

## “Buried Treasure in the Golden West North of the 49<sup>th</sup> Parallel: Judaic Research Resources in Western Canada”

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Description: Overview of collections of primary resources for Jewish studies held by Libraries and archives in Western Canada. Many public institutions such as the University of Calgary are surprising repositories of resource material for scholars studying various aspects of Jewish life in North America. Looking for cantorial compositions? Don't forget to visit the University of Calgary's Music Archives. This presentation will provide an survey of such resources across Western Canada.

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The summer 2005 issue of *Jewish Action, the Magazine of the Orthodox Union* highlights the challenges of being an Orthodox Jew in smaller cities in the United States and Canada. Six articles focus on the recent experiences of Orthodox Jews residing in small Jewish communities, but what about the history of Jewish life in smaller communities across United States and

Canada? What was the Jewish experience in these communities 50 or 100 years ago? What are the challenges of uncovering the research resources for the Jewish experience outside of the large cities with extensive Jewish communities? In Canada there is an east west divide which is reflected in many aspect of life including economics, politics and cultural memory. The national repositories of archival resources such as the Canadian Jewish Congress may label themselves as covering Canada but in reality the vast majority of their holdings relate to Central and Eastern Canada; particularly Ontario and Quebec.

This paper will focus on Western Canadian sources of primary resource material for researching the history of the Jewish experience in Western Canada. It will also include selected archival resources for the study of Jewish life in Central Canada housed in Western Canadian collections. Internet searches were the primary methodology used for uncovering these resources. What follows is based on an analysis of publicly available data from governmental, institutional and association websites. While these resources serve as a good starting point, a more thorough investigation through personal contact with specific archives, museums and libraries as well as local Jewish newspaper archives would uncover a wealth of additional resources.

Publicly accessible archival material can be divided into four categories: Jewish archives and historical societies, government archives (provincial and municipal), regional historical societies and library archives and special collections. Western Canada which encompasses the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba has a multiplicity of resources on Jewish life in Canada collected by both private and public funded archives. The URL's for all mentioned sites are included in the web resource list at the conclusion of this article.

The various Jewish historical societies in Western Canada provide considerable resources for research on their respective geographic regions. The Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada located in Winnipeg serves primarily as a repository for resources on Manitoba. The website of the Jewish Heritage Centre describes its collections, includes recent issues of its newsletter and provides a searchable list of families included in the archives. The *Calgary Cemetery Project* created by the Jewish Genealogical Society of Southern Alberta is a searchable database that provides the section, row and position of the grave as well as the date of death of the deceased. While the Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta does not yet have a web site, its publication *Land of Promise: The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta* based on the 1992 exhibit of over 400 photographs and documents, is available through the national *Our Roots* project. The Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta through the *Archives Network of Alberta*, not only provides a searchable index to its holdings, but also some digitized images and texts. Searching the *Archives Network of Alberta* I was able to locate the naturalization document for my great grandfather who was a resident of Edmonton, Alberta in the early part of the century. The Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia, through *Canada's Digital Collections* provides an historical overview of Jewish life in British Columbia from 1858 to 2001 and a description of the collections of the Society.

The provincial archives of British Columbia and the Prairie Provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba) are also valuable sources for primary documents on the history of Jewish life in the region. The British Columbia Archives not only provides records of Jewish births (1872-1903), death (1872-1984) and marriages (1872-1929) but also numerous images of Jewish life. While the photographic collections of municipal archives provide rich visual resources, their collections of unpublished resources also provide glimpses into the life of Jews in Western Canada. The City of Vancouver Archives holds photographs and documents on Jews in Vancouver including issues of a Yiddish magazine published in Vancouver.

Local and regional historical societies and museums are also good sources of primary and secondary resources on local Jewish life. The Manitoba Historical Society publishes a transaction series that includes a number of issues focusing on Jewish life in Western Canada. The Glenbow Museum's archives include records for Jewish community organization of Calgary as well as other documents relating to Jewish life in Calgary. Using the *Archives Network of Alberta*, the *British Columbia Archival Union List* and the *Saskatchewan/Manitoba Archival Network* you can easily search the holdings of the major archives in each province.

A number of public and university libraries throughout Western Canada preserve historical material on their local community through their archives and special collections. These collections can provide valuable resources for the study of the area's Jewish community. The Vancouver Public Library has a sizeable photograph collection on the web and the Saskatoon Public Library provides a detailed index to its collections of photographs and newspaper clippings. The universities of Western Canada support research into the experience of Jews in Western Canada through their extensive digital and print archival collections. The University of Calgary's *Our Future, Our Past: The Alberta Heritage Digitization Project* provides a searchable full-text database of provincial newspapers and local histories that reveals a wealth of information on Jewish life and the reactions of the broader community. The University of Alberta located in Edmonton, Alberta has digitized the texts listed in the third edition of *Peel's*

*Bibliography of the Canadian Prairies to 1953* edited by Ernie B. Ingles and N. Merrill Distad. *Peel's Prairie Provinces* includes memoirs, travel accounts, local histories as well as statistical resources such as the Manitoba Census for 1886 which lists the number of Jews in the major towns.

Local histories are also searchable on a broader basis through the cross Canada *Our Roots* project. Searching this national database to local histories, I located *Buried Treasures: The History of Elnora, Pine-Lake and Huxley Orville Cheek* published in 1972 which relates the story of the Pine Lake settlement of a small group of traditional Jews in a remote area of Alberta in the final decade of the 19th century. It is interesting to note that the Alberta Jewish community's summer camp, Camp BB-Riback, is located at Pine Lake. Other federal digital initiatives include the Library and Archives of Canada site which includes valuable research resources for Western Canada. I was able to use the *Western Land Grants Database* to find the location of the land granted to my great-grandfather and two great uncles.

In addition to their digitization projects, the western universities also preserve extensive manuscript collections including the unpublished works of Jewish figures from across Canada. The University of Calgary Music Archives holds the papers of a number of prominent Canadian Jewish composers including Ben Steinberg and Srul Iving Glick and the University of Calgary Literary Archives includes the papers of Aviva Ravel, Miriam Mandel and Mordecai Richler. The papers of Henry Kreisel and Carol Matas are found at the University of Manitoba and the Sylvester Family fonds (one of the first Jewish settlers in Victoria, B.C.) are housed in the University of Victoria Special Collections.

As outlined in this article and highlighted by the more extensive list of resources below, there is a cornucopia of primary source information for the study of Jewish life in Western Canada; the bulk of which is located in repositories in Western Canada. Further in-person investigation is required to unearth the resources not yet available through the Internet.

#### Western Repositories/Resources for Primary Material on Jews in Western Canada:

##### Regional

##### **ArchiviaNet – Western Land Grants Database 1860-1930**

([http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/020111\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/020111_e.html)) - land grants issued in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the railway belt of British Columbia, c. 1870-1930.

**Canadian NorthWest Archival Network** (<http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/icaul.html>) – access to publicly held archives in Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and Yukon. Can search all archives at once or by individual archive.

##### **The Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada (Winnipeg)**

(<http://www.jhcwc.org/jhswc.htm>) – in January 1999, the Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada amalgamated with the Marion and Ed Vickar Jewish Museum of Western Canada and the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre to become the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada. This collection contains 5,000 photographs, 500 interviews, over 300 linear feet of archival documents, hundreds of books on local Jewish history, back issues of

local Jewish Newspapers to the 1910's (have a computerized index – contact the society to request a search) and photographs of almost all cemetery stones from the Jewish cemeteries in Manitoba. On site they have a database of information and indexes to their material. On the website they list the names of people included in their database, for further information you need to contact the society ([heritage@jhcwc.org](mailto:heritage@jhcwc.org)).

**Peel's Prairie Provinces** (<http://peel.library.ualberta.ca/>) - bibliography of over 7,000 texts on the history and culture of the Prairies from the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of *Peel's bibliography of the Canadian Prairies to 1953* with over 1/3 available in digital format. In the future, will include material published since 1953.

### **Yiddish Books in the Canadian Hinterland: Some Collections and Collectors in Western Canada**

(<http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ajlweb/publications/proceedings/proceedings2003/jones.pdf>) - article by Faith Jones presented at the 2003 AJL Convention.

## Alberta

### **Alberta Family Histories Society Cemetery Search**

(<http://www.afhs.ab.ca/data/cemeteries/search.php>) - searches over 100,000 cemetery records for Alberta. Note Edmonton is not included.

**Alberta Newspaper Collection** (<http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/newspapr>) - a part of *Our Future, Our Past: The Alberta Heritage Digitization Project*, this collection contains over 738,000 images from newspapers across Alberta from 1885 to 2001. Currently not searchable, can only browse by issue.

**Archives Network of Alberta** (<http://asalive.archivesalberta.org:8080/access/asa/archaa/>) – produced by the Archives Society of Alberta this is a searchable database of descriptions of over 8,000 records from a variety of Alberta archives including Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta (60 metres) and Glenbow Archives (key historical archive for Calgary which includes the records of community organizations such as Calgary Jewish Council, Canadian Council of Christians and Jews(Alberta Region), Calgary Jewish Academy and Congregation House of Jacob. Includes digital full-text for some of the material from the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta.

**Alberta InWord** (<http://asalive.archivesalberta.org:8080/access/asa/documents/>)

– digitized archival records (diaries, letters etc.) from archives in Alberta.

**Alberta InSight** (<http://asalive.archivesalberta.org:8080/access/asa/photo/>)

digitized collection of photographs from archives in Alberta.

### **Calgary Cemetery Project**

([http://www.jewishgen.org/jgssa/Cemetery/cemetery\\_project\\_2000.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/jgssa/Cemetery/cemetery_project_2000.html)) – includes death date and location of grave.

**City of Edmonton Archives** (<http://archivesphotos.edmonton.ca/default.aspx?cid=1>) – online catalogue to over 10,000 digital photos (about 10% of the archive).

**From Pogrom to Prairie: Early Jewish Farm Settlements in Central Alberta** by A. J.

Armstrong ([http://www.albertasource.ca/aspnland/eng/society/article\\_pogrom\\_to\\_prairie.html](http://www.albertasource.ca/aspnland/eng/society/article_pogrom_to_prairie.html)) – part of the *Women of Aspenland : Images from Central Alberta site*.

**Galt Archives** – (<http://www.galtmuseum.com/discover/archives/archivesonline.htm>) – city records, manuscripts and photographs from the Lethbridge area.

**Glenbow Archives (Calgary)** (<http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesMainSearch.aspx>) – can search the archives as well as the photo collection. A search in the *Archives Photographs Catalog* (<http://ww2.glenbow.org/search/archivesPhotosSearch.aspx>) for “Jewish” on August 28, 2005 retrieved 84 photographs.

**Heritage Community Foundation’s “People of Alberta”**

(<http://www.abheritage.ca/albertans/people/jewish.html>) - contains a section for the Jewish community – includes films and audio material.

**Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta**

([http://www.jahsena.ca/jahsena\\_001.htm](http://www.jahsena.ca/jahsena_001.htm)) - holdings are searchable through the *Archives Network of Alberta Database*. Over 400 photos and 400 documents have been digitized. Use *Alberta InWord* and *Alberta InSight* to limit retrieval to digital works.

**Jewish Genealogy Society of Southern Alberta** (<http://www.jewishgen.org/jgssa>) - Search the *Cemetery Project* ([http://www.jewishgen.org/jgssa/Cemetery/cemetery\\_project\\_2000.html](http://www.jewishgen.org/jgssa/Cemetery/cemetery_project_2000.html))– includes death date and location of grave.

**Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta** - located in Calgary ([jhssa@shaw.ca](mailto:jhssa@shaw.ca)) – records of communal organizations as well as personal documents from local residents, an oral history collection of over 100 interviews and a photograph collection. Have a continuing project of photographing the gravestones in southern Alberta Jewish cemeteries.

***Land of Promise: The Jewish Experience in Southern Alberta.***

(<http://www.ourroots.ca/e/toc.asp?id=1314>). Calgary, Alberta: Jewish Historical Society of Southern Alberta, 1996 - full text of this book detailing Jewish life in Southern Alberta is available through *Our Roots* (Canadian local histories online project).

**Local and Alberta Histories** ([http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/loc\\_hist/](http://www.ourfutureourpast.ca/loc_hist/)) – part of *Our Future, Our Past : The Alberta Heritage Digitization Project* (searchable full-text of over 58,000 pages of local histories).

**Our Future, Our Past: The Alberta Heritage Digitization Project**

(<http://136.159.239.228//index.html>)

**University of Calgary Library Literary and Music Archives**

(<http://www.ucalgary.ca/library/SpecColl/index.html>) - includes papers of Canadian Jewish authors and musicians such as Ben Steinberg, Srul Irving Glick, Miriam Mandel and Mordecai Richler.

British Columbia

**BC Archives**

Search the index (<http://search.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-1C07887/search>) - select all or limit to moving images, visual records, textual records, library or web pages. Searching for “Jewish” I located information on the Jewish Synagogue in Victoria, Vancouver Jewish Basketball Team etc.

Search **Vital Events** ([http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-226330F/textual/governmt/vstats/v\\_events.htm](http://www.bcarchives.gov.bc.ca/sn-226330F/textual/governmt/vstats/v_events.htm)) – for information on birth (1872-1903), marriage (1872-1929) and death (1872 to 1984) registrations.

**The British Columbia Cemetery Finding Aid** (<http://www.islandnet.com/cgi-bin/ms2/rsd/search>) - database of over 100,000 entries for cemeteries, including the Jewish cemeteries in B.C. Note only gives location of grave, does not give the date of death.

**City of Vancouver Archive** (<http://www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/ctyclerk/archives/>) – can search the private records and the photograph collection (all the photographs or just the scanned photographs).

**Jewish Genealogical Institute of British Columbia**

(<http://www.geocities.com/Heartland/Hills/4441/>) - their collection of genealogical research material is housed at the Isaac Waldman Jewish Public Library

(<http://www.jccgv.com/home/library.htm>) at the Jewish Community Centre in Vancouver.

**Jewish Historical Society of British Columbia** (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/jhs/>) – contains a very good overview of Jewish life in British Columbia. Produces a journal called *The Scribe*. Volume 24, 2004 talks about the origin of the Victoria Jewish Community. See

<http://www.jewishbulletin.ca/archives/May04/archives04May21-05.html> for a brief description of this article. Volume 20, 2000 is available on the web:

[http://collections.ic.gc.ca/jhs/Pages/Scribe\\_No.\\_2\\_2000.pdf](http://collections.ic.gc.ca/jhs/Pages/Scribe_No._2_2000.pdf). The Society holdings include an Oral History Collection, Family Histories Collection, Photo Collection, Personal Archives and Community Organizations Archives.

**Jewish Western Bulletin** (<http://www.jewishbulletin.ca/archives/index.html>) – selected articles of this Vancouver based paper are available from 2001 to date.

**Pioneers, Pedlars and Prayer Shawls: the Jewish Communities in British Columbia and the Yukon** (<http://www.ourroots.ca/e/toc.asp?id=3633>

by Cyril Leonoff, 1978. Full-text of this book is available through the *Our Roots* project.

**Vancouver Public Library Historical Photograph Collection**

(<http://www.vpl.vancouver.bc.ca/branches/LibrarySquare/spe/photos/photoagree.html>)

**University of British Columbia Photographic Archives**

(<http://www.library.ubc.ca/archives/photos.html>)

**University of Victoria Special Collections** (<http://aabc.bc.ca/aabc/uvielist.html>)

**Vancouver – from Museum of the Jewish People, Online Database of Jewish Communities – Diaspora Communities** (<http://www.bh.org.il/Communities/Archive/Vancouver.asp>)

Manitoba

**Archives of Manitoba** (<http://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/archives/>)

**City of Winnipeg Archives** (<http://www.winnipeg.ca/clerks/docs/pathways/default.stm>)

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list the names of people included in their database, for further information you need to contact the society. ([heritage@jhcwc.org](mailto:heritage@jhcwc.org))

**Saskatchewan/Manitoba Archival Network**

(<http://lib74123.usask.ca/scaa/sain-main/>)

**Transactions of the Manitoba Historical Society**

(<http://www.mhs.mb.ca/info/pubs/transactions.shtml>) – a number of the documents in this series deal with Jews in Western Canada.

**University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections**

(<http://umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/collections/list.shtml>) - includes papers of Jewish authors such as Henry Kreisel and Carol Matas as well as private records for members of the Winnipeg Jewish Community.

**Winnipeg Tribune** (<http://www.umanitoba.ca/libraries/units/archives/tribune/index.shtml>) – index to newspaper clippings and photos

Saskatchewan

**Hirsh Community Jewish Cemetery**

(<http://cap.estevan.sk.ca/cemetery.records/hirsch/index.html>)

**Life in Saskatchewan from a Jewish View**

(<http://www.gpfn.sk.ca/religion/judaism/history/index.html>) – paper by Rebecca Landau

**Saskatchewan/Manitoba Archival Network**

(<http://lib74123.usask.ca/scaa/sain-main/>)

**Saskatchewan Archives Board**

(<http://www.saskarchives.com/web/services-pub-family.html>) - does not provide any finding aids or digitized documents on the website – use **Archives Canada**

(<http://www.archivescanada.ca/english/index.html>) to search for collections in this archive.

**Saskatchewan Cemetery Index** (<http://www.saskgenealogy.com/cemetery/cemetery.htm>) - can search for cemeteries by religion.

**Saskatoon Public Library Local History Room Databases**

(<http://www.saskatoonlibrary.ca/is/histdb.html>) – search “Collections” for index to over 40,000 photographs and other documents and “Special Newspapers and Clipping Binders” for Saskatoon newspaper articles.

Canadian Repositories Including Primary Material on Jews in Western Canada:

**Archives Canada** (<http://www.archivescanada.ca/english/index.html>) – search archival holdings across Canada and view digitized maps, photos, documents and exhibits. A search for “Jewish and Calgary” on August 28, 2005 retrieved 81 records. Produced by the Canadian Council of Archives.

**Canada’s Digital Collections** (<http://collections.ic.gc.ca/E/view.html>) – use “Search” to locate resources.

**Canadian Jewish Congress** ([www.cjc.ca](http://www.cjc.ca))

**Canadian Legal Information Institute** ([http://www.canlii.org/index\\_en.html](http://www.canlii.org/index_en.html)) – federal and provincial legal material; use advanced search to limit retrieval to the Western Provinces. Can key word search for legislation and case law, note earliest documents are from the late 1970's.

**Canadian Virtual Jewish Museum and Archive** (<http://www.cjvma.org/e/intro/index.html>) – not much for Western Canada; when you search by communities, Winnipeg is the only western city listed and there is no content yet. Initial focus was on Montreal Jewish community, but they are now beginning to expand this to all of Canada.

**Early Canadiana Online** (<http://www.canadiana.org/ECO>) - over 2 million pages of text covering women's history, government publications, literature, history of French Canada, Hudson's Bay and native studies (nonmembers have free access to parts of this growing collection. This is a subset of the microfiche collection of early printed Canadian works which can be searched by keyword, author, title and subject. (<http://www.canadiana.org/cihm/search.html>).

**Images Canada** (<http://www.imagescanada.ca/index-e.html>) - index to images on websites of participating cultural institutions (Glenbow Library and Archives, Library and Archives Canada, Simon Fraser University Library, University of Toronto Library, Toronto Public Library etc.)

**Library and Archives of Canada**  
links to research tools ([http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/0201_e.html)) - including historical census records, immigration records, land grants.  
search **ArchiviaNet** ([http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02012302\\_e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/archivianet/02012302_e.html)) to locate descriptions of National Archives of Canada holdings relevant to Jewish life in Western Canada.  
search **Canadian Directories Database** (<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/canadiandirectories/022009-100.01-e.php>) to locate early directories (national, provincial and municipal).

**Our Roots** ([www.ourroots.ca](http://www.ourroots.ca)) - Canadian local history project.

**Virtual Museum of Canada** ([www.virtualmuseum.ca](http://www.virtualmuseum.ca)) – index to digitized exhibits and images from museums across Canada.

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