin and Howe both indicate the migrations of Eastern European Jews began in the 1870's with the arrival of 40,000 immigrants to U.S., 1880's 200,000 arrived, and the 1890's brought 300,000.

2. Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, A History of Russia, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 394-395; Alan M. Kraut, The Huddled Masses: The Immigrant in American Society, 1880-1921 (Arlington Heights, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 20, 34-35; Rischin, The Promised City, 20, 22-24; Howe, World of Our Fathers, 5-7, 26.

3. Howe, World of Our Fathers, 33; Charles Upson Clark, Greater Roumania (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), 68-69.

4. Rischin, The Promised City, 4-6, 76-94.

5. Isaac B. Berkson, Theories of Americanization: A Critical Study With Special Reference to the Jewish Group (New York: Columbia University Teachers College, 1920), 51; Rischin, The Promised City, 95-98; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 4-6.

6. Moses Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, Moses Rischin and John Livingston eds., (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 33.

7. Berkson, Theories of Americanization, 51.

8. Marc Lee Raphael, "Beyond New York: The Challenge to Local History," in Jews of the American West, 50. Raphael states, "Jews came West in the first place...to start a new life, not to repeat the patterns of the past"; Howe, World of Our Fathers, 27. One Jewish father warned, "You are heading for a corrupt and sinful land where the Sabbath is no Sabbath. Even on Yom Kippur they don't fast..."

9. Arthur Hertzberg, Judaism (New York: George Braziller, 1962), 12-13, 21-37.
10. Nehemiah 13:23-27, (KJV).
11. Ezra 9:1-3, (KJV).
12. Howe, World of Our Fathers, 7-13.
13. Ibid., 70.
14. Berkson, Theories of Americanization, 55.
15. Rischin, The Promised City, 93; Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 135-136; Howe, World of Our Fathers, 261-262.
16. Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 122, 124-126. See also Rischin, The Promised City, 145-146.
17. Benjamin J. Ringer, The Edge of Friendliness: A Study of Jewish-Gentile Relations (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1967), 4.
18. Earl Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 200; Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 107, 138-139; Rischin, The Promised City, 71.
19. Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 134.
20. Berkson, Theories of Americanization, 72.
21. "What is the Jew," The Butte Miner 23 Oct. 1909.
22. Rischin, The Promised City, 95-103; Howe, World of Our Fathers, 30-32; Jacob Riis, How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1971), 85; George Wesley Davis, Sketches of Butte, From Vigilante Days to Prohibition (Boston: The Cornhill Company, 1921), 146. Davis spying a Russian Jew in Butte dressed like this remarked to him, "you should be pushing a cart filled with jewelry, pretty laces, some corset-covers and gay-colored ribbons."
23. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 103-104, 112-113.
24. Berkson, Theories of Americanization, 49.
25. Ibid., 50.

26. Israel Joseph Benjamin quoted by Moses Rischin in, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, 32, see also 27-28, 33; Kelson, "Jews of Montana," 2.

27. Marc Lee Raphael, "Beyond New York: The Challenge to Local History," in Jews of the American West, 50.

28. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 196-197, includes editor's comments on 192. Pomeroy quotes Naomi Wiener Cohen, "The happy union..." on page 204.

29. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, 32.

30. Ibid, 18, 20, 27, 28, 35.

31. Robert E. Levinson, The Jews in the California Gold Rush (New York: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 1978), 71-85.

32. Norton B. Stern and William M. Kramer, "Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Image in the Early West," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly January 1974, 132-133.

33. William Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 87, 133.

34. Norton B. Stern and William M. Kramer, "Anti-Semitism and the Jewish Image in the Early West," Western States Jewish Historical Quarterly, January 1974, 129.

35. John Livingston, in his introduction to Jews of the American West, 21-22, stated, "calling for attention has been the relative absence of anti-Semitism in the West..." and again, "It is suggestive that Jewish pioneer merchants in the West were welcomed by their neighbors far more equitably than were their counterparts in the East..."; Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 204-205. "The quite different reception of Jewish immigrants in the West also corresponds to the special circumstances of a society developed through continuing migration...election of Jews to office and their participation in community activities mark them as leading and respected citizens." Kelson in "Jews of Montana," noted that in Virginia City, "There is nothing in the evidence at hand to indicate that there was prejudice against the Jews as a group in the mining camp," 30, 49, 74.

36. Frederick Jackson Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," The Frontier in American History (New York: 1950); Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner:

Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 194-195; also Livingston's introduction to Jews of the American West, 15.

37. Butte: Its Aspirations Achievements, History, Industries and Homes (Butte, Montana Chamber of Commerce, 1927), cover.

38. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View From the West," in Jews of the American West, 33.

39. Delores J. Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains: Helena's Pioneer Jewish Community, 1864-1889" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1981), 6-7.

40. The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923.

41. M. A. Leeson, History of Montana, 1739-1885 (Chicago, Illinois: Warner, Beers and Company, 1885), 1213, 1340; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 32, 86; obituary for Mr. Louis Gans, Montana Daily Record, 12 Feb. 1904, 5.

42. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 24, 28-30, 90, 92, 96.

43. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, 33.

44. Jeanne Jasmann, letter to Norman Winestine, 9 April 1967, in possession of Montana State Historical Society Library; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 12-14, 31.

45. Kenneth Libo, We Lived There Too (New York: St. Martin's/Marek, 1984), 202; Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 4, 17.

46. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 51-57, 99; Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 112, 116-117.

47. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 9, 10, 48.

48. "Old Butte Man a Death Victim," The Belgrade Journal 23 Nov. 1942, 2; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 85.

49. Leeson, History of Montana, 916-18, 923; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 84-85; Frank Quinn, "Butte: The Rise of a City," The Montana Standard Diamond Jubilee feature supplement, 13 June 1954, sec. A, pp. 2, 39; William J. Clark, "Butte: Gold Camp to Copper Capital," The Montana Standard, Diamond Jubilee feature supplement, 13 June 1954, p. 3; Royal G. Barnell, "From Gold Camp to Copper City: An Historical Pageant-Drama of the City of Butte, Montana, One



of the Great Mining Camps of the World" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1958), xxviii.

50. "Silver Bow County: A History of its Settlement and Development," The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, New Years Edition, p. 9.

51. "How City Got its Charter in 1879," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, Diamond Jubilee feature supplement, sec. A, p. 9.

52. K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 158-159; David Emmons, The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925, 19-20, 23; Butte, its Aspirations, Achievements, History, Industries and Homes (Butte, Montana Chamber of Commerce, 1927), 3; Mark Ciabattari, "The Fall and Rise of Butte, Montana," New York Times Magazine, 1 Mar. 1992, p.48.

53. Jacob Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, (Butte, Montana, 1905), 10.

54. Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, 159.

55. "Wood Hauling Ranked as Big Business Around Local Mines," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 16. This article was reprinted in 1954 from a 1 Jan. 1882 article.

56. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 15, 16.

57. William R. Kershner, "Early Theater in Butte," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Spring 1988, 33.

58. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 8, 9, 12. Geltz, called "Uncle Sam" after the name on his lunch wagon, wrote this colorful little guide book for newcomers to the area. It is doubtful that Geltz was a Jew. He said, "My right Christian and surname is: Jacob Geltz."

59. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 141-42; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 10.

60. Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, "Redeeming the Ugliest Town on Earth," Craftsman Magazine, June 1907, 315.

61. James T. Finlen, Meet Some Folks (New York: Carlton Press Inc., 1983), 40-41.

62. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 27, 29.

63. Finlen, Meet Some Folks, 40; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 177-178.

64. Myron Brinig, Singermann (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1929), 37.

65. Sam Rafish, interview with Janet Eisner Cornish, August 4, 1980, pp. 10, 22, hereafter noted as OH Rafish J-3; Sam Rafish, interview with Ray Calkins, 1980, p. 4, hereafter noted as OH Rafish RC.

66. Ciabaratti, "The Rise and Fall of Butte, Montana," 48; Finlen, Meet Some Folks, 40-41.

67. Finlen, Meet Some Folks, 40.

68. John F. Davies, Catalogue of Books in the Free Public Library of Butte, Montana (Butte, MT: T. E. Butler Publisher, 1894), insert between pages 92 and 93.

69. Scee, "The Story to be Told of the End of the Line," 30; Myron Brinig, interview with Earl Ganz and William Bevis, July 1982, p. 9, hereafter noted as OH Brinig.

70. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 33, 34.

71. Myron Brinig, Wide Open Town, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1931), 45; Jacqueline Cooper Brinig, telephone interview with author, 1993.

72. Finlen, Meet Some Folks, 40-41; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 23, 24. Geltz gave this break down of 160 cribs: 63 were on Galena, 42 on Mercury, 34 on Wyoming alley and Paradise alley, while "Little Terrace" had 21.

73. Charles Chaplin, My Autobiography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1964), 128-129.

74. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 43; Davis, Sketches of Butte, "I do not believe..." 34, 36; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, "poor Good-forsaken..." 8, 39.

75. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 24; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 37, 39, 145.

76. Butte Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, New Year's edition, 59; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, "the State of Montana..." "Butte city is almost..." and "too slow to catch..." 3, 20, 28; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 115, 117-119.

77. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 66; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 19. Jacob Geltz considered himself an experienced man-about-town and wrote his little book in 1905 as a guide through the ups and downs of the city. He gained his nickname "Uncle Sam" after the name on his lunch wagon. "This book contains quite a lot of interesting reading matter, and is therefore for the right party very instructive. It is not only instructive for strangers who come to Butte, or to the state of Montana, but also for the people that are already living here...", 1.

78. *Shiksa* is a Yiddish word for a gentile girl or a Jewish girl who behaves like a non-Jew.

79. "Butte's First Mayor Urged 'Wise and Judicious City Legislation'," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, sec. A, p. 9.

80. Scee, "The Story to be Told of the End of the Line," 28, 29; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 65.

81. *Goyem* is a disparaging word used to refer to non-Jews.

82. Emmons, The Butte Irish, "made Butte an Irish..." 20-21, 63; Davis, Sketches of Butte, "living in Butte..." 64.

83. Barnell, "From Gold Camp to Copper City," xix. Unfortunately, Barnell did not designate the date of this goodwill event or his source.

84. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 92.

85. Butte: Its Aspirations, Achievements, History, Industries and Homes, 3.

86. "Official Journal of the official proceedings of the City Council of the City of Butte, Montana Territory, 1879-1880," 15.

87. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 28.

88. "Official journal of the official proceedings of the City Council of the City of Butte, Montana Territory," 21, 25.

89. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 38-39, 270; Brinig, Singermann, 35.

90. Stacy A. Flaherty, "Boycott in Butte: Organized Labor and the Chinese Community, 1896-1897," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Winter 1987, 35-36, 38.
91. The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 45.
92. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 201-202.
93. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 33; OH Brinig, 24; Scee, "The Story to be Told of the End of the Line," 29.
94. Neil J. Lynch, Butte Centennial Recollections (Butte: Montana: Pioneer Printing, 1979), 28. Lynch quoted The Butte Miner, July 1898.
95. Harry Reidinger, interview with Ronald Specter, 25 Nov. 1974, p. 11 hereafter known as OH Reidinger; Richard E. Lingenfelter, The Hardrock Miners, A History of the Mining Labor Movement in the American West, 1863-1893 (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1974), 7.
96. Lingenfelter, The Hardrock Miners, 13-18, 23-27; Emmons, The Butte Irish, 71.
97. Brian Shovers, "The Perils of Working in the Butte Underground: Industrial Fatalities in the Copper Mines, 1880-1920," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Spring 1987, 26.
98. Lingenfelter, The Hardrock Miners, 11-12, 27.
99. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 19, 31; Emmons, The Butte Irish, 71.
100. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 115; Scee, "The Story to Be Told of the End of the Line," 78-79.
101. Scee, "The Story to be Told of the End of the Line," 8, 21, 30, 45.
102. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 55.
103. Scee, "The Story to be Told of the End of the Line," ii.
104. Scee, "The Story to Be Told of the End of the Line," 80, 102. "What Peter Tussila told a friend shortly before he shot himself."
105. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 256.

106. Libo, We Lived There Too, 272.

107. OH Brinig, 15.

108. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, 30. See also Livingston's introduction to Jews of the American West, 15.

## CHAPTER II

### JEWES IN THE WIDE OPEN TOWN

We have no altar now whereon  
to make sacrifices; no  
frankincense to lift fragrance  
heavenward; no chorus of  
twenty of thirty Levites to  
make the welkin ring with  
hallelujahs; but we still have  
the Jewish heart...<sup>1</sup>

At the dedication of the B'Nai Israel Reformed Temple in Butte, the young and eloquent Rabbi Harry Weiss opened the ceremony with a supplication to the God of Israel. In his prayer, Weiss asked God to "bless our country, its flag, its chief executive, its officers,...for *this is our Zion*."<sup>2</sup> Though Butte may have seemed an unlikely Zion, the majority of Jews who settled there had accepted their residency in the mining city and felt no need for an ancient homeland. The Jews of early Butte not only accepted and adapted to their new surroundings, for the most part, they literally flourished, obtaining a remarkable degree of financial success. Through a mixture of keen business savvy and fraternal and political community activity, the Jews became indispensable to the stability of the early town by providing ready availability of goods and strong political leadership.

From the beginning, Butte's pioneer Jews dominated the merchant class, supplying goods to a predominantly single, male population. David H. Cohen sold tobacco and cigars, H. L. Frank sold wholesale liquor, while Henry Jacobs and others opened men's clothing stores. These merchants peddled wares

in keeping with the undeveloped condition of the Territory and the modest wants of its customers, who at that time needed only such necessary articles that were appropriate in a mining camp far removed from the centers of commerce...<sup>3</sup>

Jewish merchants whose experience resulted from the harsh school of boom/bust western mining camp economies throughout the West, not surprisingly exhibited a nervous hope for Butte's future as a viable market. The local newspaper soothed prospective settlers by pointing out that three hundred buildings erected in 1885 within and without the city limits were "evidence not only of the prosperity of Butte and vicinity, but of the abiding faith which all of its citizens have in the stability and richness of this great mineral center." The new Gans and Klein Mercantile as well, became "a testimonial ... to the permanency of Butte as a mining camp."<sup>4</sup>

Louis Gans and his partner Henry Klein may have been the most prepared of Montana merchants because of their business experience throughout the territory. They first relied on Prairie Schooners and ships down the Missouri

River to supply goods to their store in Fort Benton. Branch stores included Deer Lodge, Diamond City, Helena, and in 1877, Butte. By 1885, they claimed to be able to obtain goods in a remarkable ten days. With Louis Gans as resident buyer in New York City, they "transact[ed] business annually second to none on the Pacific Coast." The business grew to such an extent that in 1886, "their prosperity became so generally known throughout the Territory, that it [was] the subject of wonder." Indeed, they became the "leading clothiers, hatters and furnishers of Montana."<sup>5</sup>

The Butte branch of Gans and Klein store located on Main Street and reputedly the first brick store in the town, was described as "an ornament to the city." The firm's insistence on a brick building stemmed from the series of fires in Helena that twice destroyed their stock between the years 1867 to 1874. Between 1884 and 1886 their business grew an incredible 500 percent under the management of Mr. Meyer Ganzberger. Their goods featured clothing for men, boys, and children - with the notable absence of women's clothing. Variety of goods was described as "simply immense and represent[ing] every possible style and quality from a suit of overalls to the finest broadcloth," including a full line of boots and shoes, hats and caps from Stetsons to beaver caps or silk top hats, and shirts of cashmere, linen, flannel, and silk. Especially for miners, Gans and Klein carried hydraulic hose manufactured in Helena for use in



placer mining.<sup>6</sup>

Jewish pioneer, Henry Jacobs, also provided goods to the struggling young community. Jacobs fought at Vicksburg as a Confederate soldier. He left the devastated South after the War and came to Montana in 1866 to follow rumors of opportunity. Settling in Diamond City, Montana near Helena, he opened a store with co-religionist Leopold Marks. One source placed Jacobs as a merchant in Virginia City as well. In 1869, he relocated his business to Deer Lodge before removing to Butte. In 1876, Jacobs established one of the town's first mercantiles on the corner of Park and Main in the heart of old Butte.<sup>7</sup> He sold "men's, youths', and children's clothing, gent's furnishing goods, hats, caps, boots and shoes."<sup>8</sup> In 1879, Jacobs formed a business partnership with Herman Ganz called H. Jacobs and Company.<sup>9</sup> An ad for Jacobs and Company in The Butte Daily Miner in 1881 admonished the reader to "see for yourself that they are selling all their clothing at cost."<sup>10</sup>

Besides H. Jacobs and Company and Gans and Klein, Butte boasted a number of other Jewish dry good stores early in its history. Sands and Boyce dry goods and Goldsmith and Company both opened in 1880. By 1885, Butte's city directory listed 4,888 people and approximately forty-five stores selling everything from clothing and general merchandise, to jewelry, hats, cigars, hardware, furniture, and food. At least twelve of these stores, or twenty-four

percent, appear to have been Jewish owned.<sup>11</sup>

Due to excessive competition for business between the principal local stores, merchants occasionally resorted to some rather unorthodox means to secure the trade of local miners. Clothing staples such as overalls, flannel underwear, and blanket-lined duck coats were commonly sold below cost to attract customers. Meyer Ganzberger, manager of Gans and Klein, attempted to enter into a "fair price" agreement with other major dry good stores to end below-cost sales. After the failure of several previous agreements, Ganzberger suggested each store post a \$1000 deposit to solidify the oral contract. As negotiations between merchants crumbled, a bizarre price war broke out over the price of overalls, involving at least three Jewish owned stores.

E. L. Bonner and Co. had a brass band on the roof of their store to entertain the public. Goldsmith cut the price of overalls to 50 cents. I cut to 25 cents--and Sands and Boyce went up on the roof of their store and tossed down merchandise to the throngs that collected. We all lost heavily except Charles Palmer, a Main street merchant. Palmer arranged with Lieneman and Schmidt to buy any of the overalls we sold, at the selling price plus the price of a glass of beer--12 1/2 cents--in unlimited quantities.

Lieneman and Schmidt saw to it that we had lots of customers. We had to have the police on hand to regulate the crowds. Finally even Palmer had enough of our overalls to satisfy him and the war petered out. But overalls never went back to the pre-war price.<sup>12</sup>

Miners were good customers. Ganzberger stated, "in the '80's, ever man's credit was good...and our losses were very

small." At the beginning of the prospecting season, every miner was extended \$100 credit without question.<sup>13</sup> By the turn of the century, the town's mineral wealth and high wages earned the town the right to boast the largest payroll for a city of that size in the nation. In 1905, only five years later, wages were highest per capita *in the world*. Butte's monthly payroll amounted to \$1 million for its workers, about 8,000 of whom were miners.<sup>14</sup>

The early Jewish mercantiles contrasted sharply with the large department stores of the later years such as Symons Dry Goods. Officers of the Symons store, established on October 14, 1897, included William Symons as president, Harry Symons and J. E. Oppenheimer as vice presidents, and H. E. Oppenheimer, secretary.<sup>15</sup> Located at 68-82 West Park street, Symons' primary competitor was Hennessey's Department store, founded in 1886 by Irishman Daniel J. Hennessey. The two stores ran full page advertisements with Symons' claiming to be the "economists for the people."<sup>16</sup>

Hennessey's, Lutey's, A. Booth's, Connell's and Symons' each bought "goods by train loads," everything from horse-shoe nails to diamond pins, and employed at least two hundred clerks. For this reason, the small businessman had to be especially shrewd and resourceful to compete with the numerous big local firms.<sup>17</sup>

Before the arrival of the big stores, the early dry goods and general merchandise stores rarely offered women's

clothing for sale due to the absence of a significant number of females in the town's population. Of 350 residents in Butte in 1867, more than three hundred were single men and much of the remaining fifty were married males. At a tiny New Year's Eve ball given the same year, it was reported that twenty five ladies were present, probably representing the entire female population of Butte.<sup>18</sup> Local women undoubtedly relied on local dressmakers or their own sewing skills for much of their clothing. In 1885, five women listed their work as dressmaking.<sup>19</sup>

Ready availability of goods may have been an important factor in attracting females to the West, and perhaps, solving a problem that many men faced: convincing a woman to remain. One contemporary writer gave the presence of women a cosmic importance:

The absence of good female society, in any due proportion to the numbers of the opposite sex, is likewise an evil of great magnitude; for men become rough, stern, and cruel, to a surprising degree, under such a state of things.<sup>20</sup>

Real community stability depended not only on the presence of working men, but also the presence of women and children, and these families depended on the ready availability of goods. One historian referred to Butte's grocers, saloon keepers, clothiers, and other merchants as, "the principal sources of stability" in town.<sup>21</sup> Without access to basic needs and even luxuries, life in untamed regions proved too

difficult for most. The Jewish merchants were among those who supplied the goods and capital to young Butte. Their businesses helped establish the city as a "sound and enduring community."<sup>22</sup> The increasing female presence in the copper era, coupled with easily attainable supplies, marked the evolution from a male mining camp to an industrial city.

As more women came to Butte, Jewish merchants expanded their wares to meet the new demands. Ed Marans began selling "feminine apparel" in 1904, while pioneer Joe Weinberg opened a store on West Park to serve Montana women in 1908.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps because of a certain self-consciousness brought on by isolation, or an exaggerated attempt to appear worldly, merchants and residents in the West sought to rival their Eastern cousins and out-do even Paris and New York for stylishness and haute couture. Indeed, the affluent and cosmopolitan nature of Butte's population, much like other western urban communities, "inclined retail customers to favor goods that came from distant manufacturers." Merchants responded to the demands of the populace by providing the latest styles and furnishings that the world had to offer.<sup>24</sup>

Women of Butte could dress themselves and furnish their homes in as chic a manner as any big-city dweller. Butte merchants prided themselves on the cosmopolitan quality of

their wares. In the mining city one "could buy the finest merchandise manufactured in the whole world."<sup>25</sup> Jacobs and Company, for example, "cater[ed] to the popular taste" and boasted "the newest and best goods that appear in the leading markets of the world."<sup>26</sup> "In the early days," claimed one resident,

three establishments sent their modistes to Paris twice a year to buy gowns and select designs, and the Butte women--beautiful and attractive - gowned in the latest creations from the French metropolis, drew admiration wherever they went.<sup>27</sup>

Symons Dry Goods advertised that its 100,000 square feet of stock, and twenty-four units, were comparable to big city concerns, "representing all that is best in American and European productions," as well as being the "most economical." The store's department managers visited "larger cities of the east from two to four times a year [to] keep Symons in intimate touch with the best creations that find their way from Europe." And in order to provide the true feel of Paris, Symons supplied their female customers with French dressing rooms on the second floor.<sup>28</sup>

Butte's tendency to opulence was not an aberration in Montana. The big Fligelman's department store in Helena, owned by Myron Brinig's relatives, carried the same sort of European goods for their customers. Belle Fligelman Winestine, related the following story:

Mrs. [Charles A.] Broadwater and her sister used to go abroad quite often. And one year, they went to Paris. Our store used to carry these elegant trefousse gloves, because no lady would ever be seen out downtown marketing without gloves on. But when they got to Paris they discovered they had forgotten to bring that box of gloves. They only had the one or two pair that they had worn on the way. They wrote back from Paris to Helena to send them a half a dozen pair of trefousse gloves that they could have gotten right there in Paris with no trouble at all! My father always remembered that.<sup>29</sup>

As retail sales, and mining and real estate investments profited, many pioneer Jews became part of the wealthy class in town. A list entitled, "heavy taxpayers" in Butte in 1886 featured a number of prominent Jews: W. Copinus paid \$133.85, Alex Cohen - \$239.67, H. L. Frank - \$392.25, Gans and Klein - \$450.45, Henry Jonas - \$124.98, Goldsmith and Co. - \$561.99, and Joseph Rosenthal - \$327.33. By contrast, the soon-to-be unfathomably wealthy Marcus Daly paid \$179.90 on some holdings and another \$2,827.45 on his Anaconda Mine.<sup>30</sup>

This "old class" in Butte was responsible for giving the city, "its world-wide reputation for lavish entertainments, beautiful and beautifully-gowned women and bright, dashing men..."<sup>31</sup> The wealthy Jewish Oppenheimer sisters attracted a great deal of attention in the community with their conspicuous consumption. Having a brother who was part owner of the reputedly largest dry goods store in Montana was no small matter.<sup>32</sup> One elaborate display of riches by the old town wealthy is found in the report of the Jewish wedding of Mr. Julius Levy and Miss Sarah Mendelsohn

in June of 1879.

The parlors of the Mendelsohn mansion were filled with a brilliantly dressed assemblage of ladies and gentlemen. Softly a side door opened and from its portal appeared the bride, a very vision of beauty in a gown of gros-grained silk and a bridal veil of lace enveloping her from head to foot. Her bridesmaids, Miss Nettie Mendelsohn, Miss Alice Marks, Miss Lizzie Jacobs and Miss Ida Copinus, were attired in white. The groomsmen were Mr. Julius and Mr. Maurice Mendelsohn, Mr. H. Barnett and Mr. Simeon Jacobs. Maurice Silverman, acting rabbi, joined them in marriage by the rites of the Jewish faith. After the ceremony the guests stayed for refreshments and entertainment. Bishop Tuttle and Mr. W. A. Clark offered a toast to the bride and groom. The guests left only to reassemble in two hours. Three hundred guests then enjoyed dancing until three o'clock in the morning.<sup>33</sup>

The number of guests, the ecumenical guest list, and the non-traditional nature of the ceremony, all indicate that Jews of Butte, perhaps more especially the wealthy and Reformed Jews, enjoyed a remarkable comraderie and cozy acceptance with their non-Jewish neighbors.

Pioneer Jewish families such as the Mendelsohns, Oppenheimers, Symons, Jacobs, and others, illustrated only the very prosperous portion of the Butte Jewish community. The predominantly German first-comers watched as the city grew and immigrations from Eastern Europe swelled and altered the ranks of the Jewish community. At this point, Butte's Jewish population became an anomaly in western Jewish studies. Though studies indicate that Germans moved West in larger numbers than the Russian and Polish Jews, and few Eastern European Jews moved West, this was not the case



with Butte's Jewish population. Though the German presence remained strong, the overwhelming majority of Butte's Jews in the early twentieth century were Eastern Europeans. Naturally, social and religious disparities in the Jewish population began to emerge.<sup>34</sup>

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Estimates of the size of the Jewish community in the mining town varied depending upon the year and the health of the mining industry. At the turn of the century, according to one observer, about 400 Jews resided in the mining city.<sup>35</sup> After 1900, never fewer than 500 Jews reportedly lived in the wide open town until the mining collapses of the mid-century. Higher estimates, place 600 Jewish families in the city around 1908.<sup>36</sup>

To determine vital information on the Jewish community, various Butte records were studied including the 1920 Manuscript Census for Silver Bow County, mortuary records from 1901-1917, the B'Nai Israel cemetery, newspapers, oral histories, and city directories. The resulting data, formed a database of 980 former Butte Jews for determining with a relative degree of accuracy, occupational trends, residences, longevity, family origins and other vital statistics. Data regarding occupation and residence, however, are transient pieces of information and often

changed several times in a life span.

Because public records rarely identify people by religious background, and many Jews had Germanized or Americanized names, difficulty arose in determining Jewishness for inclusion in the database. Obviously, those surnames found in a survey of the B'Nai Israel cemetery were decidedly of Jewish origin. Some other Jews listed in oral histories, newspaper articles, and obituaries were also identified by religion. The 1920 Census pointed out certain Jewish residents of Butte and Silver Bow by listing native language as "Yiddish," "Jewish," or "Hebrew." Obviously, this proved helpful only with those Jews who did not speak English as their primary language. Because of difficulty in identifying names as Jewish, some Jews inevitably were overlooked for inclusion in the database.<sup>37</sup> Due to its incompleteness, the database can indicate only general trends and tendencies within a given population for a certain time frame.

Occupationally speaking, most Butte Jews eventually owned their own businesses and became self-employed. Jews predominated in sales professions from clerking to management and ownership of a wide range of stores, such as dry goods and general merchandise stores, cigar and tobacco shops, clothing stores, confectioneries, second-hand and junk stores, restaurants, tailor shops, real estate offices, jewelry, and grocery stores.

Jews worked in both skilled, unskilled and professional trades as well as merchandising. From barbers, shoemakers, and electricians, to service professions such as laborer, waiter, elevator operator, housekeeper, telephone operator, chauffeur, and laundress - the Jews of Butte ran the professional gamut. (See Appendix A for list of occupations by surname)

From the sampling of 980 Jewish residents, occupations for 311 Jews were gathered. Of this group, fully 176 or 56 percent, could be directly categorized as merchants, clerks, business managers, buyers, or sales people.

Seventeen of 311 workers sold meat, poultry, fish, groceries, and produce for a total of five percent of the sampling. A total of forty-two Jews worked in sales as clerks or merchants in either department stores, dry goods, supply companies, luggage stores or traveling sales. Another twenty-eight Jews worked in clothing trades selling either ladies' or men's clothing, shoes, or furs. Those who held management positions worked in variety of establishments from the Finlen hotel to cigar and luggage factories, theaters and restaurants, and various departments of Symons Dry goods.

Though most women in the early century were homemakers, forty-four of the 311 declared workers, or 14 percent were women. This compares neatly with Portland's Jewish women, 17 percent of whom worked in 1900. Also comparing with

Portland's community was the type of occupations chosen by women.<sup>38</sup> Fourteen women listed their occupation as either bookkeeping or stenography, making these the most chosen jobs for women. Another twelve women worked in sales, most likely in stores owned by their families. As in other communities, Jewish wives, sisters and daughters helped run family businesses.<sup>39</sup> These Jewesses, two calling themselves merchants and two identifying themselves as managers, sold such things as confections, second hand goods, dry goods, and insurance.

Five women worked as teachers, two chose nursing, two were landladies, two were laundry manglers, and two of the sampling were prostitutes, although at least two more have been identified from other sources. One each of the following professions were represented by women: tailor, housekeeper, waitress, violinist, and telephone operator.

Jews predominated in the jewelry, junk, second hand, and salvage sales in Butte. As in other Jewish communities, many Russian Jews "turned to second-hand shops, peddling and the junk business for a livelihood..."<sup>40</sup> Twenty-six, or 8 percent of the sampling, listed their occupations in these trades.

Pawn shops carried a wide variety of merchandise. Abraham Wehl, for example, opened the Pioneer Loan Office in the mining city around 1886 and advertised "a large stock of unredeemed pledges on hand for sale, consisting of all kinds

and every description of personal property...watches, clocks, diamonds, jewelry of every kind, musical instruments, seal skin sacks, fur clothing and over-coats..."<sup>41</sup>

City ordinance #578 of 1899 regulated junk dealers and required licenses costing \$200 per year, issued only to those with "evidence of character." Junk store owners were required to keep a book with detailed descriptions of each and every article purchased and give a daily report of such to the Chief of Police. They were also cautioned not to "break, bruise, burn, melt, cut, tear or mutilate" any article purchased or received.<sup>42</sup> These strict ordinances probably existed to control theft, and like anti-prostitution and gambling laws were probably ignored.

Five Jewish men in Butte declared their occupation as peddling. Many immigrant Jews chose peddling as an occupation in the late nineteenth century. Those who hoped to avoid the exploitation of sweat shop labor could be their own boss with a peddler's wagon and still observe the Jewish Sabbath.<sup>43</sup> Door to door peddling, however, was not as romantic as envisioned. Requirements for the peddler's trade included

no more than to know the names of a few items in English and to have been blessed by heaven with a special gift - shamelessness, so that you don't become depressed when you are turned away or are taunted by strangers.<sup>44</sup>

Jewish peddlers did not appear to enjoy the wide acceptance that more well-established Jews had, and as a group, endured a great deal of ridicule. Irving Howe claimed, "Irish boys seemed to take special delight in taunting Jewish peddlers." This appears to be a vast generalization, but may explain why Kalman Rudolph, who peddled in Butte, reportedly paid bribes to Walkerville toughs for the right to work in the area.<sup>45</sup> So troublesome was ridicule of Jewish peddlers by young children, that Jews in Denver placed this advertisement in The Denver Times in 1899:

The small boys of the town who have been amusing themselves by throwing stones at peddlers and ragpickers had better watch out. The Jewish Arapahoe Democratic Society met yesterday and passed resolutions asking for an ordinance protecting its members from molestation while in pursuit of any lawful occupation. A heavy penalty will be established and any little urchins caught interfering in any manner with any member of this society will be given a big dose of the medicine of the law.<sup>46</sup>

The hardships and uncertainty of peddling made it a temporary occupation in America. As time progressed, most peddlers established their own businesses or were driven out of peddling by large establishments.<sup>47</sup>

Jewish residents owned at least four large furniture stores in the mining city. Sam Shiner, "the genial, interesting proprietor" of Shiner's furniture, opened his store at 75-79 East Park in 1905. With \$350 dollars, he and his partner Lou Frank built a large business described in the syrupy congratulatory flattery of old newspapers as "a

revelation in beautiful home furnishings and conveniences...no less a revelation in constant economy and service."<sup>48</sup>

Kalman Rudolph, one of seven out of 311 workers who once worked as an expressman in the mining city, opened "Rudolphs Standard Furniture" at 65 East Park in 1921. His sons, Lou and Newt later took over. The following year, Sam Finberg established a home furnishing store at 44 East Park Street which his sons David and Harry later operated. Finally, Ed Rosenberg, who worked in the furniture trade since 1911, opened his own business in 1934 on East Park. His sons Jack and Maurice later took over the store.<sup>49</sup> Louis Stolpensky and Bernard Kopald also sold furniture in Butte.

Jews worked in skilled trades as well as sales. Like so many of their Eastern cousins who worked in home production or apparel trades, a substantial number of Jews chose tailoring as a profession in Butte.<sup>50</sup> Tailoring was listed by nineteen men and one woman, or 6 percent of the sampling of 311, as a line of work. Unlike Eastern Jews who worked long hours in sweat shops for meager wages, tailors in Butte made good money. Tailor Harry Reidinger charged \$2.50 to clean a suit of clothes and \$5.00 to make a pair of pants for the "big, strong as mules men," at a time when local miners were bringing home about \$4.25 a day.<sup>51</sup>

Reidinger came from Austria, the son of a strict

Orthodox father who, "chant[ed] in Hebrew every morning." Arriving in New York City as a skilled tailor, he had only the equivalent of eight American dollars in his pocket. In New York, he took a frustrating job as a supervisor over twelve non-English speaking Italians for \$20.00 a week, with a boss who, "used him up as a green-horn." When the young Reidinger heard of a tailoring job in Cody, Wyoming for a Mr. Charles Benjamin, he was only too happy to leave the big city. Reidinger stayed in Wyoming for eight months before he relocated his family to Butte, "the best town there is."<sup>52</sup>

Other skilled trades engaged in by Jews included six men who worked as barbers, one painter, one picture enlarger, one travel agent and one photographer. Two served as plumbers, three as machinists and one electrician. Three held clerical positions.

A total of thirty-four of 311 workers, over 10 percent, held unskilled or service jobs some which have already been mentioned. Some of these jobs were laborers, newsboys, waiters and waitresses, mail carrier, janitors, elevator operator, chauffeur, lumberman, and bartender.

Jews participated in the mining industry although not in great numbers. Jewish immigrants came to this country without mining skills. As one historian noted, "Mining was unknown in the medieval and post-emancipation eras of Europe's Jewish communities."<sup>53</sup> Most thought it wiser to



sell merchandise to miners rather than engage in mining as an occupation. Jewish westerners worked predominantly as prospectors or as merchants selling goods to early settlers. As one scholar put it, they "sought to dig not riches from the earth, but profit from the diggers."<sup>54</sup>

Seventeen Jews in the sampling held jobs with mining companies. Two of these worked as mining engineers, and one each worked as agent, leaser, teamster, laborer, watchman, sampler, and millman. Eight of the sampling of 311 Jews, a mere 2 percent, actually worked underground as miners, although many more may have worked in the mines as a transitional occupation.

Several Jewish miners met with unfortunate mine accidents. Dave Fireman, a fifty year old miner died from a "fall of ground" in 1910 in the St. Lawrence mine. Leo Morris died in a mine accident, as did Isaac Abraham, who died with five other men in the Minnie Healy mine disaster. Isaac Abraham's sister, Jennie, bravely participated in the dedication of the B'Nai Israel Temple while men searched for her brother's body, the last of the five to be recovered.<sup>55</sup> Jewish miners, though, were rare, much rarer than miners of other ethnic groups. So uncommon were Jewish miners that long-time resident Sam Rafish, who worked in his youth as a time-keeper for the mines, "didn't know any Jews who worked underground."<sup>56</sup>

The general avoidance of dangerous occupations may have

been one factor responsible for the longer life span of Butte's Jewish males over local Catholic males. Database queries indicated an overall average age at death of 58.7 years for Jews who survived beyond the first crucial year of life. When separated by gender, average age for the 422 females was 59.8 years, whereas average age at death for the 510 males was 57.6.<sup>57</sup>

A comparison with a similar sampling of 710 Butte Catholics buried in Saint Patrick Cemetery in Butte, resulted in an overall average age at death for those who survived beyond the first year of life as 53.4 years - a significant difference of over five years between Jewish and Catholic life spans. Average age for Catholic females was 54.6 years and for males 53.4, indicating Jewish females lived 5.2 years longer than their Catholic sisters and Jewish men survived 4.2 years beyond the average life span of their Catholic brethren.

Several factors may have been responsible for the longer life span of Jews. For Jewish males, the choice of less dangerous occupations may have been a small factor in the longer life span, however, this does not account for the longer life of Jewish females. For females, smaller family size and less exposure to the dangers of childbirth may have been a factor in their longevity. Factors such as socioeconomics, cultural lifestyle, and dietary preference undoubtedly had more influence than any other on the

differences in longevity. Mr. Robert Pengelly, caretaker of the Butte's older local cemeteries - Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish - claimed that Jewish people were the most aged of those buried in the three cemeteries. This may be because the majority of Jews left in town for many years were remnants of the old community.

Regarding professional occupations, the Butte Jews boasted eight attorneys and six teachers, while fifteen of the 312 sold real estate or managed rentals, and two were nurses. The number of physicians and dentists is not certain, but at least five are known. This number undoubtedly grew as the century progressed and Jews sent their children to professional schools. Within one generation, the son of a poor tailor or expressman would become a practicing physician, lawyer, or successful merchant. In a town, as one resident sarcastically put it, where "doctors, lawyers, real estate men, pawn brokers, etc.,...[were] so numerous that a person could not shoot off a gun without danger of hitting one," Jews figured prominently among those in danger of being shot.<sup>58</sup>

Overall, Jews did well in Butte. M. H. Schwartz, co-owner of Stratford Clothes Shop in 1923, believed "that a multitude of opportunities abound for the newcomer who is diligent and willing to put forth an effort."<sup>59</sup> Jews may have come to Butte poor, but they had no intention of remaining that way. This "astonishing rise in socioeconomic

position" was responsible for nearly eliminating the Jewish working class in the twentieth century, leaving most Jews as middle-class professionals or white collar workers.<sup>60</sup>

The career of theater owner Phil Levy, illustrated the remarkable business astuteness and Alger-like rise to success that followed so many of the Jewish community. Levy came to Butte from Helena in 1884 to see a prize fight at a time when only about 5000 people resided there. Returning several years later, he worked as a simple barber by day. At night, Levy performed on the stages of the old Arion theater, "singing, dancing, and [doing] character stunts." By working two jobs, Levy earned \$100 per week - \$75 from his stage performances. Eventually, he saved enough money to purchase his own barber shop.<sup>61</sup>

As fate would have it, his interest in the theater and rising financial status coincided with a slump in the theater business in Butte. An over abundance of silent motion picture houses resulted in every theater in town losing money. Levy took \$6000 in savings and decided to buy "as many of the theaters as he could," boost the prices and develop a theatrical monopoly. He organized the Ansonia Amusement Company, "built the Ansonia, bought the Orpheum and Princess then bought the Broadway theater" in Butte, as well as movie houses in Anaconda, Helena, and Great Falls.<sup>62</sup>

Jews participated in less acceptable forms of

entertainment as well. Though many of Butte's prostitutes seem to have been renowned, the Jewish ones drew special attention. At least four known Jewish women followed the oldest profession in the mining town. One woman, called "Jew Ida Levy," reportedly worked as a madam in the red-light district from the turn of the century to the First World War.<sup>63</sup> Two Jewish prostitutes buried in B'Nai Israel cemetery, Rose Schwartz and Kate Darrah, practiced their trade while reportedly remaining "faithful" to their religious convictions.<sup>64</sup>

Another local prostitute, dubbed "Jew Jess," gained a rather peculiar reputation in the city. One contemporary painted a quaint picture of Jess rocking near the open door of her neat one-room "crib," knitting and surrounded by pictures and home-made lace. However, this genteel non-gentile was reputedly a well-known prostitute and drug addict endowed with a mythical ability to pick pockets. Because of her skill at thievery, the Butte police reportedly finally refused to allow her to rent in the red-light district because of the number of victims among her clients.<sup>65</sup>

Thirteen Jews in the mining city listed participation in a number of frowned-upon occupations such as operating pool halls, selling cigars and tobacco, bartending, and liquor sales. Nine Jewish merchants catered to the community's cigar and tobacco needs, including Jesse Newman

and Lee Marx who organized the local Louis S. Cohn tobacco company.<sup>66</sup> Three operated combination pool halls and cigar stores, and two combined confections with cigar sales. Four others sold only candy or confections. In 1877, saloon owner Henry Lupin Frank began his business in a log cabin, formerly the "Copperopolis" restaurant on Main street. After several expansions, he moved the business to East Broadway where he began storage, bottling and refrigeration of liquor.<sup>67</sup>

Building newer and better businesses and homes was part of mining city social mobility. As business flourished and fortunes grew, families like the Symons and Oppenheimers moved to posh mansions on the West side of town where many of the well-to-do residents lived. Myron Brinig described this area as a place where respectable merchant families and children of pioneers settled.<sup>68</sup> Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, who was appalled at the architecture in Butte, remarked on the "gaudily expensive mansions of the mushroom millionaires" of the West side. Undoubtedly, she included gentile W. A. Clark's mansion with its European furnishings and imported carved stairways.<sup>69</sup>

The wealthier West side of town became the primary area for Jewish homes with the majority of Jewish residences located West of Main Street. Addresses for 556 individuals (192 separate homes) plotted on a 1915 Butte city map revealed less than fifty of the 192 households were located

East of Main street leaving nearly two-thirds of the Jewish population on the West side of town. Colorado, West Granite, North and South Washington, West Broadway, West Silver, West Park and North Main had the highest concentration of Jewish homes on the West side of town. South Wyoming, South Arizona, and Utah Streets held the highest concentration of individuals on the East side.

Most Jews settled in the old town area bordered on the North by Quartz Street, on the South by Aluminum, the West by Excelsior Street, and the East by Arizona.<sup>70</sup> The majority of residences were located within a nine block radius of the town center of Park and Main Streets, clustered around the main business district with the old synagogue and the Reform Temple in the center.

Jewish settlement patterns in Butte revealed an urban population with a tendency to settle close to their business and religious center. But there never existed a particular "Jewish" neighborhood. The Jewish community lived among their gentile neighbors, and thoroughly mingled with non-Jews residentially and in matters of business. Butte's Jewish community followed the same pattern of Portland's Jewry. William Toll found in his study that the majority of Jews in Portland between the 1860's and 1870's, "lived near their place of business in mixed commercial and residential areas near the city's center."<sup>71</sup> While most of Butte's Jewish community continued this pattern at least as late as

1920, Portland's population moved further from the city center after 1880.

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Jewish business and community connections inevitably brought them a certain notoriety and respectability which easily translated into political leadership. "Most Jewish merchants," stated one historian, "saw their political activity as an extension of their effort to oversee economic growth amidst social stability." Not surprisingly, many well-known Jewish businessmen of the community threw their hats into the political ring.<sup>72</sup>

Mining city Jews appear to have been conservative in outlook. No Zionist or anti-Zionist activities were uncovered in Butte, and Socialist activities among Jews seemed negligible. Though almost never radical, Butte's Jews were certainly not apolitical. Even when advertising, the owners of the M. G. Cohn Tobacco Company could not refrain from mixing business with politics when they asked their customers in 1894 to, "Smoke 'Anaconda for the Capital' cigar."<sup>73</sup>

Only one Jew in the mining city, Joseph Terry, was known to be a devout Socialist. Socialist popularity in Butte peaked with the election of Socialist candidate Lewis J. Duncan as mayor in 1911. In 1915, however, the



Socialists were defeated.<sup>74</sup> In spite of these discouraging events, Terry, "a gentle, genial and inoffensive soul," continued as a familiar fixture at the Butte Local of the Socialist party as a genuine convert to the cause of labor. He distributed free copies of The Butte Socialist on the streets, and "...when many lost courage, and feared longer to be seen performing that service to the cause of industrial freedom, Joe never faltered but came regularly to carry his route as long as the free distribution was continued."<sup>75</sup>

Terry met an untimely end on the night of February 12, 1917 when he was the victim of a hit and run accident. He was taken to the emergency hospital and later sent to the poor farm where he died. Upon hearing of his death, his "comrades" recovered his body and held a small farewell ceremony. "Never would they have this loyal and brave comrade laid away in Potter's Field."<sup>76</sup> The police seemed negligent in their attempt to find Terry's killer. Indeed, a survey of local papers during the period after Terry's death failed to uncover the slightest mention of the accident or Terry's death. This neglect cannot be attributed to Terry's Jewishness as much as to his unpopular politics.

Many Jewish men from Butte served in state and local politics. Attorney William Meyer served in the 16th state legislature in 1919 and as County Attorney of Silver Bow.

Joseph Binnard, served in the 12th state legislature in 1911. A. B. Cohen, served in the state legislature from Silver Bow and as Justice of the Peace in the township, and H. A. Frank, served in the 11th state legislature in 1909.<sup>77</sup>

Pioneer Henry Jacobs was perhaps the most prominent example of a successful Jewish businessman turned politician. Jacobs distinction as the first mayor of the copper town illustrates the opportunities open to Jews in Montana.

Kelson's history of Montana Jews placed Jacobs as a merchant in early Virginia City as well as Diamond City and Deer Lodge.<sup>78</sup> In 1866, when Jacobs arrived in Montana, Virginia City was poised at the end of intensive Vigilante activity of which the local Masons became prominently involved. Jews, through their Masonic membership, joined Vigilante movements giving financial and other support in varying degrees. Thomas Dimsdale, Virginia City resident and chronicler/apologist for the Vigilante movement, explained why the serious settlers of the little mining town of Virginia City resorted to Vigilante groups:

...good, law loving, and order-sustaining men should unite for mutual protection and for the salvation of the community. Being united, they must act in harmony, repress disorder, punish crime, and prevent outrage, or their organization would be a failure from the start, and society would collapse in the throes of anarchy.<sup>79</sup>

Merchants in mining camps clearly harbored worries "about the threat to law, order and property."<sup>80</sup> Lawless

men could be easily lured to the cash box and goods of local businesses. Jewish merchant Isador Strassburger, who came to Montana in 1862 and later sold merchandise in Virginia City, gave a poignant account illustrating the threat to early merchants in the frontier West. Criminal George Ives entered Strassburger's store and brandished a gun in a dispute over a pair of gloves. Fortunately for Strassburger, Ives was content to leave him unharmed after stealing an axe from the store. Incidents like this, no doubt, contributed to merchant participation in Vigilante committees. A few months later Ives was hung, and Jewish Benjamin Ezekiel took active part in his hanging.<sup>81</sup>

Butte's merchants held the same interest in law and order and the protection of property. Ben Falk, a Jewish pioneer who owned a meat market on East Park in 1881, declared he "was ever ready to do his part in the preservation of law and order."<sup>82</sup> Sol Levy served as an early jailor in Butte, and Rueben Sabolsky owned the land upon which the make-shift jail stood in 1879.<sup>83</sup>

Jacobs supported the early Vigilante movement to secure business interests from the lawless elements of the town. Evidence of Jacobs' Vigilante sympathies surfaced in reports of his store being chosen as a gathering place for a group of men hoping to organize a Vigilante group in Butte, "modeled on the one in Virginia City."<sup>84</sup>

Jacobs took an early interest in public service, acting

as a school trustee and holding other "minor offices." With the incorporation of the city in 1879, the Butte Charter Act named Henry Jacobs and six other men, including future "Copper King" W. A. Clark, as commissioners for the new city prior to the election of the first board of aldermen.<sup>85</sup>

As an experienced pioneer and community servant, Jacobs had every reason to expect success in his candidacy for mayor in the first municipal election of May 12, 1879. Nominated as a candidate by the Citizens Committee, he competed against Independent candidates Isaac I. Lewis, an ore purchaser and bank employee; and Fred Loeber whose occupational diversity was remarkable: "miner, butcher, brewer, baker and builder of the first public hall." Jacobs defeated Loeber by eighty-eight votes and Lewis by forty-nine.<sup>86</sup>

Although winning election as first mayor of a city indicated a certain amount of public support and popularity, voter apathy may have played more of a role in Henry Jacobs' election than actual enthusiasm for him or his platform. A few months prior to Jacob's election, only 123 of 2,500 eligible voters, a mere 5 percent, participated in the vote to incorporate the mining camp into a city. This voter apathy stemmed partly from an apparent "prejudice existing against the incorporation of the city and the city government."<sup>87</sup>

The incorporation of the city, reported a county

newspaper, would vastly improve the peace and order of the town.

...our county metropolis will be more orderly than it has been for some time past, if we may judge of its disquietude by the weekly police report; and the peaceful and law abiding citizens can now assert their right to govern and control the lawless element of the place. Butte has had more than its rightful share of this latter class, but with the power to enact and enforce the observance of laws, it can soon make them a law-abiding class or make them seek pasture anew.<sup>88</sup>

The new mayor's inaugural address before Butte's first City Council composed of aldermen from the four wards, left no doubt about his agenda for creating a safer city. Jacobs also set out to establish a non-invasive government.

Too much care cannot be taken to avoid debt, excessive taxation, and the passage of useless and odious ordinances. It has been demonstrated by experience that the world is already too much governed.

The mayor called for a "few wise and judicious ordinances in addition to the statutory laws of the territory...[to] ensure us such a city government as *will make life and property safe...*"<sup>89</sup> Further recommendations before the council included the creation of a city fire department, the passage of a vigorous nuisance ordinance to keep streets and alleys clear of filth, a city mandate against public drunkenness or loud noises, and strict accountability from city officials both elected and appointed.

Governing Butte in 1879, rough and without order, presented a daunting task for the new mayor and his

aldermen, who served "without compensation" by order of the first city charter.<sup>90</sup> Jacobs presided over a city undergoing chaotic growth and change from a "large influx of immigration" of overwhelming diversity as well as intense building and expansion of the mining industry. Between the years 1880 and 1886, the population of Silver Bow County exploded from approximately 5,000 to 23,000 people. One hardware store prepared for the winter of 1879 by ordering 450 cookstoves with full expectation of selling out before Spring.<sup>91</sup> City Council notes from 1879-1880, Jacobs term in office, reflect the concerns of a successful merchant and property owner for crime, taxation, fire control and city cleanliness.<sup>92</sup> At the end of his term in office, ex-Mayor Jacobs "made a neat and complimentary speech to the newly organized Council" and turned the governing of the wide open town over to new mayor, H. G. Valiton.<sup>93</sup>

Butte citizens elected another Jewish mayor in 1885.<sup>94</sup> Henry Frank rose from humble liquor wholesaler to wealthy mine speculator before his campaign for mayor. A Democrat, he served as mayor for a one year term. Frank also helped found the Silver Bow Electric Company and the Butte Water Company.

Frank's mining ventures included the founding of the little coal mining town of Frank, British Columbia. A landslide disaster wiped out much of the population of the town in 1903. For a man that showed "unobtrusive generosity,

especially toward those employed in the mines in which he was interested," the shock of the land slide was reportedly too much, and the former mayor never fully recovered from the loss. He died August 17, 1908 in Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>95</sup>

Shrewd theatrical king Phil Levy attempted to win election to the office of Butte's highest official as well. He first served as alderman for the sixth ward on the City Council in 1888 and later as Police commissioner. Levy announced his intention to run for mayor in February of 1913. His application appeared as the first petition on the city clerk's desk the day filing opened signed "liberally" by prominent citizens of the eight wards of the city. Signatures included prominent Jews and a great many with Irish surnames like O'Brien, O'Neill, McCarthy, Harrington, Sheehan, Mooney, Sullivan - all showing support for Levy's campaign.<sup>96</sup> In spite of widespread support, Levy lost the mayor's race.

Levy's loss aside, Jews were elected frequently to public office in the West. Their political popularity indicated a remarkable tolerance on the part of non-Jews and "reflect[ed] the easy acceptance of able and energetic first-comers in an unstructured region where all outsiders were potential insiders."<sup>97</sup>

Jewish mayors were certainly not rare in the States. San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York, and Portland, among an array of other towns, all elected Jewish mayors. What





appeared remarkable about Henry Jacobs' election was the year in which it occurred. New York, with the country's largest Jewish population, waited until 1893 to elect a Jew to its highest office. San Francisco with the nation's second largest Jewish community, had no Jewish mayor until 1895. Henry Jacobs was elected as mayor of Butte in 1879, earlier than these large communities and only one year after Los Angeles elected its first Jewish mayor.<sup>98</sup> It is a testimony to the opportunities that Butte offered that this gentile mining town in the West elected two Jewish men as its earliest mayors, even before New York and San Francisco.

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"In Butte," according to Rabbi Kelson, all that pertains to Jewish religious and organizational life in Montana found "its most emphatic expression."<sup>99</sup> Though Jews in Butte traded, befriended and associated with their *Goyish* neighbors from the earliest years, they inevitably began to have a desire to form their own community in order to replicate the religious observances of the past.

Evidence of holiday observance before the presence of an organized congregation surfaced in The Helena Daily Herald, where the Montana Steam Cracker Bakery reported it supplied Jewish People "throughout Montana" with *matzos*, or unleavened bread, for Passover.<sup>100</sup> By 1881, enough

"Israelites" resided in Butte to hold High Holy Day services and organize a Hebrew Benevolent Society modeled after the one in Helena.<sup>101</sup> The Society, consisting of about fifty initial members, was organized by the familiar and prominent citizens of the town including Sam Alexander, owner of the first restaurant in Butte, David Cohen, Henry Jacobs, and Henry Frank.<sup>102</sup>

Leeson's History of Montana noted the presence of this "Jewish Society" in Butte in 1885. Whether the original Society represented the Reform or Orthodox persuasions, or a combination of both is not certain, but one source maintains that the B'Nai Israel Reformed Temple was an outgrowth of the early "Jewish association."<sup>103</sup> Leeson stated:

The Jewish Society of Butte propose to erect a synagogue. Three-fourths of the amount required for the building has been already raised, and a subscription paper for the balance is being circulated (April 1885). The site selected for the new temple is on the corner of Mercury and Washington streets, and opposite the Catholic church. It is the determination of the projectors of the enterprise to have the synagogue completed by the fall of 1885.<sup>104</sup>

This small entry contradicted much of what is known about the Jewish community in Butte and raises some baffling questions. According to Leeson's note, the Jewish Society had not yet finished fund-raising for the building or broken ground by April of 1885, yet expected to have the building completed within seven months - an ambitious projection even by today's standards given the time-consuming nature of

construction.

In reality, the projection came about sixteen years too early. In 1892, The Butte Miner noted, "there [is] no Synagogue in the city."<sup>105</sup> Though Butte's Jewish community eventually consisted of one Reform Congregation and two Orthodox groups, the first known synagogue built in Butte was completed in 1901, not 1885 as Leeson suggested, and the first temple was finished in 1903. No other sources mention an earlier synagogue.

The second question raised by Leeson's entry regarded the projected site chosen for the synagogue which he noted would be the corner of Washington and Mercury streets "across from the Catholic Church." Actually, the Reform synagogue was erected on the corner of Washington and Galena streets across from Saint Patrick Catholic Church. Leeson's information was obviously incorrect.<sup>106</sup>

Rabbi Kelson claimed the first Jewish religious services in Butte were Orthodox in nature, and with the adoption of the Reform ritual in 1892, evidence of a serious schism surfaced among Butte's Jews. That same year, the Hebrew Benevolent Society sent to the Eastern states for Rabbi Abraham Gideon to conduct services for the Jewish New Year. The Butte Miner reported, "This year the Reformed ritual will be used. The reason is that the services will be conducted in English because the younger men do not understand Hebrew."<sup>107</sup>

The disaffection of the younger generation over ritual and language barriers illustrated the challenges already facing Judaism in the America. At this point, according to Kelson, the Orthodox and Reform Jews in Butte went their separate ways, and both eventually made plans for their own place of worship. The rift between reformers and traditionalists, so often experienced in bigger cities, had arrived in Butte.

The Orthodox group organized the A'dath Israel Congregation on October 6, 1901, with about fifty members. Max Freid acted as president with Isadore Greenberg as vice President, and Benjamin Epstein, secretary.<sup>108</sup> The group met in the new synagogue on the 200 block of West Silver, between Colorado and Dakota streets across from the Emma mine.<sup>109</sup> Undermining near the building eventually resulted in a Company buy-out, and thereafter, the Congregation assembled on West Park Street in a home near the Y.M.C.A. building.

Besides the obvious Orthodox/Reform split, internal problems plagued the A'dath Israel Orthodox group from the beginning. One observer gave his own unverified version for the cause of the rift, which he claimed began over personal differences:

a very prominent family...decided they wanted to run things and they broke away from the other group...this second group, (this is my version), they were the more sporting element, some of whom lived off of the prostitutes here and the gamblers that came into town.

That was a group that didn't establish themselves in business and they set up their own religious group...they closed the Red Light District and that group seemed to fade out of town.<sup>110</sup>

The second Orthodox group, the Montefiore Congregation, met at the Knights of Pythias Hall on the 200 block of South Main Street led by Rabbi Ehrlich, who ran a kosher butcher shop on south Main.<sup>111</sup> Old Jacob Ehrlich, described as "frock-coated, bewhiskered, and derby-hatted," became known to many residents as "Cockelevitch." The nickname derived from his practice of butchering Sabbath chickens on the sidewalk in front of his store "before the eyes of a group of gaping youngsters."<sup>112</sup>

The Reform group, the most enduring of the three Jewish Congregations, also developed plans for a house of worship. Through the efforts of Abraham Wehl, a local capitalist, and Josef Rosenthal, they began their first services in Carpenter's Hall on West Granite Street.<sup>113</sup>

As early as 1892, the group apparently moved from Carpenter's Hall to the more sacred environment of the Mountain View Methodist Episcopal Church. The Butte Miner reported in 1892, "...there being no Synagogue in the city, services will be in the Mountain View Methodist Church, through the courtesy of that church."<sup>114</sup>

Without a resident Rabbi, the Congregation called on Rabbi M. Eisenberg to serve as their leader in August of 1897.<sup>115</sup> Around 1903, Rabbi Harry Weiss was called to Butte

from Pueblo, Colorado and placed in charge of Congregation B'Nai Israel.<sup>116</sup> The Butte Miner reported that permanent plans for the Reform Temple were not developed until 1897 and a building fund not initiated until October 5, 1902.<sup>117</sup> At a total cost of \$18,000 or \$25,000, depending upon which source is to be believed, Temple B'Nai Israel was completed in 1903 and dedicated by new Rabbi Weiss.<sup>118</sup>

The Butte Miner remarked on the great attendance at the Temple's dedication service on the evening of the February 26, 1904, attended by "Hebrew residents" and "their many friends." Gentile Senator Lee Mantle, offered this supportive speech unashamedly referring to the Jews unconcealed wealth:

The once oppressed and despised race of Israel had in all walks of life and every country on earth shown its wonderful genius and enterprise...Today the men of this race control the commerce of the world and today emperors, kings and other rulers go to them with hats in their hands, as it were, to beg or borrow the money with which to carry out great public and governmental enterprises.<sup>119</sup>

Weiss gave an emotional speech at the dedication:

It was not money nor bricks nor mortar that made this edifice, but enthusiasm...We have no altar now whereon to make sacrifices; no frankincense to lift fragrance heavenward; no chorus of twenty or thirty Levites to make the welkin ring with hallelujahs; but we still have the Jewish heart...Our conquest of the world has not been by the sword, but through the law of Sinai. The scepter departs, the sword rusts, the blazonry of arms tarnish, but only love, peace and righteousness, the spiritual forces, endure from aeon to aeon.<sup>120</sup>

A fellowship meeting held on February 27 concluded the dedication of the temple. Attended by religious leaders of many faiths, visiting Rabbi Meilziner of Helena called for religious tolerance "among the people of all religious denominations" and declared the Jewish people felt charitable towards others and "had no quarrel with any sect or religious organization on account of belief."<sup>121</sup> Taken as a whole, the entire dedication carried a gushingly ecumenical tone.

The popularity of the Reform group illustrated the conclusion of one historian. Reform Judaism he stated was "comprehensible to nineteenth century American Protestants" and others more so than the old Orthodox ways.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the Orthodox group seemed to gain little attention from the community when compared with the reception paid to the Reform group. A tribute to B'Nai Israel members came in the Diamond Jubilee Edition of the Montana Standard in 1954 with no mention of the Orthodox Jews:

Members of Temple B'Nai Israel have played an important part in the development of Butte from its earliest days until the present, and the names of old-timers of its congregation are found in many recordings of historical events in Butte.<sup>123</sup>

The divisions between Orthodox and Reform Jews arose from more than just religious differences. Social and cultural misunderstandings sprang up among Jews because of their great diversity of nationalities and backgrounds. An



Interior of Temple B'Nai Israel



Exterior of Temple B'Nai Israel



early resident remembered the class and national distinctions among them. The Germans "thought they had a higher standard than the people from Lithuania or Russia, Turkey or Spain. The Sephardic Jews didn't mix with the others." Myron Brinig also recounted how much his Roumanian Jewish family, "disliked German Jewish people."<sup>124</sup>

An analysis of 533 Jews who declared the country of their parents origin in the 1920 Silver Bow Manuscript Census indicated that the parents of Butte's Jewish population hailed from twenty-three different countries and principalities. The country most frequently reported as parent's birthland was Russia. Of the 533 reportees, an overwhelming 214 listed both parents born in Russia, while another thirty-nine had one parent born there.

The United States was the second most frequently reported country of parents' origin; twelve declared both parents from America and another 133 individuals claimed one parent of American origin. Parents born in the United States represented twenty-six different states from Maine to Louisiana and all the mining states throughout the West. New York was the state most frequently reported as place of parental origin, followed by Minnesota and Pennsylvania, Utah and California, Maryland and Massachusetts, Montana, New Jersey, Michigan and Iowa, in that order. Other states were only marginally represented by one or two individuals.

Germany and the German principalities from Bavaria to

Prussia registered third as most often reported place of parents origin. Sixty individuals reported both parents originated from Germany, while thirty-two others reported only one parent from Germany. Poland ranked third with twenty-six claiming both parents were Polish, and eighteen with one Polish parent. Austria, England, Roumania, and Hungary, in that order, followed as next most frequently reported. Other countries modestly represented included Persia, Palestine, Canada, France, and Armenia.

When Jews in Butte reported their own place of birth rather than their parents birthplace, as expected, the population shifted to primarily American born. By 1920, 308 of 554 who reported a birth place, claimed to be American-born Jews. Although representing twenty-seven different American states, most were born in Montana. A total of 135 of 308 American-born Jews declared a Montana birthplace. The large number of Jews born in Montana indicated a settled population in the treasure state, a group of people who settled in Montana long enough to have a family. New York Jews accounted for thirty-three American-born individuals, followed in frequency by Pennsylvania, New Jersey, California, and Illinois.

Of those reporting birth in foreign countries, Russians again predominated. Jews declaring it their land of origin totaled 114, followed by forty-three German born, nineteen Polish born, twelve from Roumanian, eleven Austrian-born,

and ten Canadians. Representing sixteen different countries, Butte Jews who claimed foreign birth numbered 246 of the 554 reporting. Palestine, Norway, Galicia, France and Persia were represented to a lesser degree.

Undeniably, the vast cultural differences among Jews encouraged the gap between the East Europeans and the Germans. A diversity of languages among Butte's Jewish community further contributed to the problem of Jewish disunity. The large number of American-born Jews spoke English as their primary language. A total of 185 Jews reported their mother tongue to the Butte census takers of 1920, and only six of these declared English as their primary language. Sixteen Jews listed their tongue as German, one spoke Hungarian, twelve spoke Polish, and sixteen spoke Russian; but an overwhelming number of Eastern European Jews from Russia, Roumania, and Poland who declared mother tongue spoke either "Yiddish," "Hebrew," or "Jewish," depending upon the quirk of the census enumerator. Twenty-eight spoke "Yiddish," twenty-four spoke "Hebrew," and eighty-two spoke "Jewish," for a total of 134. There is no language called "Jewish," so this probably reflected a misnomer for Hebrew or Yiddish.

With so many internal differences among Jews, not surprisingly, assimilated German Jews held more in common with their non-Jewish neighbors than with the Orthodox Jews. While committed Orthodox Jews closed their places of

business on religious holidays, the Reformed left stores open on Rosh Hashana, the Jewish New Year, and Yom Kippur, a solemn day of fasting and prayer.

Mixing more with local *Goyem* than their Orthodox brethren inevitably led to inter-faith marriages. Kelson referred to intermarriage as a tragic and significant threat to the survival of Judaism. The Pioneer Jews at first attempted to preserve their religious identity by faithfully marrying fellow Jews. Mr. Isaac Kenoffel's four daughters married into other Jewish families and became Mrs. Max Morris, Mrs. Sol Brinig, Mrs. Yetta Alexandra, and Mrs. Sam Rafish.<sup>125</sup> Emma Oppenheimer married Sig Schilling. Ben Meyers and Jes Weinstock also married into the Oppenheimer family and bought Wein's clothing store. William Copinus and David Cohen Sr. were brothers-in-law. Meyer Ganzberger married the daughter of William Gallick, first president of congregation B'Nai Israel.<sup>126</sup>

Many Jews sent their children to college in bigger cities such as Cincinnati, Los Angeles, or New York, where they would mingle with a larger community of co-religionists and hopefully find a Jewish mate. However, the younger generation, in many cases, courted gentiles. Though Sigmund Schilling married one of the Oppenheimer girls, his son married the daughter of a prominent pioneer Methodist minister.<sup>127</sup>

As Jews married non-Jews more frequently their children

tasted of religious limbo, and became "divided spirits." Rabbi Kelson, not an impartial observer, went so far as to warn that these children were in danger of developing "maladjusted personalities" while living on the edge of Judaism.<sup>128</sup>

Evidence does exist that suggests Jews were able to set aside their differences to aid one another in times of adversity. Jewish charitable organizations such as the Hebrew Benevolent Society sought to care for the Jewish poor. Like any other industrial city, Butte owned a poor community with more "paupers, tramps, and hoboes" suffering from starvation than other cities of the same size. Severe winters in the town caused the poor to "suffer terrible." The promise of work attracted more workers than available jobs leaving many unemployed. Around the turn of the century, the poorhouse, located three miles from the city, was packed and the charitable societies fed from 150-200 paupers at one time.<sup>129</sup>

Impoverished Jews, though not numerous, nonetheless existed. Though Jews attempted to aid one another, some inevitably slipped through the cracks. Joseph Terry died an anonymous death at the city poor farm. Elderly Mike Levi also died of senility at the poor farm in 1901, yet Mr. Sammy Goldstein and his prostitute wife, who lived on the corner of Utah and Aluminum streets, supposedly received financial assistance from fellow Jews in spite of his

lifestyle.<sup>130</sup> Why some were allowed to fall and others given aid and comfort is unclear, but likely regarded level of activity at temple or synagogue.

As strangers in a strange land, Jews relied on one another for help in times of crisis. The story of Joseph Ashkennas who "die[d] in a land of strangers," was filled with pathos. Following the suggestion of his brother-in-law, Max Morris, Ashkennas left his home at age forty and migrated West where he, his wife, and four children settled in Butte only seven months before he died. The local newspaper notified the local Jewish community of his death: "Owing to the fact that [he] is a comparative stranger in Butte, members of the Jewish colony are respectfully requested to attend the funeral."<sup>131</sup>

As a Jewish family entered Butte, they sought out co-religionists for help. Newcomers relied on other Jews to locate employment, give financial assistance, or supply a place to reside. Harry Reidinger described his arrival in the mining city in 1912 when there were about 100 Jewish families already in residence. With family in tow, Reidinger walked the streets of uptown Butte until he found a small tailor shop next to the Empire theater on Montana street. Hired immediately, he set out down Main Street where he spied a boy with a wagon "who look[ed] Jewish." This conversation followed:

Are you a Jewish boy?

He said, 'Sure.'

Where do you live?

'My grandpa has a grocery store, and he also sells meat.'

Will you take me to your grandpa?

'Sure, follow me.'<sup>132</sup>

The boy's grandpa turned out to be old Rabbi Ehrlich who owned a shop on Main Street. The old man referred the Reidingers to his daughter who had several rooms to let. Thus, through contacts with other Jews, the family had found a job and a place to live all in the space of a few hours after entering the town. When the Reidingers needed a larger place to live, they found a little cottage on East Park Street which needed furniture. Reidinger approached a furniture store owner, possibly fellow Jew Sam Shiner, and obtained the credit he needed to get some furniture.<sup>133</sup>

Likewise, when Phil Levy needed money for his enterprise, he approached Joseph Oppenheimer, Jack Cohen - manager of Symons Dry Goods, and George Symons - head of Baltimore Cigar Company, for financial assistance. With their help, Levy bought out his competition, closed some theaters and improved others.<sup>134</sup>

Large Jewish business concerns such as Symons Dry Goods aided fellow Jews by employing them as floor walkers, managers, and clerks. As their business grew over the years, the store employed over 300 workers at one time, many of whom were Jewish.<sup>135</sup>

On days of celebration, Jews in Butte took care not to

allow other Jews to spend Holy Days alone. Bachelors were invited for meals, and this graciousness often cloaked a clandestine attempt at match-making. "We're all professional matchmakers," Sam Rafish admitted.<sup>136</sup>

Another element of cohesion between the Orthodox and Reformed groups came in the form of the B'Nai B'rith Organization, a national Jewish fraternal organization. B'Nai B'rith served a variety of religious, cultural, social and civic needs for men and women, ranging from support for college students to the Anti-defamation League. The organization met at the Knights of Pythias Hall formerly on Main Street and later in the I.O.O.F. building on Broadway with 90-100 members mostly from Butte. Each year B'Nai B'rith sponsored a well-attended annual picnic held at the Columbia Gardens and open to Jews of all persuasions.<sup>137</sup>

Over the years, the distinct yet parallel nature of all three local Jewish congregations continued. Each group carried on their separate worship services. In 1930, Dr. Emanuel Sternheim welcomed the coming of the Jewish New Year for the members of B'Nai Israel, while Rabbi Moses Zuckerman conducted at A'dath Israel, and the Montefiore congregation was led by Alter Ehrlich at the Knights of Pythias Hall. Over 500 Butte Jews observed the occasion with the blast of a trumpet blown on a ram's horn at sundown. While Butte's Jewish community observed Rosh Hashanah with ancient symbolism, a conference of American Rabbis in Maryland



drafted a statement favoring "an intelligent attitude toward birth control" as well as a five day work week. Judaism, the old merging with the new, continued to adapt to the times.<sup>138</sup>

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The Jews of Butte, like their co-religionists in Helena, were "joiners." While it may be true that much of their community and political activity was motivated by self-interest rather than altruism, the benefits to the town were nonetheless considerable. Fraternal organizations as well as political parties benefitted from their patronage. Jewish efforts brought about the establishment of the local Country Club and the Y.M.C.A., all the more remarkable when it is remembered that Y.M.C.A. stands for Young Men's *Christian* Association. Described as "public spirited and civic minded," Jews participated in a variety of social groups including Hadassah and other women's sisterhood organizations which raised money for the temple and the synagogue.<sup>139</sup>

The life stories and obituaries of Jewish men abounded with their fraternal and public service. For example, pioneer baker Jacob Osenbrug belonged to the Anglers Club, Chamber of Commerce, the Masons, and Rotary Club. Jewelry store owner, Mose Linz, was a member of the Chamber of

Commerce, Elks, Knights of Pythias, Merchants Association, and Silver Bow Employers Association. Ben A. Myers, President of Wein's Clothing Company, associated with the Chamber of Commerce, Elks, Shriners, and Y.M.C.A.<sup>140</sup> Dentist Sam Rafish belonged to B'Nai B'rith, Elks, Chamber of Commerce, Masons, and Shriners as well serving as President and fellow of a number of dental associations.<sup>141</sup> Henry Frank belonged to the Knights of Pythias and Elks and was chosen as Grand Master of the Montana Masons.<sup>142</sup> Phil Levy was chosen by his peer group to be President of the Northwest Pacific Circuit of theaters and was President of Montana State Exhibitors League.<sup>143</sup>

This affinity for public and fraternal organizations so common in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, brought a great many Jewish men into the Masonic Order. For whatever reason, Jews seemed to be attracted to the Masons all over the West, and joined lodges "out of proportion to their numbers."<sup>144</sup> In the Masonic order, Jews "met gentile merchants as equals..." From Virginia City years, Rabbi Kelson found "many Jews were Masons." Four of Montana's Masonic Grand Masters before 1950 were Jews, including Butte's own Henry Lupin Frank.<sup>145</sup>

The history of the Butte Jewish community is characterized by a wonderful atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance. Membership in the brotherhoods of the era illustrated the broad acceptance Jewish men obtained in the

West. The mining city offered not only simple acceptance but, in some cases, outright popularity and affection.

If anti-Semitism existed in Butte, it was most likely to be felt by the Orthodox Jews and those who appeared most outwardly Jewish. Though some occasions of anti-Semitism undoubtedly occurred, generally speaking, goodwill abounded between Jews and non-Jews in Montana from earliest years.<sup>146</sup>

Minor incidents of weak anti-Semitism in the state surfaced much later in the century and seem to have been limited to an occasional rude comment.<sup>147</sup> After noting the high incidence of inter-faith marriage in Butte, Rabbi Kelson noted philosophically,

it remains clearly true that people who marry Jews cannot be the products of an environment that is basically prejudiced. So far as any of the records go, there have been no open manifestations of anti-Jewish attitudes [in Butte], and a comparative newcomer to the city and to Montana can only say that he had found people anxious to cooperate and to discover the value of every human being.<sup>148</sup>

From lesser-known Jews to community leaders, reports confirm that this community suffered no blatant persecution because of religious preference or cultural habits. Sam Rafish, a Butte dentist, claimed he never understood what anti-Semitism meant because he "never experienced it." Rafish claimed over 50 percent of his patients were non-Jewish. So popular was he that a walk down Park Street, which would ordinarily take five minutes, sometimes took him one-half hour or more because of the friendly greetings and

conversations. Rafish claimed,

I don't think there was any anti-Semitism here at all. Absolutely none at all. I lived in a district where I would say 90 percent of [the people] were Catholic and quite a few of my pals are still living here.<sup>149</sup>

One minor incident of anti-Semitism was uncovered in the early days of Montana and occurred not in Butte, but in the neighboring town of Helena. Belle Fligelman, Myron Brinig's cousin, recalled an incident where she was chased by some little toughs in the sixth grade who pelted her with snowballs and called her a "sheeny." This was the only negative incident Fligelman reported, and she remembered that afterwards "the whole thing blew over."<sup>150</sup> This one event cannot be interpreted as an indication of any overwhelming anti-Jewish climate in Montana. Young people of all persuasions have been pelted with snowballs, called names, and singled out for various reasons for childhood persecutions.

Name-calling between cultural groups actually occurred fairly frequently in young Butte, and slurs could be leveled at anyone. Colorful stereotypes that today would be considered highly insulting, served a purpose in the context of an era when a great goulash of races, creeds, and cultures were thrown together - many of them bringing old resentments and grudges from Europe. Deliberately rude names were passed back and forth. The Irish were Harps, Italians - Dagos, Mexicans - Chili Beans, Jews - Yids or

sheeneys. Even the Yiddish word *Goyem* is a mildly disparaging word for a non-Jew with the equivalent connotation of "Philistine."

Jewish cultural bashing became institutionalized by a waitress in an old Butte restaurant. While an order of poached eggs on toast was called out as "Adam and Eve on a raft," an order for roast pork with a side of gravy was interpreted as a "Jew's funeral with a hearse on the side."<sup>151</sup>

The presence of an organized Ku Klux Klan between 1923 and 1929 evidently contributed nothing to anti-Semitism in Butte. Jews apparently proved a lesser threat to the Klan than the 70 percent Catholic population in Butte which they targeted. As a primarily anti-Catholic organization, Klanners seemed to ignore the small Jewish community.<sup>152</sup>

Several ironies exist concerning the Klan's relationship to the Butte Hebrew community. The first members of the Klan in Butte included a lawyer, two managers of large department stores, a CPA, and a broker - all occupations well-represented by Jews. Because of this coincidence, certain Jews no doubt had frequent contact with Klan members, yet they reported no incidents of anti-Semitism. Even more odd, a Butte woman named Mrs. D. Cohn, an obviously Jewish name, wrote for the American Protective Association paper, The Examiner, a nativistic and extremely anti-Catholic periodical of the 1890's. This same Mrs. Cohn

corresponded with the local Klan leader, a Mr. Terwilliger.<sup>153</sup>

Keeping in mind that Jews filled the ranks of the Masonic Order, it is interesting to note that the Klan targeted the Masons for recruitment purposes, although the Masons never officially approved of the Klan. One woman went so far as to declare, "all Masons were Klansmen." Ironically, the Klan met under the name "Butte Men's Literary Club" at the Knights of Pythias Hall, the same building where the Orthodox Jews held their services.<sup>154</sup> It seems obvious that many Jews rubbed shoulders with Klansmen in business and fraternal circles, yet again, no incidents of anti-Semitic behavior on the part of the Klan were reported. A related twist of irony in this strange co-existence between Klan and Jewish community came from Portland, Oregon. There, a local Jew became campaign manager for the Klan's candidate for governor in 1922.<sup>155</sup>

The apparent ease with which Jews assimilated in Montana might be explained in several ways. Perhaps Montana people were unusually open to diversity. With over forty nationalities counted in an early census, the majority were outsiders and newcomers. With so many strangers in a strange land, a group was less likely to be singled out for reasons other than obvious racial characteristics. One man said, "no where [are there] such good and accommodating people as in the state of Montana."<sup>156</sup> Perhaps in a

new town where everyone was a relative newcomer, tolerance was necessary for survival. A man or woman may have been judged more for their talents, abilities, and worth to the community. Pioneer Jews, concluded scholar Moses Rischin, "derived their important place in the West...from their standing as pioneers in the watershed years of the West."<sup>157</sup>

Jews, in turn, were expected to display tolerance and sensitivity toward their non-Jew neighbors. Even the Orthodox Jews tried to avoid offending the local Christians through a mutual observance of Good Friday by closing their businesses from noon to three as a sign of respect.<sup>158</sup> Phil Levy was once quoted as saying, "nationality cuts no ice with me. If a guy is all right, that's all I care about." If one of his Irish Catholic employees wanted permission for the day off to go to mass, Levy was happy to oblige.<sup>159</sup> By the same spirit, Jewish resident Barney Kenoffel reportedly sold shamrocks to the Irish, and David H. Cohen donated the ground for the local cemeteries to be used by all the respective religious groups.<sup>160</sup>

Mr. Abe Cohen's enthusiastic participation in local politics and social activities exemplified this desire to serve. He devoted much time and energy to the yearly pioneer ball and organized the Butte Fourth of July celebration. Due to his community service, he was praised as "always...willing to lend every effort within his power to make Butte a better place in which to live and to afford

the people of the Mining City wholesome entertainment."<sup>161</sup>

In speaking of Mose Linz, The Butte Miner reported, "many prominent men of the state can remember his helping hand and generous assistance, when twenty-five or thirty years ago he carried them through some minor crisis."<sup>162</sup> H. L. Frank, mayor of Butte, "[had] many friends, and is popular wherever known."<sup>163</sup> Wealthy Jewish theater magnate Phil Levy had "more friends among the Irish than among the Jews" and shared a friendly comraderie with all the Catholic priests in the state.<sup>164</sup> Of course, it is possible that much of this goodwill towards Jews stemmed from more complex issues such as wealth, social status, and class, but for whatever reason, Butte treated its Jewish population fairly.

Jews in Butte took full part as citizens without restrictions because of their Jewishness. The new town needed their talents and energy as well as their capital and investments. They provided credit to miners, donated land and capital for improvements, ran for, and were elected to, political office, claimed friends of all ethnic groups and persuasions, and enjoyed a remarkable acceptance, if not outright affection.<sup>165</sup> They established themselves in community and fraternal organizations, built their houses of worship, organized charitable societies, and provided merchandise and goods to the local people.

Of course, some Jews contributed to the wide open town in negative ways. Although the Jews were "not a company of



enhaloed saints," most were law-abiding and devoted community builders.<sup>166</sup>

For the most part, their service was given without much fanfare. Kelson noted this lack of attention when he stated, "[Henry Klein] is the only Jew mentioned for any purpose in Burlingame's history of the early days of the Territory."<sup>167</sup>

The issue of assimilation and the price it exacted comes into play. The Jews found their niche in Butte and broad acceptance in an unlikely place, but the cost included a loss of cultural and religious uniqueness. The fever of the new country did indeed cause some to "lose their minds, their religion."<sup>168</sup> Yet, Butte's Jewish community mingled with their non-Jewish neighbors with little or no sense of regret. They took a conscious, open-eyed risk in coming to Butte with all its flaws, considered the cost of western living to their religious and cultural continuity, and came anyway, determined to participate to the fullest in community life.

Observers may mourn the loss of Jewish identity and rich cultural heritage or applaud the "once despised" group's success in breaking away from the old exclusionism that had contributed to so much persecution in the past. Whether we mourn or rejoice the assimilation of the Jews, the process seemed unavoidable in the new land - especially in the West. Myron Brinig understood the process. "You

know, in grafting a culture onto another," he philosophized, "the graft must inevitably take on the character of the tree."

## ENDNOTES

## CHAPTER 2

1. Rabbi Harry Weiss at the dedication ceremony for Temple B'Nai Israel in Butte, quoted in "Dedication of the Synagogue," The Butte Miner, 27 Feb. 1904.
2. Ibid.
3. The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 44.
4. "New Buildings," and "Gans and Klein," The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, pp. 44, 59.
5. Ibid., 44; Davies, Catalogue of Books in the Free Public Library of Butte, Montana, July 1894, advertisement between pages 20 and 21.
6. "Gans and Klein," The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 44; Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 66-67.
7. Leeson, History of Montana, 1340; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 31-32, 92. Leeson claimed Jacobs left Deer Lodge in 1876 to start his store in Butte. Kelson affirmed 1876 as Jacob's year of arrival in Butte. However, an advertisement in the 1 January 1886 edition of the Butte Daily Miner claimed Jacobs was "engaged in the clothing business in Butte since 1875."
8. "H. Jacobs and Son--Wholesale and Retail Clothiers," The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 45.
9. Leeson, History of Montana, 1340.
10. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 93. Here Kelson quoted an article in The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Sept. 1881.
11. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 95; Leeson, History of Montana, 923-925. Neither a Mr. Sands nor a Mr. Boyce is listed among the merchants of Butte in Leeson's history, 923-925, nor is Sands and Boyce listed as a mercantile.

12. "Butte Merchants in Overall War," The Rocky Mountain Husbandman, from Montana News Association Inserts, 16 Aug. 1937, (1) 4. Kelson retold Ganzberger's story in "Jews of Montana," 97-98. Ganzberger's name was spelled in some sources as Gensberger.
13. Ibid.
14. Emmons, The Butte Irish, 23-24; Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 10, 22-23.
15. "Symons Wins Public's Favor by High Ideals," The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923, p. 14. The Oppenheimer family intermarried with the Symons, and both families shared business concerns. Joseph Oppenheimer reportedly came from Baltimore, Maryland to Salt Lake City and then to Butte in 1881 and worked for Goldsmith and Company. Evidence of a Star/Oppenheimer and Co. existed in Virginia City, but its relationship to the Butte Oppenheimers has not been established. Joseph Oppenheimer eventually owned the Metals Bank Building and Pennsylvania block and reportedly became so popular that when he died, flags on all hoists on the hill were lowered to half-mast in honor of his memory. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 22, 106.
16. "Hennesseys Salutes the University of Montana on their 100th Birthday!" The Missoulian, 28 Feb. 1993, p. U-3. Full page advertisements in the Butte Miner every week for many years covered sales between these two large stores.
17. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 26-27.
18. "How City Got its Charter in 1879," and "The Rise of a City," both in The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, pp. 9 and 39.
19. Leeson, History of Montana, 923-925.
20. Thomas J. Dimsdale, The Vigilantes of Montana, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985), 8.
21. Emmons, The Butte Irish, 69.
22. J. H. Ostberg, "Sketches of Old Butte," unpublished manuscript, 1972, pp. 97-98, in possession of Butte Public Library.
23. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, pp. 25-B and 32.
24. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 204-205. According to Pomeroy, residents of San Francisco, the city

second only to New York in Jewish population, were also overly interested in French fashion.

25. OH Rafish RC, p. 4.

26. Davies, Catalogue of Books in the Free Public Library of Butte, Montana, July 1894, advertisement between pages 28 and 29.

27. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 69.

28. Butte City Directory (Helena, MT: R. L. Polk and Company, 1917), 32; "Symons Wins Public's Favor by High Ideals," The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923, p. 14.

29. Susan Leaphart, "Frieda and Belle Fligelman: A Frontier-City Girlhood in the 1890's," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Summer 1982, 91-92.

30. "Heavy Taxpayers," The Butte Daily Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 9.

31. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 68.

32. Butte City Directory (Helena: R. L. Polk and Co., 1917), 32; OH Myron Brinig, 19.

33. "Interesting Wedding," The Butte Miner, 3 June 1879. Article reprinted in The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 24-B.

34. Livingston, introduction to Jews of the American West, 20-22. Livingston observed, "The vast East European migration in the third period, (1881-1924) which altered the structure of Jewish communities in the Northeast and Midwest, did not have the same impact in the West, for, with a few notable exceptions, Eastern Europeans did not move West in great numbers..."

35. OH Rafish RC, 17; Dale Martin and Brian Shovers, "Butte, Montana: An Architectural and Historical Inventory of the National Landmark District," Butte Historical Society, December 1986, 37.

36. J. H. Ostberg, "Sketches of Old Butte," unpublished manuscript, 97; Michael Malone, The Battle For Butte: Mining Politics on the Northern Frontier, 1864-1906 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), 67; Thomas Goldwasser, "Jews in Small Towns," The Baltimore Sun, 23 March 1983. Goldwasser obtained this estimate of 600 families from interviewing Jewish residents in Butte.

37. Sixty-eight people were identified as "possibly Jewish" through several factors including surname, occupation and place of birth. Because their Jewishness is uncertain, the sixty-eight were listed in the database as "maybe Jewish." The majority of this group have obviously Jewish names, and with a reasonable degree of certainty, can be assumed to be Jewish. However, the small number of individuals who may not be of Jewish origin may introduce a small margin of error into the database percentages.

38. Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 64. Toll noted, "A few [women] were proprietors of small shops and private teachers of music and dance, while more were teachers in the public schools. But the majority were clerks, sales girls, and stenographers in the expanding Jewish department stores..."

39. Ibid., 71; Levinson, The Jews in the California Gold Rush, 51.

40. Toll, The Making of An Ethnic Middle Class, 98; OH Rafish RC, 5.

41. The Butte Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, 45.

42. City Ordinances of Butte, Montana, 1902, 321-325.

43. Kraut, The Huddled Masses, 96; Howe, World of Our Fathers, 78-79.

44. Howe, World of Our Fathers, 78.

45. George Rudolph, telephone interview with author, 1993.

46. Libo, We Lived There Too, 306.

47. Howe, World of Our Fathers, 79; Malone, The Battle for Butte, 67; Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 11.

48. "Samuel Shiner," The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923.

49. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, pp. 7, 17, 27.

50. Rischin, The Promised City, 61-70.

51. Harry Reidinger, interview with Ronald Specter, 1973, pp. 7-8, hereafter noted as OH Reidinger.

52. OH Reidinger, 1-4.

53. OH Rafish RC, 4; Robert E. Levinson, The Jews in the California Gold Rush, 22.

54. Peter Decker, "Jewish Merchants in San Francisco: Social Mobility on the Urban Frontier," American Jewish History, June 1979, 396, quoted in Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 2; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 3, 6.

55. "Dedication of the Synagogue," The Butte Miner, 27 Feb. 1904; "Abraham's body not recovered," The Butte Miner, 29 Feb. 1904; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 102; Butte Mortuary records, 1910.

56. OH Rafish J-3, 3.

57. Forty eight people could not be identified as either male or female by their given names and were not included in the gender averages.

58. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 41.

59. "M. H. Schwartz," The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923.

60. Libo, We Lived There Too, 339.

61. "From Barber to Theatrical King," The Dillon Examiner, 14 May 1917.

62. "Montana and the Motion Picture," The Dillon Examiner, 20 Aug. 1917; Lynch, Butte Centennial Recollections, 13-14; William R. Kershner, "Early Theater in Butte," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Spring 1988, 28-39. The Broadway theater was originally owned by John Maguire who held a monopoly on local theaters from 1880 until the turn of the century.

63. Fred and Harriet Rochlin, Pioneer Jews a New Life in the Far West (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984), 171.

64. OH Rafish RC, 13.

65. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 36; "Butte Once Boasted Having World's Best Pickpocket in the Person of 'Jew Jess'," The Fergus Argos, 12 Dec. 1927; Kenneth Libo, We Lived There Too, 204.

66. Catalogue of Books in the Free Public Library of Butte, Montana, 24 July 1894, advertisement between pages 148 and 149.

67. "Who was H. L. Frank?" The Montana Standard, 14 Sept. 1981.

68. OH Rafish RC, 3; Myron Brinig, Singermann (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1929), 37.
69. Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, "Redeeming the Ugliest Town on Earth," The Craftsman, June 1907, 321.
70. The information taken from database queries, agreed with the recollections of resident Sam Rafish. "Most [Jews] lived on Utah Avenue, Platinum street, Wyoming street, Colorado, Main, Idaho, and then they lived on all the cross streets: Mercury, Silver, Gold, Porphyry, Platinum, Aluminum, all the way down to Front street." OH Rafish, J-3, 7.
71. Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 27.
72. Ibid., 80; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 107-108; OH Rafish J-3, 11.
73. Catalogue of Books in the Free Public Library of Butte, Montana, 24 July 1894, advertisement between pages 148 and 149.
74. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 9; Lowndes Maury, "What is the Matter with Butte, Montana?" International Socialist Review, May 1915, 684-685.
75. The Montana Socialist, 24 Feb. 1917.
76. Ibid.
77. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 107; "Jewish men in Montana Politics," a list in the Butte Archives.
78. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 92.
79. Dimsdale, The Vigilantes of Montana, 14. Professor Dimsdale, an apologist for the Vigilantes, resided in Virginia City during the Vigilante years and wrote a series of Newspaper Articles documenting the capture and execution of local outlaws.
80. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 27-28.
81. Libo, We Lived There Too, 202; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 31, 48; Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 76-79.
82. Helen F. Sanders, A History of Montana, Vol. 2 (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1913), 1160.



83. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 109; "Official journal of the official proceedings of the City Council of the City of Butte, Montana Territory," 20.

84. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 93.

85. Lynch, Butte Centennial Recollections, 1; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 93; The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 9.

86. "Jacobs Defeated Two Rivals in First Election," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 9.

87. Ibid.

88. Lynch, Butte Centennial Recollections, 1.

89. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 9.

90. Lynch, Butte Centennial Recollections, 1.

91. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, pp. 9 and 25-B; The Butte Miner, 1 Jan. 1886, p. 9. Jacobs' inaugural speech warned against the large influx of immigrants Butte would face in the near future.

92. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 25-B; "Official journal of the official proceedings of the City Council of the City of Butte, Montana Territory, 1879-1880."

93. "Official journal of the official proceedings of the City Council of the City of Butte, Montana Territory," 38.

94. The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 9.

95. "Frank's body lies in family plot," The Butte Miner, 22 Aug. 1908; "Who was H. L. Frank?" The Montana Standard, 14 Sept. 1981; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 94. Kelson stated that Frank served two terms as mayor.

96. "Levy Hopes to be Butte's Next Mayor," The Butte Miner, 26 Feb. 1913; "From Barber to Theatrical King," The Dillon Examiner, 14 May 1917.

97. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View from the West," in Jews of the American West, 33.

98. Ibid., 33, 35; Rischin points out that only 16 percent of western Jews lived outside of California making it all the more remarkable that Jews were elected to public

office outside the coastal state. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 196.

99. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 82.

100. The Helena Daily Herald, advertisement 18 March 1874.

101. The Butte Miner, 21 Sept. 1881 as quoted in Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 85-86.

102. Dale Martin and Brian Shovers, "Butte, Montana: An Architectural and Historical Inventory of the National Landmark District," 37; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 91; "B'Nai Israel Has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B.

103. "B'Nai Israel Has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B.

104. Leeson, History of Montana, 936.

105. The Butte Miner, 12 Sept. 1892 as quoted in Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 101.

106. The Butte Miner, 12 Sept. 1892; Leeson, History of Montana, 936; The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B; The Butte Miner, 27 Feb. 1904.

107. The Butte Miner, 12 Sept. 1892 as quoted in Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 101.

108. Butte City Directory (Helena: R. L. Polk and Co., 1917).

109. OH Sam Rafish RC, 1; OH Sam Rafish J-3, 4, 5; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 103.

110. OH Rafish J-3, 4-5.

111. The Montana Standard, 23 Sept. 1930, p. 4; OH Rafish J-3, 5-6.

112. Libo, We Lived There Too, 204.

113. "B'Nai Israel Has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B.

114. The Butte Miner, 12 Sept. 1892 as quoted in Kelson, 101. The Butte Miner, 17 Sept. 1905 said the group began meeting in the Methodist Church on August 10, 1897.

This can not be accurate because of the previous quote from the Miner five years earlier.

115. Rabbi Kelson noted on page 101 of "The Jews of Montana," that his information on Rabbi Eisenberg came from the B'Nai Israel Congregation Minute Book. Unfortunately, this important book is missing from the Congregation.

116. "B'Nai Israel Has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B, gave the date of Weiss' arrival as "about 1897." However, The Butte Miner of 17 Sept. 1905 placed the date of Weiss' arrival as February 1903.

117. The Butte Miner, 17 Sept. 1905; Leeson, History of Montana, 936.

118. "Dedication of the Synagogue," The Butte Miner, 27 Feb. 1904, lists the participating members at the dedication of the new temple as B. Rosenthal, Sadie Jonas, William Gallick (President), Max Codden, H. M. Hart, Mrs. G. Lobbenberg, Miss C. Best, Moses Linz (Secretary), D. Goldberg (Treasurer), I. Krueger, J. L. Morris, M. A. Berger, J. Mendelsohn, N. Oppenheimer, M. Ganzberger, Sig Schilling, George Symons, M. L. Heiman, A. Pincus, M. O. Cohn, Charles B. Lowerson, Edward Rose, Adolph Schilling, Sol Genzberger, Louis S. Cohn, William Symons, Sam Schott, M. E. Mayer, A. Sultan, H. D. Rosenstein, M. Melzner, Mrs. M. Eisenberg, Mrs. J. Rosenthal, Mrs. J. Sternfels, Mrs. Flora Rooney, Miss J. Abraham, Mr. A. Paynter, Abe Cohn, Julius Jonas, Mark Schilling, Henry Codden, I. Rosenstein, Berthold Mayer, Gabriel Oppenheimer; "B'Nai Israel has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B. This article reported the reform temple, "was built at a cost of \$25,000." "Congregation B'Nai Israel," The Butte Miner, 17 Sept. 1905, stated, "[the temple] was completed early in 1904, at a cost of \$18,000..."

119. "Dedication of the Synagogue," The Butte Miner, 27 Feb. 1904.

120. Ibid.

121. "Services Incident to Dedication of Jewish Synagogue Close With Fellowship Meeting," The Butte Miner, 28 Feb. 1904.

122. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 206.

123. "B'Nai Israel Has Long History," The Montana Standard, 13 June 1954, p. 18-B.

124. OH Sam Rafish J-3, 8; OH Brinig, 15.
125. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 105, 113; "Isaac Kenoffel Dies at Rochester Hospital," The Montana Standard, 17 Aug. 1920.
126. The Butte Miner, 23 Oct. 1909; Merrill Burlingame and K. Ross Toole, A History of Montana, Volume 3. (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1957), 117; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 92, 96.
127. Merrill G. Burlingame and K. Ross Toole, A History of Montana, Vol. 3, 117.
128. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 105, 113.
129. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 6, 16, 17, 21, 36.
130. Nancy Gordon Bertrand, interview with author, Summer 1991; Butte Mortuary records, 1901-1905.
131. "Joseph Ashkennas Dies in Land of Strangers," The Butte Miner, 3 Jan. 1909.
132. OH Reidinger, 5.
133. Ibid., 4-6.
134. "Montana and the Motion Picture," The Dillon Examiner, 20 Aug. 1917.
135. "Symons Wins Public's Favor by High Ideals," The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923, p. 14; OH Rafish RC, 2.
136. OH Rafish J-3, 19-20.
137. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 83; OH Rafish J-3, 6-7; Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 25.
138. "Jewish People of Butte Open New Year Observance," The Montana Standard, 23 Sept. 1930, p. 4.
139. OH Rafish, J-3, 11; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 69, 72.
140. The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923.
141. "Longtime Dentist Sam Rafish Dies," The Montana Standard, 6 Jan. 1981.

142. Guy Piatt, The Story of Butte, (Butte, Montana: Standard Manufacturing Printing Company, 1897), 38; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 94.

143. "From Barber to Theatrical King," The Dillon Examiner, 14 May 1917.

144. Pomeroy, "On Becoming a Westerner: Immigrants and Other Migrants," in Jews of the American West, 206.

145. Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 33; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 29, 31, 69.

146. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 8, 30, 49.

147. Evidence of isolated anti-Semitic attitudes surfaced in the mid-century. In 1953, manager of the Covered Wagon Ranch, Vic Benson wrote to Bill Browning, manager of the Montana Chamber of Commerce, to express concern that some of the writers scheduled to meet for an upcoming conference might be Jewish. Mr. Benson declared that neither they nor the Rockin' Horse, Elkhorn would lodge any Jewish writers, "if there is such a thing." Mr. Browning assured Benson that, "most boys are 100 percent American."

A second very minor incident was reported by Rabbi Max Kert during his service at B'Nai Israel in the 1950's. He was active in the city-county consolidation effort and was reportedly told by one Butte resident, "Why don't you go back to Israel?" Kert, an American-born Jew, replied, "If I did, this town would fall apart!"

148. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 113-114.

149. OH Sam Rafish J-3, 8, 15, 16.

150. Susan Leaphart, "Frieda and Belle Fligelman, a Frontier-City Girlhood in the 1890's," 91.

151. Davis, Sketches of Butte, 175.

152. Christine Erickson, "The Boys in Butte: the Ku Klux Klan Confronts the Catholics, 1923-1929" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1991), 1-19, 35.

153. Ibid., 28-31, 86. Seventeen of 980 Jews in the database sampling had the surname *Cohn*, while another twenty-two had the surname *Cohen*. Cohen is a word for a hereditary priest of the Hebrew priesthood.

154. Ibid., 41 note number 24, and page 81.

155. Toll, The Making of an Ethnic Middle Class, 133.

156. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 13.
157. Rischin, "The Jewish Experience in America: A View form the West," in Jews of the American West, 37.
158. Royal G. Barnell, "From Gold Camp to Copper City: An Historical Pageant-Drama of the City of Butte, Montana, One of the Great Mining Camps of the World," xix.
159. "From Barber to Theatrical King," The Dillon Examiner, 14 May 1917.
160. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 91, 109.
161. "Old Butte Man a Death Victim," The Belgrade Journal, 23 Nov. 1942.
162. The Butte Miner, 9 Sept. 1923.
163. Piatt, The Story of Butte, 38.
164. "From Barber to Theatrical King," The Dillon Examiner, 14 May 1917.
165. Morrow, "A Voice From the Rocky Mountains," 39; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 98.
166. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," iv.
167. Burlingame and Toole, A History of Montana; Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 60.
168. Brinig, Singermann, 46-47.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE BRINIG FAMILY IN BUTTE

Those who have lived in Silver Bow understand the teeming quality of the town, the way it has of reaching out to you, wherever you may be, and drawing you home... Wide Open Town, 289-290.

Myron Brinig's Butte books, though candidly autobiographical, certainly contain some literary embellishment. To tease the strands of actual history out from among the products of Brinig's creative imagination and validate his story-telling, an examination of Brinig's personal interview, his unpublished memoirs - "Love From a Stranger," and actual historical events in Butte, became essential. An intimate portrait of the saga of a Jewish family from homeland to American mining city emerged.

Brinig claimed there were no hidden universal messages to search for in his novels.<sup>1</sup> But critics disagreed. Sinclair Lewis called one of Myron's books "important" for its portrayal of the problems of the western Orthodox Jewish family. Other critics labeled his first book the most important book out of the United States in 1929 for illustrating the Jewish struggle with slipping traditions

and shaking values in America. Conventional Orthodox Jews such as the Brinigs felt these stresses most poignantly.

Moses and Rebecca feared for the continuity of Judaism in their offspring with good reason. Butte offered a seduction away from piety on an level more urgent than elsewhere. The Brinig boys turned away from their Judaism for the most part, and Myron's own falling away was swift and complete, and without apparent remorse.

Myron insisted he chose to write about Butte because of his familiarity with the subject matter and his desire to express his feelings about it. Clearly, writing about his hometown was a catharsis for Brinig. In spite of his bitter feelings toward Butte, he was fascinated with the city's character and keenly aware that he had experienced something quite unusual as a Jewish youth in a wide open town - something worth telling the world about.

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Roumania lies North of the lower Danube River in the shadow of Ukrainian Russia. The Carpathian Mountain Range, and the Transylvanian Alps dominate much of the landscape and much of the Roumanian national psyche. Pastoral Roumania has been known for centuries for vineyards so plentiful and lush they "remind[ed] one of the Promised Land, of the prophecies of Joshua and Caleb."<sup>2</sup>



Moses Fligelman, a Jewish peasant, owned and cared for a vineyard and tavern in Roumania. Letters from his relatives in America full of their success stories urged Moses to come to the States and partake of the land of opportunity. At first, Moses only toyed with the notion of emigrating, but circumstances in Europe eventually weakened his resistance.

Around 1882, Roumania was hit with an outbreak of phylloxera, a type of plant lice deadly to grapevines. With many vineyards ravaged and destroyed, this misfortune must have influenced Moses' decision to emigrate. The emergence of a fresh Balkan War and fear of mandatory conscription eventually sealed his determination.<sup>3</sup>

Brinig's relatives, the Fligelmans of Helena, Montana, suggested a much more colorful, possibly apocryphal, reason for Moses sudden migration. Years after Moses' death, a cousin explained to Myron that Moses had fled Roumania after killing a man with a blow from a wine bottle. Fleeing to Amsterdam to avoid prosecution, Moses changed his name to the Dutch surname of Brinig. Whether Moses fled conscription or imprisonment for his crime, he departed in 1887 for America with his oldest son.<sup>4</sup>

After arriving in America, Moses moved west to Minneapolis and made his living as a peddler. By saving carefully, Brinig eventually had enough money to bring his family from Roumania. With four children, and a sack of

flour to bake kosher bread, Rebecca left for America two years after Moses departure.

In Minneapolis, Moses eventually became restless selling fruits and vegetables from a horse-drawn wagon. An ambitious man, he grew dissatisfied with peddling when it became clear that other Jews prospered in their own businesses.<sup>5</sup>

Again, the Fligelms of Montana intervened. Herman Fligelman had blazed the trail for Moses by starting as a poor Roumanian peddler in Minneapolis. He began his rise to prosperity after moving to Helena, Montana in 1888 and forming an alliance with Robert Heller and Henry Loble to found "The New York Store," which was later called "Fligelman's." The store became the town's leading department store and later expanded to Great Falls.<sup>6</sup>

Myron described the Fligelms as the intellectual type, earning their living as learned men, doctors, teachers, and Rabbis.<sup>7</sup> Moses and Rebecca could not help comparing their children unfavorably to their overachieving cousins, and the younger Brinigs felt, perhaps justifiably, that the Helena cousins were snobbish. Pointing out the virtues of their nieces and nephews, Myron's parents would exclaim, "And you....you are nothing! You should try to be more like them."<sup>8</sup>

Truthfully, the Fligelms were a hard act to follow. Family members gained a certain notoriety in Montana.

Herman's daughter Belle Fligelman Winestine, became the first woman news reporter for the Helena Independent, edited the Montana Progressive in 1915 and 1916, and left to become secretary to anti-war Congresswoman, Jeannette Rankin. Frieda Fligelman, her sister, was an intellectual who pioneered in the study of "social linguistics."<sup>9</sup>

The Fligelman influence on the Brinigs, though infrequent, was nonetheless profound. After convincing Moses to come to Minneapolis, they further influenced him to come to Montana - not to Helena where he would compete in business with them, but to Butte where the mining industry was booming. A man like Moses, they surmised, could do well in Butte with a little hard work. After all, "miners make good wages." His family would simply be better off in Montana.<sup>10</sup> With the decision made to move his family to Butte, all that remained was to tell his wife, Rebecca.

Rebecca Brinig, a pale dark-haired Roumanian Jewess found little to be content with in her life with Moses, whether in Roumania or America. Her marriage had been contracted between her father and her future husband when Moses had offered to "take her off [his] hands." Her father, whom she described as a dreamer and fiddle player who loved to read about the persecution of the Jews, had left Rebecca the responsibility of caring for his brood of ten children after her mother died. Rebecca, who may have felt that marriage would be a welcome reprieve from child

care was soon disillusioned with the discovery that her new husband was rude, cold, and lusty.<sup>11</sup>

When Moses announced unceremoniously that the family was moving from Minnesota to a rugged mining town further west, she became infuriated with his lack of consideration for her feelings. Bitterness had always existed between Moses and Rebecca, but Moses' abrupt announcement only caused the chasm to widen. Rebecca alternately pouted and threatened suicide, all of which was wasted on Moses who thrilled at the notion of moving west and starting his own business. "Your father act[ed] like we're on our way to heaven," she later complained to son Myron, and then she added, "If this is Heaven, where is Hell?"<sup>12</sup>

With Rebecca's violent reaction to the move in mind, this apocryphal version of Moses' announcement becomes all the more amusing: "Softly and quietly in Yiddish, Brinig told his young wife, 'I will sell my horse and wagon and go to Butte.'" The confrontation was, in truth, anything but soft and quiet.<sup>13</sup> "When your father made up his mind to come here, I screamed at him, but he wouldn't listen." Threats of stabbing herself to death only met with Moses' exasperating approval. "All right," he replied. "Stab yourself with the kitchen knife." "What was I?", she sighed when explaining her resignation to the move, "Just a woman, a thing..."<sup>14</sup>

Rebecca had arrived in Minnesota around 1890 with three

sons and a daughter after traveling on a harsh sea journey and had born three more sons since her arrival. She had finally adjusted to the new country only to be uprooted one more time without consent, and this time with so many children. Rebecca foresaw, even before leaving Minneapolis, that Butte would present a challenge to their goal of raising the children as good Jews. "To a place like [Butte], he wants to take me," she had mourned, "where maybe there is not one Jew and our children they will grow up like *Goyem*."<sup>15</sup>

In 1900, as the Brinig family entered Butte by train, they caught their first glimpse of the city as they approached the hill. Rebecca's preconceived dislike for Butte could not have been soothed any by her first view of the mine-scarred landscape. As they entered the town, Rebecca was miserable, but Moses was ecstatic. Myron, born December 22, 1896, was only three years old, and though he could not remember his first trip into Butte, he claimed, "yet I can imagine what it was like."<sup>16</sup> In this rugged mining town, Moses was about to enter "the climactic city of his American adventure."<sup>17</sup>

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Turn-of-the-century Butte was a merchant's dream. Streets busy day and night gave a Chicago or New York-like

bustle to the town. "Even at 4 o'clock in the morning there are as many people on the streets as at any other time in the day..."<sup>18</sup> The town was literally booming, and a clever business man like Moses Brinig might easily make a good living.

Moses opened a men's furnishing store at 34 East Park, between Main and Arizona Streets and gave it the Americanized name of the O.K. Store. Moses boasted that at his store, "one dollar does the work of ten."<sup>19</sup> The O.K. store sold, "everything that a man wore and used," especially things that applied to miners such as "candlesticks, [and] overalls for \$.50," slickers for the Finnish miners who worked in the wet depths of the mines, and the hobnail boots that miners wore because of their resistance to copper water.<sup>20</sup>

The French dressing rooms and the European luxury of Symons Dry Goods, contrasted sharply with Myron's description of his father's store:

There was the main floor where goods were piled high on glass-topped show cases, counters, and wooden tables. The store was not one of your smart places with mirrors glowing and scrubbed linoleum on the floor, and shining, nickel-plated fixtures. The floor was uneven and bare, and the stock bulged and spilled over into narrow aisles...The neckties hung from horizontal steel rods, and when a customer said that he wanted to buy a necktie, all you had to answer was, 'Take your choice, mister. The ties are marked-fifty and seventy-five cents.'<sup>21</sup>

Although Moses Brinig might have been more happy working a vineyard in Roumania, he was fascinated by the

noise and feel of buying and selling. Never one to wait for business to come to him, Moses stood in front of his store on East Park and cajoled business from passing sidewalk strollers. Myron described his father's skilled business method as "kidnapping" and "trap[ing]" or threatening his customers into buying. "Say mister," he would press down upon an unsuspecting passer-by, "I see by the cracks that you got in your shoes you need a new pair. I got something extra for only three-forty-nine." When the soon-to-be customer protested that his shoes were new, Moses continued, "You was robbed. You don't have to buy any shoes from me, mister, but I tell you, you was robbed. Ain't you ashamed?"<sup>22</sup>

Saturday night in Butte was "good business for Jews" and other business owners. East Park Street, the busiest street in town, bustled with activity. Several Jewish stores clustered around East Park, but it was by no means only a Jewish business district. Nor were Jewish stores confined to this area. They lined both sides of Park, East and West as well as Main and Broadway. Jewish stores, Greek restaurants and Irish saloons all constituted the area East of Main on Park Street.<sup>23</sup>

The elder Brinig drafted his sons into the retail business from an early age, and the boys uncrated goods and waited on customers without much enthusiasm. Young Myron was assigned to watch the store front to insure that

pedestrians did not steal from the sidewalk displays. However, the boy's interest in what was going on in the streets far exceeded his desire to be a retailer. Captivated by the diverse humanity that paraded before him on Saturday night, Myron's mind drifted away and inevitably some cool thief would make away with a pair of boots or something would turn up missing, and Moses would upbraid his youngest son harshly. "A fine watchman. Look on him, the watchman. They could carry away the whole store and he would see nothing. *Hast oigen? Bist blint?*"<sup>24</sup>

The elder Brinig never understood the importance of Myron's day-dreaming to his future writing career. Myron preserved vital impressions of the town and recorded every detail of the people, the scenes, and his family in his young mind. These same impressions, including unflattering descriptions of his father, would appear in his Butte novels.

Later Myron reminisced about those Saturday nights perched on a box in front of the O.K. store watching drunks being taken away in patrol wagons, dope addicts and gamblers, Chinese with laundry baskets, miners coming and going from work and play, cripples selling pencils from cups, spielers announcing sales, and women from the red light district, all passing down East Park Street. To him the passing peoples illustrated "Primitive America...at play."<sup>25</sup>



The Brinig children attended public schools in Butte, and appeared to be well-educated and culturally refined in spite of their father's disinclination to scholarship. Myron explained that his father had been the black sheep, the peasant, of the family and the only one of ten children to reject book learning. Rebecca owned a piano, and the boys were taught to play. Myron's brother, Peter, played both piano and violin. Sol sang and played clarinet and violin. Myron played "fabulously" and became so proficient at the piano that his niece maintained he could have been a professional pianist.<sup>26</sup>

As a boy, Myron admitted to being "passionately addicted" to movies and theater. His first introduction to the silent film occurred at the Orpheum, later owned by Phil Levy. Nothing more than an empty storeroom, silent films were shown on a white sheet stretched taut in the back of the theater - matinees \$.10, \$.25 in the evening. Butte also hosted Charlie Chaplin in 1910 who toured with the Sullivan and Considine Circuit in a cheap Vaudeville act. Broadway players like George M. Cohan and Al Jolson entertained along with various ballet troops.

Years later, as a mature man and accomplished writer, Brinig met an aged and infirm silent film actress, the object of his adoration years ago in Butte. His awe was evident, even after the passage of so many years.<sup>27</sup>

At the end of the work day, Moses and his sons made

their way home to the family's modest permanent residence at 814 West Granite street.<sup>28</sup> Part of Moses' evening consisted of some bitterness between himself and Rebecca, with "her words like lice crawling all over him, giving him no peace." Myron's mother, who enjoyed fashioning herself as the paschal, or sacrificial lamb, of the family "seemed to derive a curious satisfaction out of viewing the bleaker side of life."<sup>29</sup> Cut off from decision making and feeling powerless, she turned to nagging and complaining as her most potent weapons.

After work, Moses checked the Hebrew or Yiddish journals which arrived daily from back east, for news from Roumania. Moses seemed to trust the Yiddish press over the four local papers.<sup>30</sup> Yet Moses' adherence to the old language should not be mistaken for lack of American patriotism. He felt a zealous patriotism for his new homeland and "loved this country with a devotion he could never have felt for his native land."<sup>31</sup> Perhaps that explains why the crowning memory of Moishe's life was his meeting in 1904 with Teddy Roosevelt, who represented to Moses, and so many other Jews, all that was wholesome and good in America. No other politician captured his imagination in quite the same fashion.<sup>32</sup>

So large was his adoration for the President that he took his son Myron to the lobby of the Thornton Hotel in the summer of 1904 to wait in line to shake Roosevelt's hand.

When Moses' turn arrived, Roosevelt smiled his toothy grin, shook his hand, as well as tiny Myron's, and said simply, "Delighted." Moses never forgot this brief exchange and repeatedly relived it until his death.<sup>33</sup> Though Myron snickered at his father's hero-worship, he also bragged about the encounter. In Myron's old age, he boasted to Professor Earl Ganz after a handshake, that Ganz had just shaken the hand that had touched Teddy Roosevelt's.<sup>34</sup>

Moses was politically conservative and not disposed to radicalism like some big-city Jews, many of whom emerged as revolutionary and labor leaders of the twentieth century.<sup>35</sup> Moses could not understand radicalism in general, and wondered out loud how miners could be radicals when they made such good wages. Why change a system that seemed to be working so admirably? Roosevelt would be good for business and bring abiding prosperity, and Moses Brinig defined himself as a businessman - and more specifically as a *Jewish* businessman.<sup>36</sup>

Striking a balance between the demands of Orthodox Judaism and business presented a challenge to Moses. As faithful members of the A'dath Israel congregation, the elder Brinigs strived to maintain their religious traditions by closing down their store on Jewish holidays, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, even if that meant the sacrifice of a lucrative Saturday night's business. When these holidays fell on Saturday, which "happened to be pay days for the

miners... the coincidence made it particularly hard for the Jewish merchants of [Butte]."<sup>37</sup>

Yet strict Sabbath observance dictated that no business be conducted on any Saturday. Herein lay the dilemma of the Orthodox Jew. To close business on a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, meant losing the best business day of the week - the miners' pay day. To remain open on Sunday, the Christian Sabbath, meant incurring the wrath of local Christians, many of whom were customers. Christian holidays also had to be observed by store closures to avoid offending patrons. "But what could Moses do about it...If bills were to be paid...?"<sup>38</sup>

Moses kept his store open until 10 o'clock on Saturday, and the store flourished on the traditional Jewish Sabbath. Located close to the mines and the "entertainment" district of town, the mercantile brought in columns of gold coins on Saturday.<sup>39</sup>

Myron remembered his father's deep sonorous voice in synagogue praying for forgiveness for not remembering the Sabbath day. Judaism dwelt in Moses blood and soul, and the Moses of Myron's novel despaired:

When I am in the store, I forget everything, but sell, sell, sell. I forget I am a Jew. I forget the synagogue...Sometimes, I am sorry we come to America. I ask myself, what kind of men will my children be and their children after them? They will not be Jews, this much I know. How can they know what it is to be a Jew in a city like this where so much is cheap, where so much passes like the wind? I am afraid my children will be married to Gentiles and my grandchildren will believe in

nothing.<sup>40</sup>

Reform Judaism, as a compromise between strict observance and gentile pressures, became for many Jews the most accommodating form of religious practice in the new land. Reform Judaism required only relaxed observance which allowed Jews to stay open for business on Saturday. Most Jews simply chose a religious practice they could comfortably live with in the new West - one more in keeping with their new level of acceptance.

The majority of Butte Jews did not practice Orthodoxy even when the opportunity to do so presented itself. By 1920, most local Jews hailed from Eastern Europe, and by all indications should have swelled the ranks of the Orthodox groups. However, this is not the case. Even though Butte had a Rabbi-owned kosher butcher shop, a kosher restaurant and an Orthodox synagogue; the Orthodox groups continued to shrink.<sup>41</sup> Most Jews apparently preferred the liberalized Reform persuasion.

The Moses of Myron's novel expressed nothing but contempt for the Reformers. Members of the Reform group seemed like snobs "diluted with Protestantism." He mocked their clean shaven faces and tendency to put on airs by calling their Rabbi, "doctor." All they needed, he complained, was a "gilded cross" atop the temple to complete the charade. He found in the "filtered atmosphere" of the Reformed Temple, "nothing of the struggle, the sense of race

pursued by tragedy that is found in the synagogue." At the same time, as one of Myron's characters remarked, the Reformed Jews felt the Orthodox simply enjoyed rolling around in misery and dwelling on the agonies of the past.<sup>42</sup>

While "new and Americanized faces" began to appear in the synagogue, the elder Brinigs continued to practice their Jewish Orthodoxy to the best of their ability, with the noted exception of Sabbath observance. Rebecca kept a strict Kosher home even in her later years.<sup>43</sup> To Moses, Judaism stood independent of outside influences and could not conform its style to fit the environment or times. Yet Moses overlooked that his own lack of Sabbath observance was, in a sense, a filtering of Judaism as well.

Moses died of pneumonia in 1911 at the age of 54. The cares of this world may have prematurely aged Moses. Mortuary records listed the cause of his death as "old age." His obituary praised him as a veteran businessman, "highly respected...and possessed of a social and genial disposition." Rabbi N. A. Cohen spoke at the Brinig home, followed by attorney Joseph Binnard who talked about Moses' charitable acts, and Rabbi Margolis of A'dath Israel, who spoke of the great loss his Congregation had sustained.<sup>44</sup>

After he died, Moses' children listed his virtues and cast around for some kind of affection for their father. He was a hard worker - a dynamic man - a good provider. Fourteen year old Myron, who had a stormy relationship with

his father, found it more difficult to locate his father's good points. Myron disliked his temperamental father and had always empathized with his mother in her complaints against him. Myron felt that his father "mostly forgot he existed except as someone to feed and clothe," and confessed he was not sorry to see him go. There was simply not much of a relationship to mourn.<sup>45</sup>

He did, however, commend his father for starting over so late in life. The man had always "hurled himself against the most formidable odds" and made his life in a western mining town work. Myron felt impressed that deep down, his father longed for the life of the old country but was trapped in retailing to support his large family.<sup>46</sup> Even Rebecca waxed sensitive over Moses after his death. She admitted in her old age that she loved Moses "maybe a little when he was dying." She insisted the terrible air in Butte had killed him.<sup>47</sup> It was the city that had done him in - the awful town. The lesson obviously stuck with Myron.

In 1917, the business at 34 East Park was listed as "Brinig and Sons." Moses reportedly established the oldest Brinig boys in business in Phillipsburg, Butte, Bozeman, Anaconda and Dillon before his death.<sup>48</sup> However, the younger brothers, Myron and Peter were left out, and always resented their older siblings for this reason. Myron even blamed his brothers for ruining his father's business.<sup>49</sup>

Myron was no retailer, and his father must have

realized that. One of Moses' last requests included a college education for Myron, who had developed a desire to be a writer. Myron wanted to leave Butte. Later he explained, "I left Butte because I wasn't very happy there, and I wanted to come to New York. And then there was this business of going to school."<sup>50</sup>

The youngest Brinig's philosophy concluded that creative people must escape from the familiar. "If you're a creative person, you know it very early in your life, and you want to escape where you can be creative. You can't be creative in the bosom of your family." Following a seventeen year old's dream, young Myron left Butte by train in 1914 for Columbia University in New York to become a writer.<sup>51</sup>

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Myron returned to Butte from college every summer until 1918, when he was drafted into the army. After the War, Brinig returned to New York and to college. Though Myron attended writing classes at Columbia, he never actually graduated or obtained a degree from any University.<sup>52</sup>

In 1920, he sent an article to Harper's Magazine which the publication rejected. However, the editor suggested to Myron that a young movie executive named David O. Selznick in Fort Lee, New Jersey needed a reader for \$25 a week.



Myron's job would be to recommend books for film production.<sup>53</sup>

While in Selznick's employ, Myron met a co-worker named Ellen Rowe who, through connections with a publisher at Muncey's Magazine, helped Brinig to get his first story published. Unfortunately for the struggling author, his only stable income ceased when Selznick went broke in 1923. With his former editor at Muncey's gone and the new replacement "not as sympathetic either to me or my stories," Brinig needed to find work fast.<sup>54</sup>

During the 1920's, Myron continued "writing, publishing and with good reviews, yet, if not exactly starving, living by odd-jobs, and the grudging help of my family in Butte, Montana." His luck changed temporarily when he found a job with F.B.O. (Film Booking Offices), owned by Joseph P. Kennedy, as a reader in their "scenario department."<sup>55</sup> Myron's only encounter with his boss occurred when Kennedy approached him for help in assembling a library of literary works for his family's new apartment. Brinig felt, with the arrogance of youth, that anyone who needed someone to choose their library books must be quite stupid, and refused the offer. Myron always felt regretful for his curtness toward his boss. Apparently Kennedy remembered the incident too. Myron was fired shortly after the exchange.<sup>56</sup>

In 1924, Brinig attended the turbulent Democratic convention and witnessed the clash between the supporters of

Catholic Al Smith and those who opposed him, including the Ku Klux Klan. In 1927, he viewed the triumphant return of Charles Lindberg in a tickertape parade through New York City. He pooh-poohed the event as an illustration of the sensual hero-worship so characteristic of the 1920's.<sup>57</sup>

Brinig's big break came in 1929, when he was thirty-two years old. After being rejected by four of five publishers, his first book, Singermann, was published by Farrar and Company.<sup>58</sup> Arguably his best work, Singermann, a tell-all book inspired by his family life in Butte, received rave reviews, and was praised as a "solid and excellent... novel."<sup>59</sup> William Soskin of The New York Evening Post wrote:

Two years ago, I threw my hat into the air and performed a series of unseemly gestures of hysterical enthusiasm when a novel called Singermann by Myron Brinig appeared. It seemed to me by far the best emotional expression of the problem of the Jew in America that had appeared in fiction...Other critics found considerable merit in Brinig's book, but it was not until the novel appeared in England that the reception began to resemble my own in vociferous enthusiasm. Arnold Bennett and a number of other critics danced in the streets and called it *the most important book out of America that year.*<sup>60</sup>

Writer Arnold Bennett gave a front page review of Singermann in The London Standard. Bennett, whom Myron greatly admired, hailed from an industrial town in England, and therefore may have been sympathetic to the message of Brinig's novel.<sup>61</sup>

Ironically, this Jewish novel was published in Germany

in the early 1930's under the name Die Singermanns, during the rise of the most virulent anti-Jewish atmosphere in world history. Myron felt that his book was among those burned by the Nazis.<sup>62</sup>

Earl Ganz, who studied Brinig's Butte books, explained that Singermann "showed what the town did to a Jewish immigrant family and what they did to each other in the scramble for money and transplanting of a culture."<sup>63</sup> Singermann, a painfully Jewish novel full of ethnic candor, brings the Jewish community and Brinig's family to life. Myron told the story of a mining town called "Silver Bow" and a Jewish family named the "Singermanns" with a patriarch named Moses and a matriarch named Rebecca.

Moses and Rebecca Brinig are used to illustrate the struggle of Orthodox Jews against the erosion of religion and *goyish* influence. Rebecca, who feared that in Butte, all her children would marry non-Jews realized her fears when her oldest son, Jack, married a Jewish convert to Christian Science. The new daughter-in-law, in real life named Fannie, became "Daisy Singermann" in Myron's novel.

Daisy's importance as symbol of the breakdown of old-style Judaism cannot be underestimated. This blue-eyed, ham-eating, Americanized, former daughter-of-Israel-turned-Christian, according to Rebecca, had lured her oldest son away from family and faith. In this context, "Daisy" became the temptress of Americanization and Christianity that tore

at early Jewish identity. When Daisy embraced Christian Science over Judaism, the Rebecca of Myron's novels was convinced that all that was evil emanated from her daughter-in-law.

Brinig wrote his second Butte novel, Wide Open Town in 1932 while on a visit to Butte.<sup>64</sup> This novel earned high praise from the critics, though not to the same degree as Singermann. William Soskin, who had so highly praised Brinig's first Butte novel, said, "Wide Open Town seemed too deliberately a Whitman poem, a proletarian hymn about Brinig's mining town in Montana."<sup>65</sup> The book was published under the name Copper City in England, presumably to make it more attractive to the English.

Wide Open Town was a portrait painted with scars and blemishes intact. Brinig revealed the seamy side of the city, the hypocrisy, the corruption, and the vulnerability of its people, Jews and non-Jews alike. In Wide Open Town, a virtuous Catholic youth, John Donnelly, was coaxed by a "friend" to violate his strict ideals and visit the red-light district of "Silver Bow." The protagonist developed a passion for a young prostitute named Zola and suffered with guilt for abandoning his moral standards. A plan to escape from "Silver Bow" for California never materialized, and the couple met a tragic end.<sup>66</sup>

Brinig's books "condemn[ed] [Butte] for bringing out the best in people and then destroying them."<sup>67</sup> In most

cases the town - the terrible town - shook the main characters' basic values. Whether Irish Catholic or Jewish, religion was challenged.

Brinig could also be accused of cynicism in his attitude towards the survival of love/marriage relationships. Wide Open Town and Singermann, were rife with examples of ill-fated romances between miners and prostitutes, Jewish men and *shiksas* - all men and women whose differences spelled disaster for their future. In Singermann, Moses and Rebecca engaged in consistent marital bickering. The Singermann boys became mixed-up with ne'r-do-well women from the red-light district. One of the brothers became obsessed over a prostitute named Maxine, resulting in his moral destruction.

The character in Brinig's novels that most resembled Myron's own life was Michael Singermann, the youngest of the Singermann boys. Michael's life paralleled Myron's own. The boy experienced many of the same conflicts as Myron had, including a stormy father/son relationship and latent homosexual feelings. Michael, like Myron, suffered from a sensitive personality and unpopularity with his peer group. Brinig once wrote:

I was not particularly popular among my schoolfellows - though at best, even if they had liked me, I would have preferred being alone and going my own way. However no child is so solitary that he does not find one or two friends along the road from childhood to adolescence; and if he is as sensitive as I was, he usually falls [in] among young girls.<sup>68</sup>

Brinig revealed all these sensitivities and vulnerabilities through the character of Michael Singermann. When Moses struck Michael for not preventing merchandise from being stolen from the store front, the fictional thirteen year old Michael, humiliated and crying, would flee to the safety of the store's basement. There, on piles of clothing, he relished adult fiction novels such as Robert W. Chambers, or Compton McKenzie's Sinister Street. Young Michael was captivated by the sensuality and love scenes.<sup>69</sup>

When asked in his old age about his literary models, Brinig, like the fictional Michael, said he admired Joseph Conrad, Compton McKenzie, Proust, and Joyce - the latter two he labeled the "greatest writers of the century as well as Thomas Mann." He also admired F. Scott Fitzgerald and Arnold Bennett.<sup>70</sup>

Brinig's novels revealed a bold sensuality uncommon for the 1920's and 1930's. His novels presented erotica and homoerotica - much like the works of Thomas Mann, whom Brinig admired. Full of sexual interludes, passion, and love scenes, Brinig wrote novels that Michael Singermann would have liked to read.<sup>71</sup> The Saturday Review noted in 1941, that his novel, All of Their Lives "[was] so punctuated with sultry passages that only by the most emancipated fireside may it be risked as family reading."<sup>72</sup>

Myron never mentioned in his memoirs or personal

interviews when he realized his own sexual preference. Myron Brinig was bisexual, and undoubtedly, the homosexual/bisexual topics in some of his novels must have caused many of his contemporaries to blush. In Singermann, a homosexual teacher attempted to seduce one of the Jewish brothers, causing him to realize his own latent feelings.<sup>73</sup> In the same book, young Michael Singermann fell in love with a male school mate. Not surprisingly, Brinig's books became "always a great favorite of the old ladies that go to lending libraries."<sup>74</sup>

It is interesting to ponder how Myron's preferences must have been received in Butte. Butte was a man's town - a masculine, rough town. Perhaps this is why Myron hated Butte so. He was too different. The family never talked about Myron's bisexuality. "It was a terrible taboo," said Myron's niece. On one occasion Myron, who always loved to shock the family, came home for a visit with a young man. "There was a lot of whispering, 'How could he?'"<sup>75</sup>

Brinig offered unwincingly honest visual images of Butte - the labor unrest, the red light district, the simple people and their weaknesses, the ugliness of the scenery and the smelters belching smoke out across the valley creating the famous sulphurous air. His Butte novels pulled down the bedsheets of Butte and revealed the seedy side of town.

So they came to the Red Light dives in East Galena Street...always alive with voices, sounds of music, pianolas rattling off mechanical tunes...Along the wooden

sidewalks was a continuous promenade of miners in overalls and hobnailed shoes, girls in the latest fashions from Market Street in San Francisco and State Street in Chicago...Patrol wagons dash along the street, stopping now before this crib, now before another. Usually it is a man who is hustled out from one of these cribs, fighting the policemen with fists and teeth. But sometimes it is a woman, her hair a tangle of licentiousness, her slanting wet mouth spitting forth a venom of vituperations. Sometimes a man has been knifed in one of the gambling dens; he is carried into an ambulance, his shirt over the ribs sticky with blood... But the line is fierce, fierce, alive, alive.<sup>76</sup>

Myron certainly saw Butte's red light District as an audience-drawing tabloid topic for his books. "O American saloons, bawdy houses, gambling dens, Winchesters and 44's, pretty ladies and sedate ladies!" he exulted.<sup>77</sup> His knowledge of the goings-on in the place where "the Daughters of Light gave the Sons of the Pit their pleasures" seemed somewhat intimate.<sup>78</sup> It seems very likely Brinig at least toured the District only one block from his father's store. His brothers were rumored to have been "very active" visitors in the area.<sup>79</sup>

Michael Singermann, Myron's alter-ego, had a rather depressing red-light experience. Singermann described Michael's first encounter with the district. The young man's fall from virtue began with his graduation from knickers to long pants, coupled with a first taste of liquor at a local saloon. The combination of new-found bravado, liquor, and coaxing from a family friend, resulted in a red light romp with a cheaper crib whore which left the young man ashamed and disappointed.<sup>80</sup>



Remembering wild Saturday night scenes, Brinig wrote about the payday world of East Park street:

On Saturday night, spielers paraded up and down the streets, shouting out, Big sale at the Gent's Furnishing Store. Baseball tomorrow at Columbia Gardens, Northwestern League baseball. On Saturday night, dope fiends shivered and jerked their way along the sidewalks of Silver Bow. Cripples who had been maimed in the mines, sold pencils and shoelaces and damned you for a dirty dog if you didn't help them out. How would you like to be a cripple, you stingy louse? Saturday night was a hell of a night in Silver Bow, for then you saw the race-track touts and the pimps and the ladies from Down the Line. And always the patrol wagons ringing through the streets.<sup>81</sup>

The Butte books took frequent note of the stinking air. His characters choked on it and loathed it as much as Rebecca had. The smoke and sea of sulphur fumes "followed you wherever you went." The sulphurous air "was so thick you could cut it with a knife. It choked you, burned in your throat, in your gizzard...Many died from it."<sup>82</sup>

Nor did the author try to hide the ugliness of the city from his readers. Silver Bow was an "ugly town...its drab, sterile streets without grass and trees..."<sup>83</sup> In Singermann, Brinig painted his home town as "a town of ugly houses and streets...each infrequent blade of grass ...fighting the smoke and sulphur of the copper mines and smelters."<sup>84</sup>

To escape the barren city and the noxious air, Brinig's characters fled to the neighboring mountains. In several of his novels, lovers courted at the beautiful Columbia Gardens

outside of town.<sup>85</sup> Founded around 1898-99 by W. A. Clark, the park provided an important social center for the people of Butte. The Gardens offered refuge for the people of the town, supplying fresh air and trees, an amusement park with carousel, a pavilion for dances, beautiful flower gardens and picnic facilities - all for free admittance. Estimates place 2,000-3,000 visitors daily in good weather with the Butte Railway Company making direct trips there several times a day.<sup>86</sup>

Like other more perceptive observers, Myron found in Butte a mysterious enigmatic beauty, and cast around for words to describe it. Like an old lover, in the dark, Butte lost much of its unattractiveness and took on a peculiar loveliness. Among all the physical ugliness of the daylight city, he found in the "raw, American mining camp" a "certain unpremeditated beauty."<sup>87</sup> Brinig wrote of the Montana twilight that copper-tinted the surrounding hills. The Silver Bow of Myron's books remained "a mountain town...her head and shoulders were in the stars, her feet were deeply imbedded in the drifts of copper mines." Big Butte hill, a "stepchild to the Rockies," provided a view of the valley below to take one's breath away especially at twilight. Brinig wrote, "we are glad that we first saw beauty here, we who have lived here and loved here and slept here, by good stones, good mountains, our friends the pines."<sup>88</sup>

Another kind of beauty appeared in the copper mines and

the bravery of the men who allowed themselves to be "shot down in cages, into the mine shafts, down, down, five hundred, a thousand, three thousand feet, so fast that their stomachs were in their mouths. They were as far below the surface as the Rockies are above..." The mines of Butte provided a lucrative though dangerous living. "Silver Bow had been made by the copper mines. The copper mines were Silver Bow...At night it was very beautiful to watch the fires coming out of the smokestacks of the smelter...[but] the beauty was composed of the blood and agony of men."<sup>89</sup>

When Myron wrote about the mines and miners in Butte, he wrote with a passion one might gain from experience. In this case, however, his experience was limited to what he was told. He entered a mine shaft only once in his lifetime during a summer tour. Mining, he felt, was not a viable way to make a living, though he acknowledged "without the miners, [Butte] would have been a dead village of perhaps three or four hundred people," and "Butte wouldn't exist without copper."<sup>90</sup>

Myron seemed a bit confused on the issue of labor unrest in Butte. He insisted that Moses had never turned away a striking miner in his hour of need. However, the first actual strike in Butte did not occur until three years after Moses' death. Likely, what Myron remembered were the mining shut-downs of 1903, 1907, and 1908. In 1914, the same year Myron left for school, labor unrest exploded in

Butte. The Butte Miner's Union Hall was dynamited and the governor imposed martial law in the town. The chaos and excitement of those years became a recurring theme in Myron's Butte books. Butte was turbulent in 1917 as well, the year the population peaked at upwards of 100,000 people making it the largest city between Minneapolis and Spokane.<sup>91</sup>

Most miners eschewed radicalism, but Butte contained the largest arm of the radical Industrial Workers of the World, who championed radical proletarian ideals. Organized labor had failed in Butte by 1914, but the Speculator Mine Disaster, which killed 165 men in 1917, gave new credence to radical agitators and precipitated the first actual strike in Butte.<sup>92</sup>

Brinig related the story of I.W.W. agitator Frank Little, disguising him as "Phil Whipple." Like Frank Little, Whipple was a militantly radical I.W.W. agitator. With crackling excitement, Brinig recreated, though not entirely accurately, the events of 1917:

The company lowered the wages of the miners fifty cents a day due to the low price of copper on the market, and a premonition of tragedy lay over the town. The I.W.W.'s wanted a strike, but the more conservative officials of the Miners' Union counselled delay and hoped for better things...A big meeting was to be held at the Miners' Union Hall on North Main Street opposite the Post Office, and nearly all of the miners in town attended...Just a spark and there would be a gigantic explosion that would change the face of everything. A representative of the union, a tall, saturnine man with an easy flow of words, was speaking... 'With all my heart I beg of you to consider your vote carefully. Remember that a strike at

this time of the year will be no picnic. Remember that the Company is trying to do the best it can for you'....And a voice shot out of the crowd, 'Down with Capitalism!' - a voice like a rocket that cut the air in a quick burst of fire. Others took up the cry, and in a moment the hall was seething with shouts and furies. Then a splendid looking man known as Phil Whipple, the local leader of the I.W.W. faction, a great red fire of a man who was internationally famous for his radical speeches and writings, stood up from the crowd and cried, 'I speak for the working man! I demand to be heard!'<sup>93</sup>

The fictional Phil Whipple, like the real life Frank Little, was kidnapped by armed men and hanged from a railroad trestle outside of Butte. Company agents were widely believed to have instigated the death, and the incident aroused world-wide public indignation and touched off workers' riots in Buenos Aires and Berlin.<sup>94</sup>

Brinig tried to caricature all parties in the conflict between the powerful Anaconda Copper Mining Company, the unions, and the radicals. The I.W.W. blamed everything on the company with their "pious sing-song," or when a "[striker] caught a sliver in his leg...it was a plot of the mining company."<sup>95</sup> Neither was the company innocent in Brinig's eyes. Beyond placing lackeys in public offices to do their bidding,

the mine owners were huge corporations now and had enlarged their interests by buying mines in South America...Down in South America, the natives received only a few cents a day for their labours; and it was in South America that the Company made most of its money...Whenever the miners in [Butte] went on strike, demanding higher wages, the Company could afford to wait them out...saying to the miners: You want an increase in pay, but in South America we pay an Indian ten cents a day and he is satisfied.<sup>96</sup>

The public seemed enthused to read about the travails of this untamed copper city. Brinig continued with the same formula in his third Butte book, This Man is My Brother. Continuing the saga of the Singermann family into the 1930's, this novel placed the brothers as co-owners of the largest department store in "Silver Bow."

Abandoning subtlety, Myron filled the pages of This Man is My Brother with bitter diatribes about the conflicts between Jews and non-Jews. He pontificated on the lack of merit of religious beliefs in general. The message Brinig conveyed about Butte's Orthodox Jews was a sad one of impoverished Rabbis without congregations and a guilt-ridden younger generation of Jews who no longer understand their fathers' religion, yet long for the sense of meaning it could provide. One of the characters mourned, "...none of you Singermans are real Jews any more except Gran'ma and Uncle Sam."<sup>97</sup>

Brinig's own distaste for religion was evident. Through his characters, his novel became a plea for all to cast off religious beliefs. One Singermann brother remarked, "...my own feeling about it is that the more quickly religious myths pass, the less harassing life will become. Why believe in a God who strains our credulities to the breaking-point?" "While other races scrap their traditions, burn them in the machine, the Jews hug their little neurotic Jehovah-isms close to their hearts."<sup>98</sup>

Myron seemed to call for Christians and Jews to set aside God and become one, yet he painted an ugly picture of the belief-free human. He portrayed the Singermann brothers as a group of searching, empty men without roots. Each brother drifted on the verge of nothingness, loneliness, and dissatisfaction in the vacuum created by their agnosticism. The character Harry Singermann complained, "Once we had roots. Now we're like those peculiar sea plants that float up and down on the waves..."<sup>99</sup>

This Man received mixed reviews. The great writer, Sinclair Lewis, in an open letter to The New York Herald Tribune, stated,

This Man is My Brother, brings out of the contrast between a brilliant, neurotic, Jewish family and the Montana smelting town in which they live, a true American three-dimensional novel...The book is not merely 'clever' and 'promising', it is important.<sup>100</sup>

William Soskin of The New York Evening Post, found Brinig's newest book had, like Singermann,

The same physical intensity, the intuitive appreciation of emotional lives, the almost glandular understanding of many types and many moods of men and women, the same broad paganism, the same combination of strong, frank appetites and delicate sensitivity...The same healthy impatience with the easy formulae of the professional Jews who solve their racial problems by Causes and Movements, the same understanding of that extraordinary chemistry of the blood which sets the young Jew in revolt against the patriarchal traditions and the orthodox heritage...Yet I find myself swallowing hard in an effort to minimize my disappointment in This Man is My Brother.<sup>101</sup>

Myron's books would always be measured against Singermann and many would fall short.

In 1931, after three successful novels, Brinig moved to Los Angeles to look for work. There he spent time observing the California crowd. After all, he explained, "The more I knew about my fellow men, the better for my art," and he added modestly, "supposing I had any."<sup>102</sup>

Brinig detested Hollywood pretense. He viewed the superficiality and bacchanality of the town with disdain. California's drugs, "antiseptic corruption," and blatant homosexuality, in spite of his own preferences, disgusted him. His revulsion ultimately led him to exact literary revenge on the Golden state. In his book, The Flutter of an Eyelid, a satirical fantasy about Hollywood in the 1930's, Myron ended the novel by thrusting the California coast into the Pacific Ocean.<sup>103</sup>

The Flutter of an Eyelid, released in 1933, marked a drastic departure from the old Butte formula. "I repeat," said James W. Poling in The New York Herald Tribune, "this book defies classification, that it is a cock-eyed book; mad, repellent, weird and perverse, provocative, sometimes brilliant, many times beautiful, always exciting."<sup>104</sup> In spite of this critics' praise, Flutter was considered unsuccessful.<sup>105</sup>

Brinig's best-selling and most widely popular work was a Butte novel called The Sisters. Written in 1937, it



caught the eye of Hollywood film producers who later purchased the movie rights. Bette Davis and Errol Flynn won the parts of the main characters, but the film, Myron later admitted, was only loosely based on his book and turned out to be a third-rate movie - with the exception of Miss Davis' performance.<sup>106</sup>

His prologue to The Sisters illustrated the hometown influence in his writings.

When I was a boy in Silver Bow, Montana, I used often to go to the drugstore kept by Ned Elliot. He and his wife, Rose, were good friends of mine and the family to which I belonged; but Ned's three daughters, though a good deal older than myself, were the objects of my adoration...The Elliot sisters were not only sympathetic, they were very pretty - that is, Louise the oldest, and Helen, the youngest, were. Grace was plain, but wholesome and kind-looking...During my summer vacations in Silver Bow, I used to see Louise, Grace and Helen quite often, and afterward I heard a good deal about their lives. It is from these recollections and from what others have told me that I have reconstructed this story...<sup>107</sup>

Departing from normal Hollywood protocol, the premier of the film was held in the mining city. "Famous actors and actresses" flew to Butte with much local ado, and the paper announced proudly that publicity pictures of Butte would be shown around the world to promote the feature. The movie opened at the Rialto theater and ran four days for the general public.<sup>108</sup>

Though Myron never mentioned it in his memoirs, he too returned to Butte for the premier of The Sisters on October 22, 1938.<sup>109</sup> Butte residents felt quite proud of their

famous former resident. "Thousands who saw this fine picture yesterday," gushed the local paper, "acclaim it as one of the best they have ever seen."<sup>110</sup> In Butte's anxiety to claim Myron as its own in his hour of glory, the paper erroneously listed him "born in Butte in 1897," though he was born in Minneapolis in 1896. This "son of a Butte pioneer family" returned "triumphantly to his old home to share with his brothers and sisters the pride and joy that is known to a family, one of whose members has 'made good' as an author." It would have been interesting to see Myron's reaction to this statement. He always asserted that his family never liked his novels. Most kept quiet about his work, and a few were even peeved, with good cause, about his blood-letting portrayal of them in his books.<sup>111</sup>

When the author was at the peak of his popularity, he met the famous Mabel Dodge Luhan and began the era of his life referred to as the Taos years. He met Luhan by accident on the road between Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico, though once he claimed the meeting was arranged by Luhan and a friend. Luhan, a noted patron of artists, a writer, and a salon hostess in New York, had moved near the Pueblo Indian Reservation to be with her Indian husband. Luhan's taste for artists and writers immediately attracted her to the likes of D. H. Lawrence and a host of others. Through Luhan, Myron was introduced to the great and famous of the day including Thomas Wolfe and Theodore Dreiser. For some

reason, she took a unique liking to Brinig and invited him to live in a guest house on her property in New Mexico.

His relationship with Luhan was bewildering at best. He admitted he loved her, and she loved him for a while, presumably only in a platonic sense. He bought a home on her property for a bargain price where he lived with his male companion, Cady Wells. Wells later left Myron because he wanted fidelity at a time when Brinig was "not ready to give up women."<sup>112</sup> After leaving Taos in the 1950's, the author went to New York where he lived the remainder of his life.<sup>113</sup>

Butte was no longer a wide open town by 1931. That year Brinig wrote,

It was all in the past, a story of that Silver Bow of twenty or more years ago that would never be again...the Silver Bow of before the war, when life had seemed so much more colorful and exciting than it was now...when saloons were wide open and there was a large Red Light District down in Galena Street. There were those who still described Silver Bow as a 'wide open town,' but now it was wide open on the sly; the old honesty and picturesqueness had faded with the coming of prohibition.<sup>114</sup>

The change was inevitable. "This is the last frontier," one of Brinig's characters philosophized, "America will never be like this again."<sup>115</sup>

Brinig's books lost their popularity when he departed from his Butte material.<sup>116</sup> But times were changing and his former audience collectively aging. He did, however, return to wide open town literature from time to time. Footsteps

On the Stairs, written in 1950 and set in 1908 "Silver Peak," Montana became an attempt to renew interest in frontier novels. Here Myron again dealt with a Jewish family and the problems of intermarriage, this time with an Irish Catholic family. In other novels, Butte and Montana made cameo appearances. In You and I, written in 1945, one of Brinig's characters sold newspapers in a bawdy house in Butte.<sup>117</sup> In The Gambler Takes a Wife, Brinig returned to stories of Montana in the 1880's.<sup>118</sup> Critic Fred T. Marsh noted, "Brinig [seems] unable to leave his home town out of any novel."<sup>119</sup>

But his later works always stood in the shadow of Singermann. "[Brinig] has lost some of the passion and the communion with vital experience that marked such a novel as his very early Singermann," said one critic, "But he has developed a pleasant compromise between literary deftness and that fiery urge with which his writing career began."<sup>120</sup> "Myron Brinig," wrote another critic in 1945,

who way back in 1929 wrote that solid and excellent family novel Singermann, and later more than a dozen other extremely good, so-so or brashly bad novels - all of which one remembers sharply and with amazingly varied degrees of deep satisfaction or discontent - has hit his stride again.<sup>121</sup>

Brinig's critics lamented that his novels had lost much of their "full-bodied" nature, and his later novels became "tamer and tamer."<sup>122</sup> Brinig once expressed his frustration, "You know, when you try to describe Butte, it's

very difficult."<sup>123</sup> Perhaps he described it best when he wrote in regards to the old city, "What tawdriness, what majesty, what romance?"<sup>124</sup>

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Brinig returned to Butte "fairly frequently" to visit his mother over the years and even provided an apartment for her old age on West Mercury Street. He dedicated Singermann to Rebecca, but it is doubtful she ever read any of his books.<sup>125</sup>

On one of his last visits to Butte, Brinig bought Mabel Dodge Luhan a gift of a copper crucifix engraved with the words, "complements of the Copper Capital of the World."<sup>126</sup> Perhaps the gesture carried more symbolism with it than Brinig cared to admit: a Jew crucified upon a copper cross. Luhan seemed to see the connection.

In the 1940's, after Rebecca died, Myron apparently never returned to Butte. Perhaps he simply wanted to remember the town as it had been when he was young, or maybe without Rebecca, Butte never seemed quite the same. He never cared to remain close to his relatives. His bitterness stemmed from old feuds and hurt feelings between brothers. "I think it's a mistake to have close relations with your relatives," he explained. This was his creed for his entire life. He admitted, "I don't particularly like

people."<sup>127</sup>

Myron never saw the Berkely Pit swallow whole districts of old Butte: Meaderville, Centerville, Dublin Gulch, McQueen, and the beautiful Columbia Gardens - each eaten up by open pit mining. In fact, he had never even heard about the Berkely Pit until about 1980. Then he wondered, "You can't have a town with strip mining in the middle of it."<sup>128</sup> If he had seen it, Myron might have liked to write about the scene of the giant trucks descending a mile down into the pit to collect ore, widening the void in the Butte hill.

The last of his twenty-one novels, The Looking Glass Heart, was written in 1958. After that, he never found a publisher for his works.<sup>129</sup> Myron was philosophical, however, about his fall from literary grace. Never arrogant about his early success as a writer, neither was he overly saddened by his loss of fame, realizing its transitory nature. His career, he insisted, was simply based on luck. "Writing is mostly chance," he explained, recalling that Singermann had been rejected by four or five publishers before ending up on the first list for Farrar and Rinehart.<sup>130</sup>

In spite of all Brinig's disdain for Butte, he seemed incapable of shaking the memories of the wide open town. He said, "How often, if you originated in a small town from which you departed at a comparatively youthful age, do old scenes, faces and incidents crowd into your memory!"<sup>131</sup>

The town, the people, were so different from his early memories. Butte's Jewish population declined along with the mining industry. The mining shut-downs of the 1970's struck a staggering blow to the city. Businesses struggled and folded due to competition from large chain stores and the decreased buying power of the local population.<sup>132</sup> Younger Jews who left for college to become professionals never returned. A few left town for bigger cities where a faithful Jew could observe religion more fully and find a Jewish mate. Others simply lost interest in religion.<sup>133</sup> Understandably, the decline in membership caused B'Nai Israel Congregation to suffer financial difficulties. In September of 1965, President of the Congregation, Newt Rudolph, wrote an open letter to the members expressing deep concern for the future of the Temple.

I am sorry for the handicaps and pressing problems that face our Congregation, its future has the clouds of a diminishing existence...Your Board has tried to make the balance sheets balance without indulging the members with the burden of asking for additional funds...At this rate of unbalance, in less than five years our Synagogue will be non-existent and sooner if our ailing building needs emergency repairs.<sup>134</sup>

This pattern of decline in the Jewish community in Butte was not unique. Thomas Goldwasser studied the phenomenon of Jewish disappearance from rural areas and small towns and found the pattern existed nationwide. Jewish parents struggled with the high rates of intermarriage in smaller communities where children had few

Jewish friends.

The cultural and religious pressures often are so intense that many rural Jews assimilate totally into the non-Jewish community around them, intermarrying at rates approaching 75 to 80 percent, not attending synagogue and denying their Judaism.<sup>135</sup>

"There is no doubt about it, being Jewish in small towns is much harder. Their quality of life is not the same. There is not nearly as much to give them Jewish identity."<sup>136</sup> Fear of attracting unkind attention causes modern Jews in smaller towns to "[keep] a low profile," unlike their early-day prominence. In Butte, Goldwasser noted, "when a Jew dies, he may lie in state at a gentile funeral home...contradicting all the tenets of Judaism...In essence, there is a Jewish wake."<sup>137</sup>

Father Joe Pat Sullivan of Butte noted the Jewish dilemma in the community:

You see, as a Catholic clergyman here, my situation is completely different from that facing Jews. Catholics dominate here, and even if a few stray from the fold, I know that we'll always be around. With Jews, its completely different. They have to struggle just to stay alive as a viable religion. To stay alive, I believe that the Jewish community must have a facilitator to call them all together, and I don't think they have one here anymore. So, if nobody is getting the job done, it just isn't going to happen.<sup>138</sup>

Though continuing existence has presented a challenge, B'Nai Israel still "hangs on tenaciously" with about thirty families and no permanent Rabbi. In 1993, the temple celebrated its ninetieth anniversary. Still beautiful and



well-kept, the building remains locked much of the time.<sup>139</sup>

Myron's Butte novels have made somewhat of a comeback in recent years, partly for their historical significance. Former University of Montana Professor, H. G. Merriam, studied Brinig's works and labeled him "Montana's most accomplished and productive novelist."<sup>140</sup> Merriam brought Brinig to the attention of Professor Earl Ganz, who, with the help of others, found the aged writer in Manhattan in 1981 and obtained an interview with him. Thanks largely to Ganz' efforts, Wide Open Town was re-released in 1993.

Myron Brinig died May 13, 1991 at the age of ninety-four. At his request, his cremated remains were scattered near the place he loved best - not Butte - but Shelter Island, New York where he resided from 1961 to 1968 with his male companion of many years.<sup>141</sup>

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Inside a Myron Brinig book, the reader enters old Butte - down East Park Street and past Moses Brinig's gents' furnishing store, or near the open doors of a large cigar store and saloon with the smell of stale beer and smoke. Miners with large stained boots on the rail talk and laugh in accented conversation. Symons Department store overflows with shoppers, while the railway cars clang down Park street. The air is full of smoke and above it all the

hulking mine frames. This is history at its finest told in living color by one who lived it, observed it, savored it.

Clearly, Brinig experienced the twentieth century like few others. He seemed to have an uncanny knack for encountering the important people and events of his day. He met Teddy Roosevelt, worked for David O. Selznick and Joseph P. Kennedy, watched the triumphant Charles Lindberg parade in New York, attended the turbulent 1924 Democratic convention, and rubbed shoulders with the greatest writers and artists of his era in the home of Mabel D. Luhan. He recorded in detail the pinnacle of the greatest western mining camp, and wrote a novel about his Jewish family which was deemed highly important in understanding the Jewish saga in the American West. But then, Myron's ambition was always, "To be an author and write a story or a poem and see that it is good, very good."<sup>142</sup> "I would create poems out of all Americans, prostitutes and miners, spielers, grafters, booze-fighters, Presidents, Jew composers of jazz, movie studios in Hollywood..."<sup>143</sup> And indeed, he did.

## ENDNOTES

## CHAPTER 3

1. OH Brinig, 5, 14.
2. OH Brinig, 15; Brinig, Singermann, 21-23; Clark, Greater Roumania, "reminded one of the...", 21.
3. Clark, Greater Roumania, 21; Brinig, Singermann, 21, 22... "It had been a poor season for the grapes in Roumania, and taxes had been higher."
4. Myron Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," unpublished memoirs edited by Earl Ganz, 161-163; Alan Goddard, Old Timer's Hand Book Illustrated (Butte, Montana: Bumont Press, 1976), 28. The name Fligelman was spelled in some sources as Fliegelman.
5. Brinig, Singermann, 24-26, 29; OH Brinig, 1; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 9.
6. Kelson, "The Jews of Montana," 68; Susan Leaphart, "Frieda and Belle Fligelman, A Frontier-City Girlhood in the 1890's," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Summer 1982.
7. OH Brinig, 17; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 11.
8. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 165, 167.
9. Leaphart, "Frieda and Belle Fligelman, A Frontier-City Girlhood in the 1890's," 92; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 161.
10. Brinig, Singermann, 29; OH Brinig, 1.
11. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 9; Brinig, Singermann, 14-15.
12. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 11.
13. Goddard, Old Timers Hand Book Illustrated, 29.

14. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 10-11; Brinig, Singermann, 29-31.
15. Brinig, Singermann, 30; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 9.
16. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 11; Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988.
17. Brinig, Singermann, 31-33, 39.
18. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 26.
19. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 26; OH Brinig, 6.
20. Brinig, Singermann, 39; OH Brinig, 1-2, 9; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 6; The Montana Standard, 15 Feb. 1981, p. 18.
21. Brinig, Singermann, 285-286.
22. Ibid., 40-41, 42, 69; Brinig, Wide Open Town, 8.
23. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 60; Brinig, Singermann, 34-37; Guy Piatt, The Story of Butte, 26, 38. Piatt indicated that Savin Lisa, an Italian immigrant, ran a store at 63 East Park, while H. L. Frank, a Jew from Alsace, had a store on Broadway.
24. Brinig, Singermann, 34-38, 284-287.
25. Ibid., 36; Brinig, Wide Open Town, 37-38.
26. Jacqueline Brinig Cooper, telephone interview with author, 1993; OH Brinig, 17; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 11-12.
27. Chaplin, My Autobiography, 124, 128; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 45-47, 58; OH Reidinger, 13; OH Brinig, 4.
28. Butte City Directory (R. L. Polk and Co., 1917); The Butte Miner, 28 Nov. 1911 mistakenly lists the Brinig's home as 840 W. Granite.
29. Brinig, Singermann, 16, 260; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 167.
30. OH Brinig, 13; Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 7; Brinig, Singermann, 43.
31. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 5.

32. Rischin, The Promised City, 230.
33. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 5-7; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 40; Brinig, Singermann, 44-46.
34. Earl Ganz, foreward to latest release of Brinig's Wide Open Town (Helena, Montana: Montana Magazine and American and World Geographic Publishing, 1993), xix.
35. Rischin, The Promised City, 43, 159.
36. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 5-7; Brinig, Singermann, 44-46.
37. Brinig, Singermann, 73.
38. Ibid., 42.
39. OH Brinig, 18.
40. Brinig, Singermann, 42, 46-47.
41. OH Rafish RC, 9.
42. Brinig, Singermann, 56-58.
43. Jacqueline Brinig Cooper, telephone interview with author, 1993.
44. Butte Mortuary records 1901-1917; "Friends Honor Memory of Late Moses Brinig," The Butte Miner, 28 Nov. 1911.
45. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 7.
46. Ibid., 11; OH Brinig, 15-16.
47. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 8.
48. Jacqueline Brinig Cooper, interview with author, 1993; Butte City Directory, (Helena: R. L. Polk and Company, 1917).
49. OH Brinig, 3.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 2, 20.
52. Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988.
53. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 16-19.

54. Ibid., 29-31.
55. Ibid., 31-32, 38; OH Brinig, 21.
56. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 32-34.
57. Ibid., 35-37.
58. Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988; OH Brinig, 22.
59. Florence Haxton Bullock, The New York Herald Tribune, 18 Nov. 1945.
60. William Soskin, The New York Evening Post, 25 Jan. 1932.
61. OH Brinig, 7, 9.
62. OH Brinig, 22; Stephen Morello, letter to author, July 22, 1992.
63. Earl Ganz, "A Voice From the Past," The Speculator, Winter 1985, p. 4.
64. Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988; OH Brinig, 20.
65. William Soskin, The New York Evening Post, 25 Jan. 1932.
66. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 50-52, 64-65, 163-164.
67. Earl Ganz, "A Voice from the Past," The Speculator, Winter 1985, p. 4.
68. Myron Brinig, The Sisters, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937) prologue, p. 3. For more insights into Michael Singermann's character and thus, Myron's character, see Singermann. Michael disliked his father and brothers, 149; Moses called him a mama's boy, 265; Michael a delicate boy who cried at school and preferred to play with the girls, 277-278; Michael fell in love with male school mate, 279-80; and Michael carried away by sights of Saturday night, 284.
69. Brinig, Singermann, 286-289.
70. OH Brinig, 6-7.
71. Brinig, Singermann, 178, 194, 256, 290, 293, 295-300; Brinig, Wide Open Town, 37, 40-50.

72. Richard A. Cordell, The Saturday Review, date unknown, 1941.
73. Brinig, Singermann, 293, 336-338.
74. OH Brinig, 12.
75. Jacqueline Brinig Cooper, telephone interview with author, 1993.
76. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 37-39.
77. Ibid., 122.
78. Ibid., 37.
79. Jacqueline Brinig Cooper, telephone interview with author, 1993.
80. Brinig, Singermann, 290-300.
81. Ibid., 36.
82. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 4, 11, 36, 189, 239; Brinig, Singermann, 48, 101, 181, 237-238, 242, 315, 357.
83. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 189.
84. Brinig, Singermann, 33.
85. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 85-90; Brinig, Singermann, 102-105.
86. Geltz, Uncle Sam's Life in Montana, 42-44; "Columbia Gardens: A Memory For Two Decades," The Montana Standard, 5 Sept. 1993; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 57-58.
87. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 10-11.
88. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 146-148, 156; Brinig, Singermann, 336.
89. Brinig, Singermann, 357; Brinig, Wide Open Town, 7, 96.
90. OH Brinig, 2, 18; Brinig, Wide Open Town, 33.
91. Theodore Wiprud, "Butte: A Troubled Labor Paradise," Montana the Magazine of Western History, Oct. 1971, pp. 31-38; Emmons, The Butte Irish, 364-383, 398-399; Mark Ciabattari, "The Fall and Rise of Butte, Montana," New York Times Magazine, 1 March, 1992, p. 48; Butte: Its

Aspirations, Achievements, History, Industries, and Homes, 1927, p. 1.

92. Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land, 215-216.

93. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 255-258.

94. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 276-282; Davis, Sketches of Butte, 136-139; OH Brinig, 27.

95. Brinig, Singermann, 361, 172-73, 372.

96. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 11.

97. Myron Brinig, This Man is My Brother (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1932), 86.

98. Ibid., 87, 90.

99. Ibid., 86.

100. "A Letter from Sinclair Lewis," The New York Herald Tribune, 4 Feb. 1932.

101. William Soskin, The New York Evening Post, 25 Jan. 1932.

102. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 40, 53.

103. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 56, 71, 75-76.

104. James W. Poling, "A Book Defying Classification," The New York Herald Tribune, 14 May 1933.

105. Fred T. Marsh, The New York Times Book Review, 19 June, 1938.

106. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 1.

107. Brinig, The Sisters, prologue, 3.

108. "Picture Based on Butte Novel Gets Premiere Here," The Montana Standard, 16 Oct. 1938.

109. Ibid.; The Montana Standard, 21 Oct. 1938, advertisement, p. 21.

110. The Montana Standard, 24 Oct. 1938.

111. The Montana Standard, 16 Oct. 1938; Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988; OH Brinig, 8.



112. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 86, 100, 104, 134-135, 137; Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988.
113. Stephen Morello, letter to author, 22 July 1992.
114. Brinig, This Man is My Brother, 319.
115. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 40.
116. Earl Ganz, quoted by Ginny Merriam, "Who is Myron Brinig and Why Aren't We Reading Him?" The Missoulian, 25 May 1991, p. B-1.
117. Florence Haxton Bullock, "In Life's Deep Rhythm That Harmonizes Events," The New York Herald Tribune, 18 Nov. 1945; also see You and I (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1945).
118. Iris Barry, The New York Herald Tribune, 12 June 1943.
119. Fred T. Marsh, New York Times Book Review, 19 June 1938.
120. William Soskin, The New York Herald Tribune, 12 June 1939.
121. Florence Haxton Bullock, The New York Herald Tribune, 18 Nov. 1945.
122. Earl Ganz, The Speculator, Winter 1985, pgs. 4-5; Fred T. Marsh, The New York Times Book Review, 28 Jan. 1934.
123. OH Brinig, 19.
124. Brinig, Singermann, 424.
125. OH Brinig, 17; Myron Brinig, letter to Earl Ganz, 28 Dec. 1988.
126. Brinig, "Love From a Stranger," 200-201.
127. OH Brinig, 19-20, 23.
128. OH Brinig, 17-18; The Montana Standard, 15 Feb. 1981, p. 18; Brinig received letters from Helen Rice, a student in Montana, who brought him up to date on more recent Butte history including the Berkeley Pit.
129. Stephen Morello, letter to author, 22 July 1992.
130. OH Brinig, 21-22.

131. Brinig, The Sisters, prologue, p.4.
132. OH Rafish J-3, 12.
133. OH Rafish J-3, 12-14; OH Rafish RC, 17-18, 22, 24.
134. Newt Rudolph, letter to Congregation B'Nai Israel, 20 Sept. 1965 from Near Print File Geography: Butte, Montana, in American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
135. Thomas Goldwasser, "The Last Rural Jew," The Washington Post Magazine, 25 Aug. 1985, p. 12.
136. Ibid., Goldwasser quoting Rabbi Maurice Schwartz.
137. Thomas Goldwasser, "Jews in Small Towns," The Baltimore Sun, 23 March 1983.
138. Ibid., Thomas Goldwasser interviewed Father Joe Pat Sullivan in Butte for his article in The Baltimore Sun.
139. "Synagogue Hangs on Tenaciously," The Montana Standard, 18 Sept. 1993, p. 3.
140. Andrea McCormick, "Jewish writer mirrors Butte's early days," The Montana Standard, 15 Feb. 1981.
141. Alex E. Horton, III, letter to Stephen Morello, 19 Aug. 1991 regarding the disposal of Brinig's ashes; The New York Times Obituaries, 15 May 1991; The Montana Standard, 16 May 1991.
142. Brinig, Wide Open Town, 254.
143. Ibid., 124.

## APPENDIX A

## List of Occupations by Surname

\* indicates information from 1920 census

NAME	OCCUPATION
1. Abraham, Isaac	miner
2. Abrahams, Barnard	sampler, quartz ml.*
3. Abrahams, Nyman	tailor
4. Abrahams, Reinhold	labor, st. wk.*
5. Abrams, Mauritz	painter*
6. Adelstein	barber
7. Alderman, Abraham	barber/pool hall
8. Allen, Lizzie	merchant, cigar st.*
9. Aronowsky, Louis B.	newsboy*
10. Aronowsky, Mrs. Fanny	tailor
11. Aronowsky, Max	tailor*
12. Ashkenas, Anna	stenographer
13. Ashkenas, Jennie	bookkeeper
14. Auerbach, Isadore	advertising
15. Bank, Benjamin	real estate co.
16. Barnett, Bessie	violinist
17. Beckt, Max	merchant, dry goods*
18. Bender, Elmer	insurance
19. Benjamin, Arthur	bookkeeper, Wein's
20. Berger, Michael	real estate
21. Bernstein, Hanna	bookkeeper*
22. Binnard, Joe	attorney and politician
23. Black,	waiter, gambler
24. Blank, Herman	real estate
25. Blank, Mick	manager, Rialto theater
26. Blaustein,	kosher restaurant
27. Blaustein, Ida	bookkeeper*
28. Blaustein, Joseph	expressman*
29. Blaustein, Joe	mail carrier*
30. Blaustein, Max	real estate
31. Blaustein, Sadie	stenog., insur.*
32. Blumkin, Harry	financier
33. Bohn, Charles	peddler, junk*
34. Braun, Mrs.	manager, millinery dept.
35. Brinig, Henry	merchant, cloth. st.*
36. Brinig, Jacob	merchant, clothing
37. Brinig, Louis	merchant, men's clothing
38. Brinig, Moses	merchant, men's clothing
39. Brinig, Peter	merchant, shoes
40. Brinig, Sol	merchant, shoes

41. Brinig, William	merchant, men's clothing
42. Broudy, Max	merchant, clothing*
43. Burland, Ben	sales, gen. st.*
44. Canty,	merchant, candy store
45. Coddon, Henry	paper company*
46. Cohen, Adolph	merchant, candy*
47. Cohen, Ben	miner*
48. Cohen, David	manager, theater*
49. Cohen, Jack	President, Symon's
50. Cohen, Mae	teacher, music*
51. Cohen, Minnie	landlady, furn. rooms
52. Cohen, Moses	lawyer*
53. Cohn, Harry	watchman, mines*
54. Cohn, Henry	sales, meat
55. Cohn, Isaac	buyer, cattle
56. Cohn, Jack	merchant, dept. store
57. Cohn, Jonas	tailor
58. Cohn, Louis	merchant, fish*
59. Cohn, L.	merchant, fish
60. Cohn, Sidney	merchant, fish
61. Converse, Josephine	teacher, language
62. Copinus, Clara	life insurance*
63. Copinus, Louis	sales, dept. st.*
64. Copinus, Wolf	merchant*
65. Cushman, Solomon	tailor
66. Darrah, Kate	prostitute
67. Davis, Henry	laborer*
68. Deitch, R.	salesman, travel.*
69. DeWorkin, William	plumber
70. Diamond, Jacob	sales, furs*
71. Edelstat, Abraham	merchant, shoe st.*
72. Ehrlich, Alter	grocer, rabbi
73. Ehrlich, David	janitor, Daly bank
74. Ehrlich, Herman	elev. man, Daly bk.*
75. Ehrlich, Hyman	clerk
76. Ehrlich, Joanna	confectionary store
77. Ehrlich, Louis	clerk, drugstore*
78. Ehrlich, Meyer	tailor*
79. Eisenstein, Dave	barber*
80. Eisenstein, Rosetta	nurse*
81. Feldman, Max	picture enl.
82. Finberg, Sam	merchant, furniture
83. Fireman, Dave	miner
84. Firestone, Irving	buyer, dept. st.*
85. Fisher,	merchant
86. Fisher, Jacob	real estate*
87. Frank, Henry L.	liquor, wholesale
88. Freemach,	insurance
89. Funkelman, Max	chauffer, taxi*
90. Gallick, Gustave	merchant
91. Gallick, William	merchant
92. Genzberger, Earl	lawyer*

93.	Genzberger, Grace	stenographer, mining co.
94.	Genzberger, I. W.	rental dept.
95.	Genzberger, Meyer	agent, Anaconda co.
96.	Genzberger, Solomon	real estate*
97.	Gershen, Samuel	junk dealer st.*
98.	Goldberg, Art	bartender
99.	Goldberg, Morris	expressman
100.	Goldsmidt, Albert A.	bookkeeper*
101.	Goldstein, Jack	ladies ready-to-wear
102.	Goldstein, Sam	junk dealer
103.	Goldstein, Sam	tailor
104.	Goodman, Israel	jewelry store
105.	Gordon, Abraham	merchant, dry goods*
106.	Gordon, Andrew	peddler, hides*
107.	Gordon, Barney	bookkeeper junk st.*
108.	Gordon, Barney	miner
109.	Gordon, Bessie	mangler, laundry*
110.	Gordon, Charles	warehouseman, junk st.
111.	Gordon, Charles	clerk, Symon's
112.	Gordon, Esther	sales, second hand*
113.	Gordon, Fisher	peddler
114.	Gordon, Hymen	travel agent
115.	Gordon, Joseph	peddler, hides*
116.	Gordon, Louis	peddler*
117.	Gordon, Max	millman
118.	Gordon, Mike	junk business
119.	Gordon, Nathan	sales, second hand*
120.	Gordon, Rose	telephone operator*
121.	Gordon, Sam	merchant, gen. st.*
122.	Gordon, Sollie	newsboy*
123.	Gottlieb, Leo L.	miner
124.	Green, Adolph	merchant, lad. furn.*
125.	Green, Davis	manager, dry goods*
126.	Gross, Phillip	hide buyer*
127.	Grossman, Esther	mangler, laundry*
128.	Grossman, Harry R.	machinist, garage*
129.	Grossman, Louis M.	shoemaker*
130.	Grossman, Tillie	saleslady, dry gds.*
131.	Gusdorf, Al	photography
132.	Halpern,	expressman*
133.	Heilbronner, Adolph	ad. man R.R.*
134.	Heilbronner, Isaac A.	broker*
135.	Heilbronner, Julian	real est./loan/ins.
136.	Heiman, J. D.	teacher, college*
137.	Heiman, Morris	supervisor, Symons
138.	Herman, Julius	candymaker*
139.	Hershfield,	grocer
140.	Hurwitz, Benjamin	merchant, second hand
141.	Hurwitz, Samuel	commercial sales*
142.	Israel, Jack	sales, print co.*
143.	Jacobs, Albert	merchant, ladies cloth.
144.	Jacobs, Elizabeth	bookkeeper, ladies cloth.

145.	Jacobs, Emil	copper miner*
146.	Jacobs, Henry	merchant, men's clothing
147.	Jonas, Henry	tailor
148.	Kaufman, Abe	merchant, sec. hd.*
149.	Kaufman, Florence	clerk, Symon's
150.	Kaufman, Goldie	saleslady*
151.	Kaufman, Morris	merchant, gent's furn.
152.	Kenoffel, Isaac	tailor
153.	Kenoffel, John	restaurant owner
154.	Kenoffel, Leo	miner
155.	Kenoffel, Morris	propr. rm. house*
156.	Kenoffel, Samuel	restaurant owner*
157.	Kirshen?, Sol	merchant, sec. hd.*
158.	Kopald, Bernard	merchant, furn.*
159.	Kopald, Pearl	nurse*
160.	Laber, Ida	merchant, fruit*
161.	Laber, Samuel	laborer, street wk.*
162.	Lane, Edward	lumberman*
163.	Lazareff, Morris	expressman*
164.	Levin, Max	junk peddler
165.	Levinsky, Alex L.	attorney
166.	Levinsky, Henry C.	attorney*
167.	Levinsky, Herman	clerk, Shiner's furn.
168.	Levinsky, Louis	sales clerk, cloth.*
169.	Levinsky, Marie	teacher, music*
170.	Levinson, Max	grocer, Kosher meats
171.	Levy, Dave	clerk recorder off.*
172.	Levy, Edmund	bartender
173.	Levy, Elliot	poultry business
174.	Levy, Elliot	real estate agent*
175.	Levy, Julius	barber shop
176.	Levy, Morris	merchant, produce*
177.	Levy, Phil	barber, manager Ansonia
178.	Levy, Sol	janitor, Symon's
179.	Lewis, Sam	poultry
180.	Linz, Mose	jeweler
181.	Lipshutz, Moses	alderman
182.	Lipson, Sam	restaurant owner
183.	Lotz,	merchant, general store
184.	Lutman, Albert W.	bookkeep. frt. co.*
185.	Lutman, George	clerk, electric co.*
186.	Lutman, William	barber*
187.	Mann, Sidney	shoe sales, Symons
188.	Marans, Edward	manager, lad. cloth.*
189.	Marans, Emil	sales, Home Supply Co.
190.	Marans, Maurice	asst.manag., Home Supply
191.	Marx, Lee	wholesale tobacco
192.	Mayer, Berthold	electric. contract.*
193.	Mayer, Edward	machinist*
194.	Mayer, Edward F.	jeweler
195.	Mayer, Samuel	dept. manager, Symon's
196.	Mendelsohn, Dorothea	housekeeper

197.	Meyer, Bessie	waitress*
198.	Meyer, Gustave A.	plumber
199.	Meyer, Harry	attorney*
200.	Meyer, Joseph	machinist*
201.	Meyer, William	attorney*
202.	Meyers, Jacob	tailor
203.	Miller, Isaac	manager, restaurant
204.	Morris, Max	propr., cloth. st.*
205.	Moses, Arthur	labor. furn. ware.*
206.	Mottelson, Max	junk business
207.	Myers, Ben	buyer, Symons*
208.	Myers, Harriet	teacher, pub. sch.*
209.	Nastonas,	rooming house, E. Park
210.	Netzner, Nathan	pawnbroker*
211.	Newman, Jessie	merchant, tobacco*
212.	Neyman, David	merchant, men's furn.
213.	Neyman, Fannie	bookkeeper, garage*
214.	Neyman, Joseph	merchant, men's furn.
215.	Neyman, Lena	clerk
216.	Neyman, Louis	merchant, men's furn.
217.	Oppenheimer, Carrie	clerk, Symon's
218.	Oppenheimer, Elias	salesman, shoe dept.
219.	Oppenheimer, Gabe	clerk, shoes Symon's
220.	Oppenheimer, Henry E.	sect., Symon's
221.	Oppenheimer, Joseph E.	treas., Symon's
222.	Ornstein, Emil J.	merchant, meats
223.	Ornstein, Moses L.	merchant, meats
224.	Ornstein, Saul J.	merchant, meats*
225.	Perelson, Morris	merchant, sup. co.*
226.	Perelson,	junk business
227.	Pincel, Nate	tailor
228.	Pincus, Adolph	real estate*
229.	Pincus, Jacob	merchant, cig./pool*
230.	Potter, Sam	shoemaker
231.	Rafish, Deborah	stenog. motor co.*
232.	Rafish, Fannie	stenog. real est.*
233.	Rafish, Harris	tailor
234.	Rafish, Morris	tailor
235.	Rafish, Mose	tailor*
236.	Rafish, Sam	tailor*
237.	Reidinger, Harry	tailor*
238.	Reiner, Sam	junk business*
239.	Rose, Ed	jewelry
240.	Rosenberg, Edward H.	merchant, furniture*
241.	Rosenberg, Jacob	miner
242.	Rosenberg, Louis	cigar factory*
243.	Rosenberg, Rub.	Montana jewelry co.
244.	Rosenfeld,	shoemaker*
245.	Rosenfield, Kaufman	tailor*
246.	Rosenstein,	jewelry and confectionery
247.	Rosenstein, Arthur	bookkeeper, cig. st.*
248.	Rosenstein, Gertrude	teacher, public sch.

249.	Rosenstein, H. F.	waitress*
250.	Rosenstein, Isadore	merchant, cigars/confect.
251.	Rosenstein, Louis	merchant, cigars/confect.
252.	Rosenstein, Max	bookkeeper, electric co.
253.	Rosenstein, Sarah	stenographer*
254.	Rosenstein, Solomon	merchant
255.	Rudolph,	mining engineer
256.	Rudolph, Henry	expressman
257.	Rudolph, Kalman	expressman
258.	Rudolph, Joseph	expressman
259.	Sabolsky, Sam	bartender
260.	Schaulauker, Jacob S.	merchant*
261.	Schenker, Adolph W.	merchant, jewelry*
262.	Schilling, Henry	merchant, tobacco*
263.	Schilling, Mark	merchant, cigars/pool
264.	Schilling, Sig	merchant, cigars/pool
265.	Schwartz, Rose	prostitute
266.	Schwartz, Sam	physician
267.	Seigel, Maurice	merchant, grocery*
268.	Schatz, Sam	junk business
269.	Shiner, Ed	warehouseman-Shiner's
270.	Shiner, Sam	merchant-furniture
271.	Simon, Isadore	merchant, jewelry*
272.	Simon, Morris	merchant, gen. st.*
273.	Spiegel, Jacob	tailor*
274.	Steinberg, Maurice	salesman*
275.	Stolpensky, Louis	merchant, furn.*
276.	Stolpensky, Samuel	merchant, second hand
277.	Stone, Sam J.	physician*
278.	Strasburger, Edgar J.	mining engineer
279.	Sylvester, Edward	laborer*
280.	Symons, Aaron	merchant, dept. st.*
281.	Symons, Frank	mine leaser*
282.	Symons, Harry	vice pres., Symon's
283.	Symons, Henry H.	sales, dept. st.*
284.	Symons, Isaac N.	buyer, Symon's*
285.	Symons, Theresa	stenographer, ins.*
286.	Symons, William	merchant, dept. st.*
287.	Wehl, Abraham	capitalist*
288.	Wein, John H.	merchant, men's clothing
289.	Weinberg, Etta S.	manager, cloak st.*
290.	Weinberg, Harry	ladies ready-to-wear
291.	Weinberg, Joseph	merchant, women's clothes
292.	Weinstein, Herman	merchant, wholesale*
293.	Weinstein, Joseph	merchant, wholesale*
294.	Weinstein, Mary	stenographer*
295.	Weinstock, Gustav	salesman produce*
296.	Weinstock, Belle	bookkeeper, grocery*
297.	Weiss, Maurice	manager, Finlen Hotel
298.	Wertheimer, Alfred K.	merchant, clothing*
299.	Wise, George B.	clerical work*
300.	Wise, Louis	tailor*



301.	Wissburg, Charlot	keeper, room. house*
302.	Witofsky, Abe	merchant, luggage*
303.	Witofsky, Benny	teamster, mine co.*
304.	Witofsky, Daniel	salesman*
305.	Witofsky, David	laborer, cop. mine*
306.	Witofsky, Men.	trav. sales, trunks*
307.	Witofsky, Simon	manager, trunk st.*
308.	Wolfson, Sam	clerk, furn. st.*
309.	Wortenberg,	lawyer/Rabbi
310.	Zoellner, Arthur	tailor
311.	Zuckerman, Moses	butcher/Rabbi

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