

From information received from Dave Glickson, Devils Lake, N.D.

#### JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN RAMSEY COUNTY

In the north and central part of Ramsey County, on a prairie hillside, is a small plot of ground, measuring 140 by 145 feet-- the only Jewish Cemetery in this part of the State. It is located in the southeast quarter of section twenty seven, Sullivan Twp.

The House That Shadows Built, a book written by Will Irwin, depicting the life of the movie magnet, Adolf Zukor, holds historical interest for residents of Devils Lake and vicinity.

In his book, Mr. Irwin, tells us how, in 1881, two brothers, Morris and Samuel Kohn, emigrated to the United States. They were born in the little town of Tokay, in the wine district of Hungary. These brothers had enjoyed a modest prosperity as winegrowers and wine-makers, until a plague hit their vineyards and wiped out all their holdings.

Prior to this misfortune, letters from emigrant relatives had fired imaginations of Morris and Samuel with the opportunities in America. On the proceeds of a small inheritance, they took steerage and emigrant train and landed in Chicago with less than \$10. between them.

Here in Chicago, the two Kohn boys got jobs and set about learning a trade. They had left their elder sister Esther, who was married to a vineyard owner named Herman Kaufmann, in Hungary. He too had lost his vineyards in the same plague that hit the Kohn's property. The brothers saved their earnings and a year after their arrival in Chicago, they sent for the Kaufmann family.

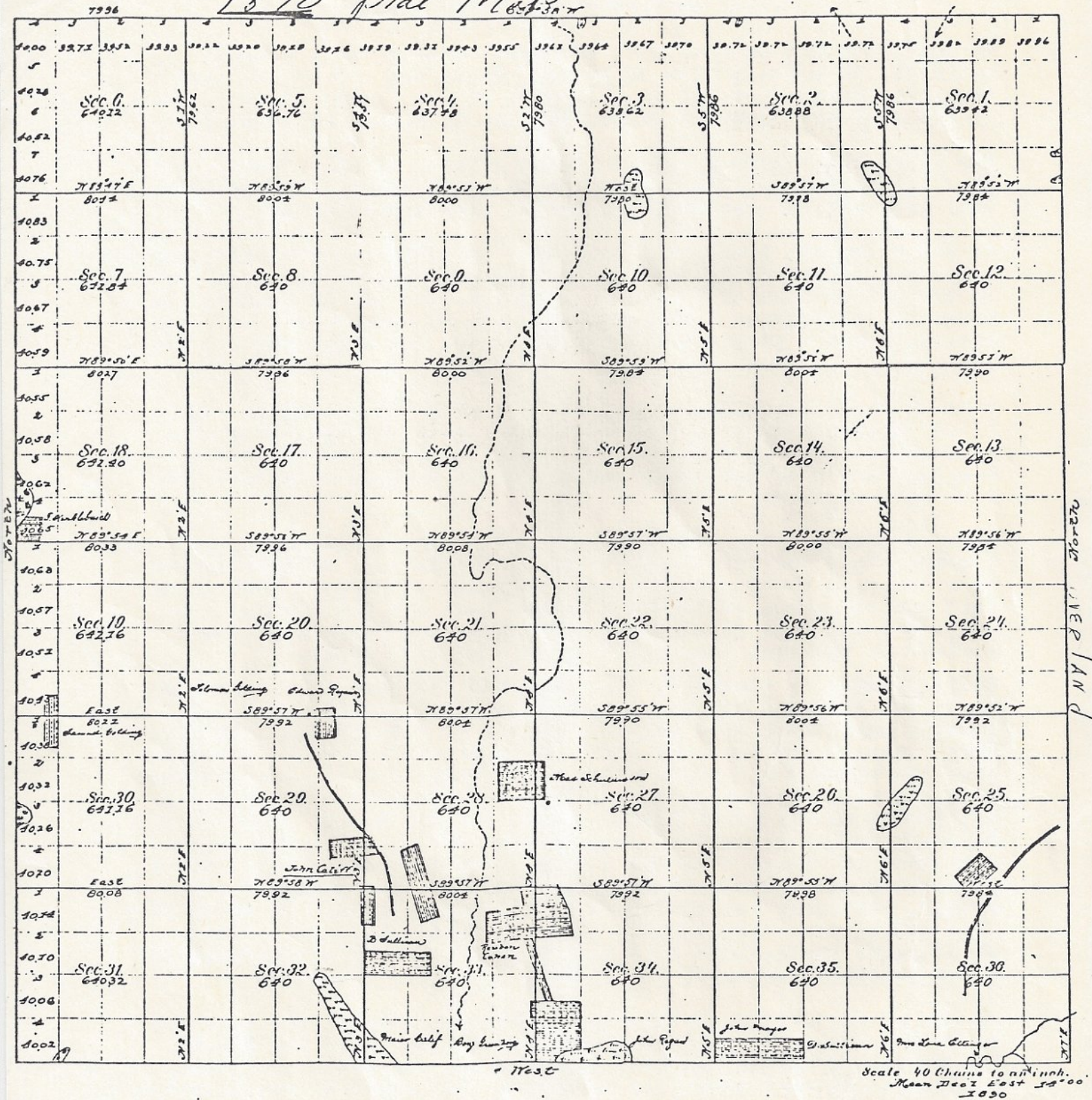
Still peasant by instinct, the Kohns had the peasant hunger for land. The American custom of giving away tracts of land to all comers, burst upon them with the dazzle of a fairy tale. At this time, Dakota territory was having a land boom and while strolling down the streets one night after their night school, the brothers were attracted by a sign in a window. Morris made out the sign, telling about the great possibilities and the bumper crops of the Northern Dakota Territory. They entered the building and learned from the land agent that for a mere registration fee, the government would give any bonafide settler 160 acres of land. For a winter, the Kohns and Kaufmanns worked and saved and by March 1884, they had between them \$380.00. They purchased an outfit from a discouraged immigrant---a rickety wagon, a set of old harness and three scrubby broncos.

By way of encouraging settlers, the railroad would rent a box car to Devils Lake (the northern terminus at this time) for \$60.00. The Kohns and Herman Kaufmann rented a box car and loaded their equipment and what household furniture they could spare, into the car, then filled the car with hay and feed for their horses. Morris Kohn and Herman Kaufmann traveled in their car, sleeping and shivering in the hay and eating what cold lunch they had taken with them, for the week's journey it took them from Chicago to Devils Lake. Samuel and Mrs. Kaufmann and the children stayed on in Chicago for the present, living on Samuel's wages as a clothing operative.



Dullivan  
Township 157 North, Range 63 West, Ramsey County, North Dakota.

1890 plat Map



The above plat, showing ~~land parcels~~ lands in Township 157 North, Range 63 West, of the 5th Principal Meridian, has been correctly copied from the original plat on file in the U.S. Surveyor General's Office of North Dakota.

Bismarck, N. Dak. April 27-1903.

Eaton A. Williams, U. S. Surveyor General.

By



Devils Lake was up to its neck in a land boom when the newcomers arrived. The crowd about the general store welcomed the young adventurers. An old settler stepped forward and offered to guide them to a good fertile location which no one had as yet staked out as a "claim".

They bought at the general store, the lumber and tar paper for a "shack". They then mounted their horses and their guide led them twenty miles northward, and when they stopped, the guide pointed to a beautiful stretch of rolling prairie land. Morris rode his horse over the lands, and as he rode, he noticed that the horses hooves threw up rich black soil. On his return, his first word to the guide was, "Here we stay". (This land they homesteaded on is near the town of Starkweather and is owned by Theodore Overbo of Devils Lake.)

The next morning they began building their shack, and they had staked out their horses to graze, tethering them to spare timbers. One of their horses was a wild bronco, and being frightened, broke loose from his stake, with the two others soon following suit. Before the men were finally able to catch them, they estimated they had gone about ten miles across the prairies in their chase.

The next day, after their experience with their horses, was another day of trouble for these young inexperienced men. They were unpacking and setting things to rights and while Morris was experimenting on how to clear the land, Herman was making their cabin shipshape. A tin of kerosene had spilled into their metal water pail. Herman by way of cleaning it out, set the inside of the pail afire, and poured out the burning mixture onto the ground. It ignited the dry grass about their shack, and two minutes, the prairie was on fire. Both men fought desperately to put out the fire, but it was too late. The wind carried it down onto their shack. In a short time, the shack burned and the fire swept on over the heavy dry grass of the prairies. They had abandoned hope of being able to stop the prairie fire when rain began to fall.

This gave them fresh courage and the next morning they returned to Devils Lake where they bought more tar paper and lumber to rebuild their shack, and at the same time, they filed their claims. They built a sod house in the side of a hill this time. Then they broke forty acres and planted it to potatoes. The bank, they found, would lend money to a bonafide settler, so they went in debt for machinery for farming their land, and also for a much needed cow. In the later summer, Mrs. Kaufmann and the children came on from Chicago. The potatoes, the cow and Samuel's steady remittances, kept them alive through that winter.

Meantime, Morris Kohn found a way to supplement the family income. All this time, Indians were drifting back and forth down the trails from the north, bringing furs. Morris began dealing with the Indians for these furs, and in turn, would send them on to Samuel, where he found a market for them in Chicago.

As soon as the frost was out of the ground that spring, Morris and Herman began working sixteen hours a day at breaking land. These two inexperienced men along, accomplished that season, the super-human task of planting nearly a quarter section of land in wheat.



Under the suns and rains of a good crop year, it flourished--- stalks grew as high as a man's shoulder, and were heading out good and plump. The partners sat in the sod house by night, figuring what they would do with their profits from the crop. Next year, they would plant the whole section to wheat! It was a bonanza! In the first week of August, down from the Arctic came a premature frost. It blasted the wheat; turned the beautiful golden heads to black pellets.

They stood the blow as best they could. Samuel kept up his remittance from Chicago. But interest and pressing debts used up all that money, and the family in the sod house must live. Morris, who was a good carpenter and had a talent with tools, found employment where he had a steady monthly wage of thirty dollars and board. He continued to trade for furs, and Mrs. Kaufmann did sewing for some of their neighbors, each trying to make up for the loss of that crop. Morris saw that he would do better to go back to Chicago and find work, as the big boom was hit hard by that premature frost. Morris went to work in a factory where he had previously worked and his boss told him he'd pay off their debt and that he would take a third of his wages until it was cleared off. On these terms, Morris retired from the business of farming.

The Kaufmanns stayed on their homestead. A tragedy hit them, when their little nineteen month old boy developed convulsions. Herman rode madly across the prairie, was sixteen hours trying to locate a doctor, only to learn on reaching his home, that the baby had died. They built a coffin out of pine board and Mrs. Kaufmann sewed a shroud. They buried the tiny tot in the little private graveyard, which later was the Jewish Cemetery ground.

After six years of rough pioneering, the Kaufmanns decided to give it up. Their two eldest daughters were riding over six miles to school, the mother worrying each evening for fear of some mishap to them. She also worried about their future---growing up on the prairie without much prospect of a social future for them. With this in mind, they too, decided to give up their farm and return to Chicago.

We learn that the Kaufmanns had four beautiful daughters, who all married well. It was Lottie, the eldest, who married Adolf Zukor. They met at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Lottie had been chosen, because of her beauty, to demonstrate an embroidery machine at the Fair. They were married in 1897, and later moved to New York City, where Mr. Zukor became famous in the movie world. The little girl who had ridden horse back to school, over the North Dakota prairies, helped her parents by herding cattle and doing the many chores those early settlers had to do, was now as Mrs. Zukor, entertaining the great of the theatrical world, traveled abroad, and was presented to royalty. She was a member of twenty or more charitable associations in New York at the time of her death.

About the time that the Kaufmanns had given up their farm and returned to Chicago, a Jewish colonization association from New York sent out settlers, who settled about six miles east of the Kaufmann vicinity----this was known as the Jewish Settlement---among those settlers we find the names of Greenberg, Kaloff, Freedman, Adelman and Canter, as well as many more. These folks tried



It has been told how these Jewish people started a colony in 1882. (This could be Iola) Adverse weather conditions, crop failure and dire poverty caused these colonists to disband. Some of these settlers were joined by the hardiest settlers from Painted Woods (near Bismarck, N.D.) and other immigrants who originally settled in the cities. The community of Iola was about five miles north of the first settlement. (We feel this is Benzoin)

This settlement experienced adverse weather. A hot dry summer produced poor crops and combined with an extremely severe winter, the settlers found themselves at the charity of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Jewish congregations.

A committee from there found the settlers of Iola (Benzoin) in extreme poverty and in the state of emergency. They saw children standing barefoot trying to keep warm near the sunny side of the building. Fires in the mud houses were burning of dried manure because wood was too scarce and precious to burn.

By 1889, many colonists had left Iola for larger cities or had joined railroad construction crews working toward Grand Forks.

A few remaining homesteaders were joined by new settlers who persevered under difficult economical and social conditions and in ten years the colony was considered a success.

A writer in the Inter-Ocean gave an account of how the Jewish settlement in Overland Township was one of the most peculiar points and that Ramsey County could boast of a settlement within her boundaries, such that was doubted could be found elsewhere in the United States. These some twenty families of Hebrew, living mainly in Overland Township, had their synagogue, held all the religious services and abided by their old Mosaic Laws.

He wrote: "The travelers who first see this settlement are much surprised, as though he were to see some large merchantile establishment standing by the roadside and doing an enormous business. (This makes no sense at all and we don't understand what he was trying to convey.)

The speculative Hebrew or "Wandering Jew" as he was sometimes called, will always be found in some metropolis in the heart of commercial clamor. His speculative nature and businessman genius soon made him captain of industry.

Therefore to find 20 families on well established farms, who have followed the plowshare from 10 to 20 years appeared so rare.

However, in a letter to the Editor of the Edmore Herald News in 1906, a lot of the Hebrews must have moved out as Abe Calof wrote of only five families. This letter told a little story of this Jewish group. Part of the letter read: "As farmers, we always try to pass our time in a pleasant and progressive way. This means, we have always the intention to give our life the color and shape of city people."

"Accordingly, we five families, living close to one another have organized a society called 'The Farmers Sociability' which will be a means of realizing our ideas of passing spare time."



farming for a number of years, but were not able to cope with the hard times that were on them, and not being too well acquainted with farming methods, they gradually gave up their farms and drifted into the surrounding towns and larger cities, where they went into the business world./

Taken from History of Edmore, by Eva Sparks. Copywrite 1970.  
(Mrs. Sparks worked on this book alone, and we find she did not double check information, dates and so forth, and much is incorrect.)

#### JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN OVERLAND TOWNSHIP (township was Sullivan)

*Overland* Mrs. Carl Borstad tells a very interesting story about the Jewish settlement that was once a part of Overland Township, then known as Iola. (incorrect: --We find Iola located in Harding Township, later named ~~Cato~~ Township. We place settlement of Benzoin in Sullivan. When post office closed at Iola, the mail was sent to Benzoin. Mrs. Sparks knew nothing about Benzoin.)

She made a historical pilgramage into this community, mainly because her grandfather, James W. Pownell was an early settler there in 1889, and to look for a little Jewish cemetery that was supposedly near there.

They found the small graveyard fenced with a strong meshed wire fence in the midst of a farmers field on the SE $\frac{1}{4}$  of section 27. (The cemetery is not surrounded by a field. There is a strip of prairie reaching from the road to the cemetery, that is as wide as the cemetery.)

With due respect to the dead, they went in, stepping cautiously through tall growth of grass and woody brush. Here they found a number of headstones and markers, some of them toppled, a few broken and others completely hidden in the tangled cover.

The gravestones marked untended resting places of old people, young people and children. It gave them a start to notice the many children's graves there were.

An old atlas of Ramsey County, which the Borstad's had, indicated that as of 1900, there were perhaps 10 dwellings closely bunched at Iola. Others identified with the colony had land several miles away. Perhaps there were more dwellings in the late 1800's immediately after the founding of Iola. (We find no such thing, but do find a number of dwellings in Overland Township from the 1909 Atlas, but the cemetery is about five miles west of these dwellings.)

This settlement was made up of Russian Jewish refugees without resources of their own and without experience in frontier agriculture, or for that matter, any kind of agriculture. They lived in very poor dwellings, some described as mud huts. They were dependent on charity of one kind or another and the funds of Jewish charities in the Twin Cities and elsewhere were well nigh exhausted by appeals to aid other refugees by the thousands.