

JEWS OF THE GOLDFIELDS

THE population of Victoria rose from 97,000 in 1851 to 364,000 in 1855. Among the throng of immigrants which went to the goldfields, were Jews from Poland and Russia, a sprinkling from the Californian Coast, a goodly number from England, a large quota from Germany and an isolated few from other parts of the world.

Those Jews who came from England, came for the same reason as their co-religionists before them, poverty, but now the incentive was greater than before.

Former goldminers from the Californian Coast were of the progressive and adventurous type who had tasted the excitement of life on the American goldfields. The Jews from Germany, Poland or Russia were not only attracted by the lure of gold, but were escaping from discrimination or persecution.

It is suggested that one of the main factors which made them leave their homeland,





and this applied especially to the Jews living under the Russian yoke, was to avoid military service.

Not only could the compulsory military service for the Jew be extended in Russia for half a lifetime, but it was almost impossible for the conforming Jew to adhere to his religious practices whilst serving in the Russian or Prussian forces.

Many of the Jews who came from Germany or Austria had also been implicated in the 1848 Revolution and were fleeing the forces of reaction which followed the revolutions.

Not too many Jews from Russia were able to find their way to far-away Australia and statistics show that the majority of Jewish settlers during the goldrush came from Germany and not from Eastern Europe.

Large Eastern European immigration to Australia began only in the eighties of the nineteenth century.

nineteenth century.

SHANTY SHULES

"Conforming" Jews found out very quickly that there was not a possibility for them to "conform" in the tent or shanty towns of the goldfields.

If there were sufficient numbers of Jews at a goldfield township, they tried to found a congregation, get a shochet, build a small synagogue and, if possible, engage a reader.

In 1854 the Sandhurst (Bendigo) congregation and in 1855 the Ballarat congregation came into being and on November 12, 1855, the consecration of the Ballarat Synagogue, an unpretentious wooden building took place. Like the Melbourne and Geelong congregations, the Ballarat congregation called itself "The Remnant of Israel".

In Sandhurst, too, a "semi-permanent" synagogue was built in 1855 and it was here that the first Jewish migrant from Hungary became minister, chazan and shochet. He was **Gedalliah Isaac Friedman**

was **Gedalliah Isaac Friedman** (Ha-Cohen) who was visited at Sandhurst in 1861 by **Rabbi Saphir**, of Jerusalem.

Friedman had not always been a "Reverend". Arriving with his wife and 7-year-old son in Sydney in April, 1833, he set himself up as a dealer in Clarence Street.

Then he moved to George Street, but lost his wife and son through sickness.

Four months later he married again (Maria Nathan). Auctioneering, he established a branch store at Appin.

After five years he went to Hobart, where he prospered in business and became one of the founders of the Hobart Town Jewish Community.

Moving back to Sydney, he was naturalised in 1851 and had an inn, store and garden at Liverpool Plains.

Back at Hobart he became a butcher and pawnbroker who issued his own tokens, be-

FROM OUR PAST

By Dr. G. F. J. Bergman

fore, in the late fifties, he gave up his community work, set up business, moved to the goldfield town of Sandhurst and devoted his life to his sons in Melbourne, where he died in June 1875, as The Dialect wrote: "a true ortho-

Dialect wrote, "a true orthodox Jew".

DONATIONS

Even at such an out-of-the-way place (the Jews called it "the goldene medine") as the diggings at Golden Point, Mount Blackwood near Daylesford, in the Ballarat district, the Jewish residents held on August 20, 1855, a meeting at the shop of Cohen & Levinson in the Main Street, "having for object the formation of a temporary shule for the coming of Yom Tovim".

£31/9/6 was collected from 25 Jews for this purpose, of which Cohen & Levinson donated 5 guineas as the largest contributors.

The wealth of these diggers must not have been great, because most of them gave only ten shillings.

Few of the Jews dug for gold, because they were unaccustomed to such work. They, therefore, turned to trades, which were a necessity at the goldfields.

Trade was as hazardous and speculative as mining.

Whenever a lead ran out or rumors were heard of a richer goldfield — and this happened very often — the traders had to follow the mob and pitch their tents anew.

In September 1855 at least 50 Jewish adults were at Mount Blackwood. A year later the place was deserted.

ROBBED

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Fears of attack, inclement weather, sickness, shortage of food and water were perils which the Jewish trader and peddler had to risk with his fellow fortune-hunters.

Some of them, like **Raphael H. Caro** and his assistant **Solomon Levy**, paid with their lives. They were robbed and murdered by bushrangers, 70 miles from Avoca.

Leopold Barnett, another hawker, had 250 ounces of gold on him belonging to **Marcus Kuttner**, of Black Creek. He was waylaid by highway robbers, who took all his possessions. In consequence of the robbery, Kuttner went bankrupt.

"DIGGERS"

A number of Jews were, of course, real "diggers", although not all of them were as fortunate as the German **Bernard Lazarus** of the "Lazarus No. 1 New Chum Mine" at Sandhurst.

A pioneer in the quartz-mining in the district, he had lucky strikes. In one fortnight his dividend from the mine drew £3882. He then refused £100,000 for his interest in the mine.

From 1864 to 1879 he received up to £136,000 from his mine and in 1879 he sold out for £40,000.

But same as in NSW, the individual miners were finally replaced by mining companies

replaced by mining companies in Victoria.

The culmination of the gold exploitation was reached in 1856, but the gold fever continued until about 1868.

Then goldmining declined, many companies collapsed, some smaller towns became "ghost towns" and a lot of money was lost.

At the beginning of the seventies there were only a few companies left, 135 at Ballarat, 53 at Beechworth, 39 at Castlemaine, 87 at Maryborough.

MEETINGS

Many of the companies during the height of the rush, had the wealth of their mines highly overestimated. Some were outright fakes.

As in any mining business — and we lived recently through a similar period with extraordinary stock exchange losses through wrong information — there were also great risks involved.

The Jewish capitalists who played a decided part in the industrial development of the goldmining industry found this out to their detriment.

The Maryborough Mining and Quartz Crushing Co. with which **E. F. Sichel, E. J. Cohen, E. A. Cohen, Edward Cohen, M. A. Moses** and **Dr S. Iffla** were connected, had many stormy meetings.

Mathew Mitchell was chairman of the McIvor Caledonian Quartz Mining Corporation. Director of the El Dora-

do Quartz Mining Co. and a shareholder of the Stieglitz Mining Co., in which **H. C. Pirani, E. Sichel** and **Nathaniel Levi** were also interested.

Levi and **E. Benjamin** were requested to look after the interests of the shareholders in the Bendigo Valley and White Hills Gold Mining Co., **E. L. Cohen** and **A. L. Henriques** had to wind up the Maryborough Mining Association.

Some of the newcomers made a fortune at the gold-fields, but later established themselves as prosperous industrialists in very different fields.

A good example was **Daniel Tallerman** who arrived in Melbourne in 1853 as a purser aboard a sailing vessel, a

(Continued page 12)

Jews of the Goldfields

(From page 10)

rather unusual occupation for a Jew. He probably "jumped ship" like many other sailors.

He went first to Barker's Creek goldfield, where he set up his tent and hoisted his flag, a custom then usual among shopkeepers on the diggings. His flag was of blue guernsey surmounted by a cap, an appearance which was so novel that Tallerman's flag became famous among the miners.

In December 1853 he came across a working party at the foot of Mt Tarrengower and erected the first store at this place, which soon became a busy mining centre in which Tallerman prospered.

FEVER

He soon had five large auction marts and stores. He then built "Maldon Hall", a large ballroom, and purchased a large section of land in the district, which he subdivided.

Then the bubble burst, the main leads gave out and the miners moved off. The new rush to Avoca badly affected Tallerman's business. He had to close down with 17/6 in his pocket . . .

He then began auctioneering, and came into some money again with which he

money again with which he moved to Ballarat to start a brick field, providing a commodity very scarce at that time.

The rain put a severe damper on this speculation which proved to be a total loss.

After he had recovered from an attack of rheumatic fever, he started again in business at Ararat. He became once again prosperous, whereupon he went to Melbourne to live with his brother for whom he worked now as a traveller.

Again he was up to extraordinary enterprise; he became the impressario of a troupe of dancers which he took to New Zealand with considerable success.

Then, perceiving that there was a great import of rubber goods into Australia, he began to import caoutchouc from Singapore, Calcutta, South America and even England and fabricated rubber goods in Melbourne.

The difficulty of obtaining raw material and skilled labor at a reasonable price forced him to abandon this enterprise.

Tallerman's greatest achievement, however, was his establishment of the Australian meat export trade.

He went, ahead of others, to England to prospect for

to England, to prospect for the market and returned with a contract of 560 sheep and five tons of beef. The meat was prepared in various ways and brought over by himself to England.

It was an immediate success and he established the "Australian Meat Agency".

The fame of his preserved meat reached even the Emperor Napoleon III of France which led to Australian meat exports to France.

He often participated at ex-

hibitions where, on his own account, he displayed Australian products.

And in this business he finally found the goldmine which had escaped him at the "diggings"

Another young Jew who had come from London to Victoria during the goldrush, Julius Vogel, had first started business in Flinders Street. After having lost heavily in flour speculation, went to the goldfields, where he also failed to make a fortune.

He finally became a journalist and proprietor of provincial newspapers. Yet, he had higher aspirations and stood for Parliament.

And when he failed with this ambition, he had enough of Australia, and migrated to New Zealand, where he established, together with another Jew from Victoria, Benjamin Fargeon, a gifted journalist

and novelist, the first New Zealand newspaper, "The Otago Daily Times".

Where he had failed in Australia, he succeeded in New Zealand. Not only did he become a member of the New Zealand Parliament, but Julius Vogel was twice Prime Minister of New Zealand and was knighted by Queen Victoria.