JEWS OF SOUTH DAKOTA:

THE ADAPTATION OF A UNIQUE MINORITY

by

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South Dakota, like other states of the Great Plains, has many cultural traditions brought by diverse ethnic groups. Of these, the Jews have the longest history of minority experience, extending over several thousand years. By contrast, other groups who settled in this area were relatively speaking, ethnic monoliths and this was their first taste of pluralism. Some communities were transplants of ethnic enclaves from states further east, such as Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois.[1] Yet even here Jews were unique among the minorities in that they formed no permanent enclave anywhere within the state, but were scattered throughout the area. The aim of this study is to probe Jewish adaptation to the unique setting of South Dakota, an area characterized by sparse settlement, a predominantly agricultural economy, and a wide diversity of ethnic groups.

South Dakota ranks with Wyoming and Montana for the lowest proportion of Jews nationally, namely, one-tenth of one percent or less. Estimates of the number of Jews now living in South Dakota vary from 350 to 690 of the state's total population of 690,000.[2] (See Table 1. p.14) Identifying this Jewish minority is a task fraught with great ambiguity. Jewish self identity may be based on religious, ethnic, or ancestral roots, or a combination of these. Using a religious criterion, one would include all persons who are members of synagogues or who profess the Jewish faith. This, however, would exclude many persons who strongly identify with Jews as an ethnic group but have only marginal religious loyalty -- "Yom Kippur" Jews, the counterpart of "Easter" Christians. Furthermore, there are non-practicing Jews whose assimilation experience includes the abandonment of the Jewish faith but who nonetheless retain their Jewish identity. The State of Israel counts as Jewish anyone born to a Jewish mother. One Man, an offspring of a mixed marriage (Jewish mother) and now a member of a Christian church, put it this way: "Racially I am a Jew." It should be noted, however, that it is nearly universal for Jews to regard those who practice Christianity as having ceased to be Jewish.[3]

The picture is further complicated by the divisions within Judaism. In order of decreasing conservatism, these are Hasidic, Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. But the end is

not yet! There are ethnic variations within these groups. Jews have often been bi-cultural, that is, they acquired the culture of the host society while retaining their distinctive Jewish sub-culture. Therefore there are German, Spanish, French, and Russian Jews, ad infinitum. They are indeed, as one writer entitled his book, "A Coat of Many Colors."[4] Joseph L. Blau in his book Judaism in America, concludes that although there is a common literary and historical tradition, the answer to the question, "What is Judaism?" cannot be answered by a precise definition. "No person and no group of persons has the right to pronounce authoritatively on what Judaism is, today in the United States of America, or at any other time or place in history. There is no criterion for orthodoxy or heterodoxy. The only way to answer the question is by enumeration and description of varieties."[5] For purposes of this study it was simplest to regard as Jewish anyone who considered himself a Jew or was so perceived by his Jewish peers.

Despite its diversity, several motifs are common to the Jewish subculture. Foremost among these is the worship of God. "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One."[6] This note of monotheism separated ancient Jews from their polytheistic neighbors and is still keynoted in the synagogue service today. A second universal trait is love of learning. Knowledge of the Torah and the Talmud was probably the most prized value among the impoverished Eastern European Jews. On the American scene this pursuit of knowledge was secularized and expanded to embrace all learning. M. N. Kertzer, writing in 1976, noted that Jews constituted less than three per cent of the national population but eight per cent of all college graduates and ten per cent of all professors.[7] Jews are also outstanding in their patronage of the arts: music, theater, museums, et cetera.

Deeply engrained in Jewish tradition is the practice of tzdakah (charity). The emphasis on sharing the world's goods with the poor and needy, both Jews and non-Jews, harks back to the thunderings of Amos and the exhortations of Deuteronomy. "Though charity is a precept in all religions," declares Fortune Magazine, "it is a matter of rule in Jewish religion."[8] Tzdakah is characterized as being not merely the largesse of the rich, but as an act of justice. The underdog has a legitimate claim on the good fortune of his fellows. Through centuries of harassment and exploitation, tzdakah became a viable survival technique. In America it has spawned a great variety of philanthropic organizations.[9] Coupled with tzdakah is the value of deferred gratification. Hard work, frugality, and a commitment to "this worldliness" are encouraged, not as ends in themselves, but as the means to future security, health, comfort, and status.

Finally, Jewish culture places great emphasis on family and family obligations. This has created innumerable instances of material assistance to fellow Jews -- aid in finding job opportunities, support for the indigent, and the preservation of religious traditions in the absence of synagogues.

This kinship cohesiveness has also been a great asset in the struggle for survival. Sociologists have observed a "goodness of fit" between Jewish and American values.[10] It is therefore not totally surprising that they have achieved a more speedy realization of the American Dream, rising from penniless immigrant to the middle class, than was true of most ethnic groups.

In spite of their small numbers, many strands of the "Coat of Many Colors" surfaced in South Dakota. The first to come were the German Jews. These Jews had experienced emancipation from European ghettos subsequent to Napoleon's exploits in Europe. Many came to this country in the 1830's and 1840's. By the 1880's they were acculturated, prosperous, and educated and saw South Dakota as a new frontier of economic opportunity. Among their enterprises were breweries, jewelry stores, hide and fur companies, and clothing stores carrying quality merchandise. Sioux Falls, in this period, was a free-spending divorce colony which brought a prosperous clientele from eastern states. This apparently was a factor in bringing the Fantle Brothers store to Sioux Falls.[11]

At the other end of the state Jews participated in the boom town development of Deadwood in the gold rush days. A significant number with mining interests came to the Black Hills area from Montana and Colorado. Among them were Fred and Moses Manuel, two Jewish brothers who staked the famous Homestake claim in Deadwood Gulch in 1876. They sold it a year later to George Hearst, father of William Randolph Hearst.[12] Jews were soon a part of Deadwood's elite. This is attested to by local historical accounts and such concrete evidence as the stately Franklin Hotel, Goldberg's Grocery, and Schwartzwald's Furniture, as well as by the imposing tombstones on "Hebrew Hill" in Mt. Moriah Cemetery.[13] It should be noted, however, that early Deadwood's richest man, Harris Franklin (originally named Finkelsteiu), began as a poor immigrant, not a third generatiou Americanized Jew.[14]

By far the largest contingent of Jews to enter South Dakota were of Ashkenazic extraction from Eastern Europe. Most of them were impoverished shtetl Jews who spoke Yiddish and were very pious and orthodox. They are typified by the Jewish community of the musical, Fiddler ou the Roof. The push factors in this migration were the Tzarist pogroms of the early 1880's and the desire to avoid military service in the Russiau army. While many of these immigrants ended in sweat shops or as peddlers in eastern urban ghettos, some came all the way to the Plains. Four main routes led into South Dakota: from New York or Chicago to Sioux City, southeast Dakota and further west; from Minneapolis and St. Paul to Sioux Falls; from Minneapolis and St. Paul to Fargo, Aberdeen, and Sioux Falls; and from Winnipeg to Fargo, Aberdeen, Mitchell, and Sioux Falls.

A unique contingent among the Eastern European Jews was the Am Olam, utopian intellectuals who were drawn into a Jewish "back to the land" movement. While not particularly

religious, they were highly idealistic and attempted to establish socialistic agricultural communes, including Bethlehem Yehudah and Cremieux in Dakota Territory.[15]

Jewish refugee efforts during the World War II era brought a small number of escapees and survivors of the Holocaust to South Dakota, however, most of these eventually left the state. There has also been a continuous sprinkling of Jewish merchants and professionals who have entered the state in response to career opportunities, unrelated to any ethnic or group migration.

The settlement of Jews on the Dakota plains took the general pattern of wide dispersal. Often there were only one or two Jewish families in a town. This dispersion necessitated that the bulk of transactions occur between Jews and Gentiles. There were too few Jewish employers or customers to make possible a concentration of economic activity within the confines of their own ethnic group. Jews of South Dakota entered a wide variety of vocational pursuits. The most common were general merchandise, wearing apparel, furniture, hides and furs, scrap metal and auto parts, jewelry, meat processing, banking, mass media, public utilities, and the professions of law, medicine, engineering, and education.

Hundreds of Jews homesteaded but very few remained on farms and ranches. The Louis Sinykin and Sam Bober families are conspicuous exceptions. The Sinykins of eastern Pennington County eventually acquired all of the land of an early Jewish settlement known locally as "Jew Flats." They remained on the ranch during the family's growing years. Their children became active in 4H. As of 1965 they had moved to Rapid City but retained ownership of the land.[16] Some Jews entered agriculture related businesses, such as elevator owners, sheep and cattle dealers, and a seed company. Sam Bober, a Ukranian immigrant, acquired 10,000 acres of ranch land. After the drought of the 1930's he joined the staff of the state experimental farm at Newell where he developed new varieties of drought resistant alfalfa. Eventually he opened the Bober Seed House in Rapid City.[17]

A well traveled economic ladder is in evidence among the Yiddish speaking East European Jewish immigrants. The first rung was that of peddler. "Anyone who doubts the tenacity and vigor of these early-day Jewish merchants, often itinerants who carried their goods in hundred-pound packs to their rural customers, has only to visit the 'Jew Peddler Trail' on Rapid Creek between Canyon City and Mystic ....It was their regular trail, more or less over the Volin Tunnel, as they came westward from Rapid City, and today as in the past, a casual hiker without a burden has to be in good health to negotiate it at all."[18] Some were fortunate enough to have a fellow Jew or even a sympathetic Christian offer them a horse and buggy. The goods were peddled to the homesteaders of the area. Joyce Nauen writes: "Many a farm wife wore a gold wedding ring purchased from a Jewish peddler."[19]

After a week or two of peddling they would return to Sioux Falls or Sioux City to replenish their supplies. Peddling became a bit less strenuous with the advent of the automobile. One successful grocer reported: "As a kid I used to go with Dad in our old Dodge truck. We had shelves built on the back to carry our stock of groceries to the farmers. We were always well received. People would invite us to meals. We sat at the table with threshing crews."[20]

For the first generation it was a spartan bare-bones existence. Given their frugality, their work ethic, their mutual help ethic, and their drive to better themselves, they made it to the second rung of the ladder, ownership of a general store. From here it was a short distance to a chain of several stores. The next step was a move to a specialized store, such as a ladies ready-to-wear store, or to become a wholesaler and supplier. The K & K store chain was a striking example. It began with two Kutcher brother peddlers, "Red" and L.C.. They came from Sioux City but established a home base with the John F. Miller family east of Freeman where they stored their supplies. Their peddling became an important part of life to many members in the community. To have the Kutchers spend the night was a treat for the family, especially the children.

> It was a sight to see the Kutchers coming down the road. Children would run and open the gate for them. Then, in almost a magical moment, the men would get out of their buggy and open one of their satchels. The children would watch with eyes wide open as they would open one of the little drawers built into the satchel and little trinkets were brought out and given them in gratitude for opening the gate. Soon the rest of the goods were laid out for viewing by the entire family and wished for things were purchased.[21]

When the Kutchers opened their store, their original ad carried the following:

> K & K store will open Saturday, August 17
> with the following specials:
> Men's 50¢ work shirt.....37¢
> Men's 90¢ overalls.....75¢
> Ladies' $4.00 walking skirts.$2.00
> One Price to All.[22]

The success of the Freeman store prompted expansion until there were thirty-four K & K stores in the region. As the Kutchers aged, shares in the company were handed down to sons and daughters and slowly the stores were sold to others. The last to close, some sixty years later, had been the first to open, namely, the K & K store in Freeman. Meanwhile the younger Kutchers continued to operate a wholesale business in Sioux City. The pattern of rapid intergenerational mobility with the second generation entering the middle class, so common among Jews, occurred in South Dakota as well. The pioneer village was a good opportunity for the small independent.

With the changing economic patterns and the decline of the small town, many a South Dakota village lost its Jewish family. This trend was accentuated even more for Jews than for the general population due to their high achievement motivation to reach middle class, for this usually involved migration to urban communities. "The departure of the Jews is an early symptom of the decline of a town," was a bit of folklore encountered in an interview.

Jewish political activity in South Dakota can best be described as "low profile." There have been no senators, congressmen, or state governors[23] among the state's Jews. A number have served in the State House and as officers. Benjamin Strool served as Commissioner of School and Public Lands for many years. Abe Pred and others served in the State Legislature. On the party organization level Jews have assumed leading roles in both political parties: Stanford Adelstein in the Republican party and Manley Feinstein among the Democrats. Jews have at times been active in lobbying at the State House. An early businessman, Moses Kaufman, was described thus: "As a lobbyist, he is the smoothest man in the state."[24] The evidence suggests that this ethnic group is open to political participation as a means of coping with issues, however, on the South Dakota scene, it appears to have been primarily ou the basis of personal interest. Their numbers are too limited to make up a Jewish voting bloc and perhaps few issues of general ethnic concern have surfaced on the state level. If South Dakota's Jews are predominantly Democratic, as is true of the group nationally,[25] then they may well be under represented in elective offices in a predominantly Republican state.

Their limited numbers also affected their religious organization and practice. When Jews first entered South Dakota there seldom were sufficient numbers within an area to make up a minyan of the ten male heads required to organize a synagogue. Perpetuation of the religious tradition depended heavily upon the family. Early but short lived synagogues were organized in Deadwood in 1877[26] and in East Pennington County in 1909.[27] Sioux Falls organized a synagogue in 1916, but the cultural and religious differences of the Germans and the Eastern Orthodox Jews proved too great and the Germans broke away in 1919 to found a Reform synagogue.[28] They purchased a Protestant church building and remodeled it to house the Mt. Zion Congregation. In time the differences diminished. Eventually the Orthodox synagogue became defunct, and the only building ever built as a Jewish house of worship in South Dakota was sold and now houses St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church. While there is only one synagogue in Sioux Falls, there continue to be both Orthodox and Reform cemeteries. The B'Nai Issac Congregation of Aberdeen was chartered in 1917. It is associated with Conservative Judaism.[29] The Synagogue of the Hills, organized in 1943, is associated with Reform Judaism and worships at the Ecumenical Chapel at Ellsworth Air Force Base at Rapid City. Rabbi Forstein of Mt. Zion Temple in Sioux Falls is currently the only resident rabbi in the state. Some of the state's

Jews retain membership in one of several synagogues in Sioux City and return there for the High Holy Days whenever possible.

Two forces have operated to generate strain on Jewish religious participation: small town residence has separated them many miles from a synagogne, and Saturday was the major shopping day for the area generally. The latter issue was met by establishing synagogue worship services on Friday night, since the Jewish Sabbath begins at sundown on Friday, but Jewish ritual law regarding Sabbath work was compromised under the necessities imposed by circumstance.[30] The distance from Jewish worship centers was less easily dealt with. Children were taken many miles to attend Sunday Schools for instruction in the Jewish faith. This became a big social event for small towners who at the same time could get together with fellow Jews for visiting and enjoyable trips to larger towns. As one interviewee reminisced, "That used to be the highlight of our life. My father used to drive us to Sioux Falls for Sunday School and afterwards we'd go to the old Chocolate Shop and have lunch, and that was the highlight of the week." Some families hired rabbis to give their children religious instruction:

> When I was a small boy we had one of those rabbis. What do you call them? Melamed? He used to come to the house and, of course, we tried to avoid him and when we'd see him come to the front door we'd run out the back door. But he caught us most of the time. We had two rabbis -- I don't know why we changed unless one couldn't stand us any longer. One was called Miller der schwartzer and one was Miller der royter. One had black hair and the other red. We were bar mitzvahed through them. They used to go from house to house. They had a route, just like the piano teacher would go to different houses. They'd come on Monday afternoon after school for an hour and a half.... Each family had its own melamed...I don't know what he charged, two dollars, I forget. But if mother didn't have much money, that was one thing she wouldn't give up, that was the melamed, they had to have him.[31]

Attempting to perpetuate Judaism by moving out of a small town to a larger Jewish community was not uncommon.

> We...lived in a non-Jewish community in Rapid City. The time came when we had to decide what to do with our boys: are they going to be Jews or non-Jews? We figured by watching others that the chance for them to remain Jewish in a Jewish community was greater, although there was no guarantee, because a lot of Jewish people in Jewish communities became non-Jewish. So with great sacrifice we... moved to Denver. The only reason we moved, the only reason, was so the boys would have Jewish contact.[32]

The oldest son in this family later returned to Rapid City and became very involved in the community.

Keeping a kosher house also was a struggle when Jews were widely scattered and a shochet (ritual butcher) was not readily accessible. A homesteader in the northwestern corner of the state commented: "We got tired of eating potatoes and prairie dogs weren't kosher."[33] In the pioneering era, the news of where kosher food was available spread via the informal network and traveling Jews soon learned of these places. Mrs. Martinsky, an Orthodox Jewish woman, ran a store and tourist camp in Kadoka. "There was no other place for a Jew to stop between Mitchell, South Dakota, three hundred miles east of here except Kadoka, where Mother was, and was the only Jew. For many years she was known as the place to stop so you could get a kosher meal. This included tourists coming there to see the country from as far east as New York and Chicago."[34] In time most area Jews simply shifted from the stricter Orthodox dietary laws and conformed to the more liberal expectations of Conservative and Reform Judaism in this matter. Nevertheless, during interviews three families were encountered who keep kosher houses today -- a rabbi, a professor, and a business man. The taboo on eating pork is more widely observed. Several persons stated that although the original health reasons requiring ritual slaughtering and forbidding pork are now obsolete, they nevertheless continue to abstain as a matter of habit and religious discipline.

When synagogues are not readily accessible, the burden of perpetuating the faith falls more heavily on the family. Judaism has more obligatory family rituals than the Christian faith. In this circumstance the issue of intermarriage is particularly acute. Intermarriages were seen as a threat to the survival of the Jewish faith and culture since the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.[35] For the East European Orthodox Jews there were especially strong prohibitions against intermarriage. Nevertheless, with no Jewish eligibles available, romantic attractions to the Gentiles were bound to develop. "L. J. had a girl friend, G.... He went with her for years but L. J.'s mother was still living and she said, 'You can't ever marry anyone else but a Jew.' G. waited and waited.... She went out with him and kept company all the time, but he said he promised his mother, so he can't marry her as long as his mother lived. But when the mother died, for some reason or other he didn't marry her anyway. He married a Jewish girl and lived in Sioux City." When children reached marriage age, some families moved to larger centers such as Denver, Sioux City, or Sioux Falls where there were Jewish communities of sufficient size to provide a range of eligibles. Others sent their children to schools that had a sizeable contingent of Jewish students. A number of Jewish parents pointed with great satisfaction to the fact that their children found Jewish mates and were in some cases following a more orthodox life style than the parents themselves. In spite of these efforts, intermarriages did occur and in recent years have reached proportions sufficient to cause great concern. Rabbis have estimated the rates to be between 30 and 40 per cent in the area. Iowa and Indiana, two

states with religious affiliation data on marriage licenses, reported intermarriage rates as follows: Iowa (1959) 42.8 per cent; Indiana (1963) 48.8 per cent.

The interweaving of family roles and economic functioning is also evident. When a family member is lacking to fill a role, a kinsman or affinal relative may fill the position, as is illustrated in this unpublished family history: C.N., after separating from her husband, operated a boarding house with her three children. After several years she married the star boarder, S.S., who operated a furniture business. She now became a homemaker. Her youngest son, C.N. (S.S.'s step son), was later taken into the business. When S.S. died the widow and son became business partners until she passed away in 1942. In 1948 C.N. took three nephews, his sister's children from a mixed marriage, into the business as partners. In 1965, the oldest, L.A., took over the management. In its one hundred five year history, the store retained its original name, stayed within the family, and is currently managed by a step grandson of the founder.[37]

Jews have generally been perceived as very solidaristic, but even in the most unified groups, differences will surface. Nationally, an intragroup cleavage developed between acculturated German Jews and the new arrivals from Eastern Europe. To the former, the language, outlandish dress, and social customs of the latter were viewed with disaffection or at best, paternalistic condescension. The refined and sometimes prosperous Jew had very little in common with the impoverished, Yiddish speaking immigrant other than their shared religious identity. Even their religious outlook and expression manifested the same contrasts of social class and ethnic differences that parallel the class differentials of Protestant denominations. Littlefield observed: "The Sioux City German Jews neither approved nor respected the foreign ways or religious orthodoxy of the newcomers, and were particularly down on the use of Yiddish, insisting on conversing in German if the newcomers couldn't understand English. It was this rejection of their language and the culture it conveyed that all but permanently alienated the two Jewish communities from each other."[38] Concerning this same cleavage in Sioux Falls, Joyce Nauen writes: "It is not hard to imagine with what ill-conceived dismay the Jews of Sioux Falls viewed the first of these strangers to limp exhausted into town. The Yiddish speaking, excitable gesturing strangers who practiced their Judaism with an almost ferocious piety (and were unbelievably poor besides) must have presented quite a contrast to the cultivated and prosperous local Jews."[39]

Yet in spite of these differences, the ethical imperatives of tzdakah and mutual help triggered an array of organizations to assist the flood tide of Yiddish refugees pouring into the United States. Within a couple of generations the socio-economic gap was largely closed. This rapproachement also received an assist from the inevitable process of intermarriage. "The first of these peddlers to take up residence in Sioux Falls was ostracized socially

until he had won the hand and heart of a lady of impeccable German desceut, whereupon he hung up his pack forever and opened a junkyard."[40] A unique opportunity to express their religious and ethnic solidarity arose during World War II when no less than a thousand men of Jewish extraction were stationed at the Sioux Falls air base. For a community of less than three hundred to provide religious fellowship and a home away from home for so many service men required the unified and dedicated effort of the entire group.

It is widely believed that Jews tend not to integrate into their communities, that is, they maintain a vital reference group and roots of identity outside the community. Although they live within the community, their attitude is not so much that of "resident" as of "stranger," as George Simmel conceptualized the terms. A "stranger" is not a person who drops in for a brief sojourn without intending to settle. "The stranger is a person who comes today and stays tomorrow. He is, so to speak, a potential wanderer, although he has not moved on, he has not quite overcome his freedom of coming and going."[41] The opposite of "stranger" is "resident," a person whose identity is in the community and who reflects the values and biases of the community and does not regard out migration as a live option. Lavender has reviewed several studies of small town Jews which address this issue. As their titles indicate, some conclude that the characterization of "stranger" is an accurate one. Among them are Rose's "Strangers in Their Midst," aud Kaplan's "The Eternal Stranger." On the other hand, Shoenfield's "Jewish Identity and Voting Patterns" concludes that small town Jews are integrated into small town society.[42] Tendencies in both directions surfaced in the interviews. The persistence of "straugerhood" among South Dakota's Jews is illustrated by the fact that many of the deceased are not buried in public cemeteries within the state, but are interred in Jewish cemeteries in Sioux City, Minneapolis, and Denver. One respondent expects to terminate residence even earlier: "When I retire I want to get out of here as fast as possible." Except for daily contact in business, the "strangers" remain relatively isolated socially. At the "resident" extreme are those who have become fully assimilated and lost their Jewish identity. The majority seem to be distributed along a continuum between these opposing tendencies. The Jewish ideal appears to be integration without assimilation. The dilemma is not unique but common to all hyphenated Americans who wish to be full fledged participants in the larger society while maintaining a distinct ethnic identity. Sparsity of number in South Dakota prevented the development of separate Jewish organizations to parallel those already in the communities. Geographic distance restricted participation in the larger centers that had Jewish sub-communities. All of this added impetus to their participation as "residents." Yet eveu the most involved have retained a "suitcase mentality," that is, a latent wariness of possible rejection. As one active community leader put it, "Believe it or not, I find even in my own mind that there is a partially packed suitcase always in the closet."

South Dakota's Jews have participated freely and extensively in social organizations. Interviewees statements indicated that they experienced little anti-Semitism, and where it existed it was rapidly receding. "We have had a very marvelous life," stated one. "We have never, ever felt any anti-Semitism whatsoever in any way, shape, or form. We've had a marvelous relationship. For instance, we have a Masonic Temple. They put on a dinner for four hundred to five hundred people. If they know in advance that we are coming to the dinner and they are serving ham, the waitresses come and bring two steaks. And all our friends kid the life out of us and say, 'Gee, I wish we were Jewish.'" Another person stated: "I belonged to every organization worth belonging to in this town. There was absolutely no prejudice." A banker remarked to the writers, "If you want to talk to Mr. R. you'll have to do it this morning. He is my golfing partner and we're leaving town this afternoon to play golf." Mr. R.'s father reported some difficulty in breaking into social circles when they first came to town. This was more pronounced for his wife than for himself since he had a lot of business contacts. "So much of social life was organized around the churches and when you don't belong to one of the churches it's pretty hard to move into the social area.... But," he added, "anti-Semitism is not a major problem here. People have been very nice to us. My wife plays cards with all of them now. They are all good friends. She blows the same old telephone hot air and everything that goes with it."

Jews have been active in various community-wide philanthropic efforts, both formal and informal. Two of those interviewed served as local chairmen of the Community Chest. Others have served on Protestant and Catholic boards, and even as president of the Y.M.C.A.. One Jewish merchant reported, "I've sung for weddings and funerals for every denomination in the community and I never accepted a penny from any one of them for this." During the interviews the authors frequently encountered reports of incidents of mutual assistance and interchange between Jews and non-Jews. Some of these reached back to the "Old Country." The daughter of a German-Russian immigrant family related the following:

> There were a number of Jewish families living in our village in Russia. My mother, as a girl, used to go over there on Friday night to light the fire and do other necessary work after sunset....
>
> One day when Dad was coming home from Freeman with a horse and buggy he picked up a peddler.... After supper he was walking around with his hands behind his back. My Dad said, "Don't you feel good?" Mr. Secht said, "Yes, I'm O.K." But they finally pinned him down and he said, I have a family in Russia. They have almost nothing to eat and I have no money to send them to come here." So my folks offered him some money. He wasn't going to accept it. "You don't know me and I don't know if I could ever pay it back." The folks insisted on his taking it, which he finally

> did. In a month or so his earnings plus the gift was enough to send for his family....After two years he moved to Sioux City. Every year after that, just before Christmas, he sent a box to our family.... And each Christmas when the box arrived Mother shed tears and said, "Sam did that again. Why does he do it?"

Such felicitous exchanges extended even into the area of religion. A Jew, asked to teach Sunday School by a Protestant church, remonstrated that after all, he was a Jew. "Yes, of course," came the reply, "but we want you to teach us the Old Testament." Another incident involved a Methodist minister who lived next door to a liberal Jewish family with two boys. One day the minister asked the parents, "Don't you think it's time your children learned something about their own religion?" "Yes," replied the mother, "but how are we going to do it?" Neither parent had special training and there was no rabbi within reach. The minister offered to teach them what he knew, explaining that his major in seminary was Hebrew and that he had a dear friend, a rabbi, who could supply him with the books needed. An agreement was reached and the boys came to the minister's house weekly for a year of instruction. "He inculcated in them such a reverence and such a love for their own religion," observed the mother. The father added, "I think the most unusual thing about it was that he taught them an appreciation of their religion without any inclination to proselytize. When you stop to think about it, it would be pretty near impossible for a person not to tend to do that ....We are so happy now. They both married Jewish girls."

On the other hand, anti-Semitism, while largely subdued, is nonetheless still present. Interviewees reported experiencing ethnic slurs, children being denied a chance to play because they were Jews, getting blackballed at a fraternity, attempts to exploit anti-Semitic feelings for political purposes (which proved ineffective), and just being ignored. Ethnic slurs were often seen as endemic in the culture and thoughtlessly made without real antipathy. Public prayers made "in Jesus name" were perceived as a failure to recognize that our pluralistic society contains other religions than the dominant Christian persuasion. The comparatively low level of discrimination experienced may be due to the fact that Jews have proven to be very effective "ambassadors to the Gentiles," and also to the operation of selective exception. Stereotypes are retained by saying that the popular images of Jews simply don't apply to the few that they have learned to know personally, for example: "Not our Jake on Main Street," or this: "We were very good friends of the K's. They were such friendly, honest people." So they continue to walk the tight rope of participating in society without being absorbed by it. A respondent in Rose's study had put it this way: "The secret of a Jew living in a small town -- happily -- is to assimilate as soon as possible -- but, always to remember he's a Jew."

For the adult, the Jewish identity is an accomplished fact. The concern is with their children. The belief exists among the parent generation that isolation and lack of a reinforcing ethnic enclave places them on the alert and impels them to make extra efforts to preserve their Jewish identity, rather than slowly giving in to assimilation. "South Dakota has done us a good turn," stated one. "We realized who we were. If we had stayed in New York we would not have a kosher home and our kids would have married non-Jewish people." It is the writers' considered opinion that there is something of a "Roots" phenomenon among the Jews living within the state. Various means have been employed to revitalize and preserve their identity. Children are sent to Jewish summer camps. There is continued emphasis on family rituals and teaching. Youth are encouraged to enter colleges with larger Jewish student populations. Some families move to larger centers to achieve greater Jewish contact and to enhance mate selection opportunities. Many adults visit the State of Israel. It is not uncommon for Dakota Jewish youth to live in Israel for a period of time or attend university there. There appears to be a new sense of pride in their heritage. Littlefield attributes much of this new self esteem of the Jews to the rise of the State of Israel.[44] This view was corroborated by a number of persons interviewed. However, cause and effect in social change are difficult to establish when so many changes occur simultaneously. The period in question also exhibited great ferment within American society. It was the era of Civil Rights movements, Black Power, Red Power, Women's Liberation, Affirmative Action, and Consciousness Raising. Within this period also, the tidal wave of East European immigrant Jews largely rose to middle class respectability. Some of these developments may also have lent support to a changed self estimate of Jews and changed societal perception of minority groups, as American society moves from the Melting Pot theory towards ethnic pluralism.

The adaptation of the Jewish people to the plains of South Dakota was molded by their small numbers (less than one-tenth of one per cent), their geographic dispersion, and the predominance of the Christian religion. These factors, plus intra-Jewish diversity, placed great burdens on them to retain their faith and culture. The support of a local synagogue was impossible in most communities. Only three organized synagogues survive today. Educated German Jews rose to prominence in early Sioux Falls, and in the Black Hills during the gold rush days. The much larger Yiddish migration came later in poverty and often began as peddlers. The values of tzdakah, industry, and kinship obligation were functional in gaining a foothold in the new area. Relations between Jews and non-Jews were governed by achieving a high level of integration without complete assimilation. Anti-Semitism was experienced at minimal levels and appears to be receding. Jewish identity was retained through family ritual, the hiring of intinerant teachers, forbidding intermarriage, and various means of bringing youth into contact with larger Jewish groups. The contemporary generation manifests a sense of "roots" and a new pride in

its heritage. The Jewish presence has added a colorful strand to the ethnic fabric of South Dakota.

TABLE I

Jewish Population in Selected West North Central States.*

State	Population 1977 est.	Jewish population 1978 estimate	Estimated % of Jews
Missouri	4,801,000	72,220	1.51
Colorado	2,619,000	31,830	1.21
Minnesota	3,975,000	34,380	0.87
Nebraska	1,561,000	8,155	0.52
Kansas	2,326,000	10,325	0.44
Iowa	2,897,000	7,745	0.27
North Dakota	653,000	1,085	0.17
South Dakota	689,000	690	0.10
Wyoming	406,000	310	0.08
Montana	761,000	495	0.07

*Taken from a table on U. S. Jewish Population in Siegel and Rheins. The Jewish Almanac, p. 115. Full citation under note #2.

NOTES

[1]Herbert S. Schell, History of South Dakota 3rd ed., rev., (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1975), pp. 68-69.

[2]Freda Hosen, "South Dakota Jews Inherit Interesting History," Sioux Falls Argus Leader, 15 July 1976; Bureau of Census, U. S. Department of Commerce, Census of Religious Bodies, 1936, Vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1941); Richard Siegel and Carl Rheins, eds., The Jewish Almanac (New York: Bantam Books, 1980).

[3]Stanford Adelstein, Personal correspondence.

[4]Abraham D. Lavender, ed., A Coat of Many Colors: Jewish Sub communities in the United States (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977).

[5]Joseph T. Blau, Judaism in America (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 2-3.

[6]Deuteronomy 6:4.

[7]M. N. Kertzer, Today's American Jew (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967, pp. 32-33.

[8]Ibid., p. 94.

[9]Ibid., pp. 91-106.

[10]Ibid., p. 4.

[11]Joyce Nauen, "They Came to Sioux Falls," The London Jewish Chronicle, 17 April 1964, p. 9.

[12]Al Alschuler, "Jewish Pioneers of Deadwood Gulch," Jewish Digest, Nov. 1977, p. 60.

[13]Helen Rezatto, Mount Moriah (Aberdeen, S.D.: Northern Press, 1980), pp. 173-178.

[14]Ibid., p. 173.

[15]Violet and Orlando J. Goering, "Jewish Farmers of South Dakota--the Am Olam," South Dakota History, XII, no. 4, Winter 1982, pp. 232-247.

[16]American Legion Auxiliary, comp., Eastern Pennington County Memories, (Wall, S.D.: 1965), p. 374.

[17]Paul Friggins, "The Americanization of Sam Bober: From Russian Peasant to American Pioneer," Readers Digest, July 1949.

[18]Watson Parker, Deadwood (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1981), pp. 140-141.

[19]Nauen, "They Came."

[20]Direct quotes from interviews are not identified to preserve confidentiality.

[21]"K & K, The Beginning and the End," Freeman South Dakota Courier, July 21, 1973.

[22]Ibid.

[23]Governor William Janklow's (1978-___) father was Jewish, but the Governor is listed as a Lutheran in the South Dakota Legislative Manual, 1979.

[24]Dana R. Baily, History of Minnehaha County, South Dakota (Sioux Falls, S.D.: Brown & Sanger, Printers, 1899).

[25]L. H. Fuchs, The Political Behavior of American Jews (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1956), pp. 99-120.

[26]Alschuler, "Jewish Pioneers," p. 61.

[27]American Legion Aux., Eastern Pennington County Memories, p. 374.

[28]Nauen, "They Came."

[29]Brown County Museum and Historical Society, Brown County History (Aberdeen, S.D.: Northern Plains Press, 1980), p. 246.

[30]Rabbi Albert A. Gordon, Personal correspondence.

[31]American Jewish Committee, "Oral History Interview with Morris Adelstein," (Denver, 1968), pp. 11-12.

[32]Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[33]University of South Dakota Oral History Tape, MS 1187. Interview with Isadore Pitts, 24 August 1974, by Freda Hosen at Sioux Falls, S.D.

[34]Adelstein, Personal correspondence.

[35]Ezra, chapters 9 and 10; Nehemiah 13:23-30.

[36]Marshall Sklare, America's Jews (New York, Random House, 1071), pp. 185-187.

[37]Leo Aldrich, Unpublished family history.

[38]Oscar Littlefield, "The Jews of Sioux City," (Manuscript, 1975), Chapter 3.

[39]Nauen, "They Came."

[40]Ibid.

[41]George Simmel, The Sociology of George Simmel, trans. and ed. by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press, 1950), pp. 403-408.

[42]Lavender, Coat of Many Colors, p. 46.

[43]Ibid., p. 46.

[44]Littlefield, "The Jews." Chapter 10a.