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# Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue (Shearith Israel) Montreal, 1768–1968

ESTHER I. BLAUSTEIN, RACHEL A. ESAR, and  
EVELYN MILLER

## I

Two hundred years ago, in 1768, the Portuguese Congregation of Shearith Israel was founded in Montreal, the first synagogue in Canada.

A short eight years before, the first Jews had arrived in Canada (apart from some who arrived with the British Army in 1759) and the distinction of becoming the first Jewish settler belongs to Aaron Hart. He had served as commissary officer in General Amherst's army and after the conquest of Canada had settled in Three Rivers, Quebec.<sup>1</sup>

Aaron Hart was soon followed by Levy Solomon. He, too, had been a provisioner to the army and a merchant in Albany, New York, then still a British possession.<sup>2</sup> Andrew Hays came and the brothers Samuel, Isaac, and Uriah Judah. The latter were cousins—and later brothers-in-law—of Aaron Hart.

## SITE FOR FIRST SYNAGOGUE

Simon Levy arrived and Lazarus David also settled here. His son, David, later provided the site on which the first synagogue building was erected.<sup>3</sup> A daughter, Frances, wife of Myer Michaels, was a generous supporter of the congregation's later home on Chenneville Street.

Abraham Franks settled in Quebec City. He was the father of David Salesby Franks, in whose rooms in Montreal the first minutes were signed in 1778. These authorised the building of a synagogue, the first small home of the

If no footnotes are used, the source is the Minute Books of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue.

<sup>1</sup> Arthur D. Hart, (ed.) *The Jew in Canada*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. J. Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, p. 409.

<sup>3</sup> *150th Anniversary Book*, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, p. 13.

Congregation Shearith Israel. For many years this building stood at the corner of Notre Dame and Little St. James Streets; it has now been demolished.

The name 'Shearith Israel' means Remnant of Israel. As foretold by the Prophets, there has always been a remnant to carry on the Faith and traditions of Judaism: a remnant after Judea went to Babylon; a remnant after Babylon went to Spain; a remnant after Spain fled to the continents of North and South America. Many of our first Canadian Jewish settlers were descended from these survivors; they and their families became the first members of the first Jewish synagogue in Canada. At this time, the synagogues on both American continents followed the Sephardi Form of Prayers. Since many members of the Shearith Israel were of Sephardic extraction, it was natural that this ritual should be adopted. Thus, from the beginning, the new congregation was closely associated both with Bevis Marks in London and with the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in New York.

## DISCIPLINED IN MANNER

The Spanish and Portuguese Jews were disciplined and formal in their manners and the synagogue organisation was patterned accordingly. The *Parnass* (President), the *Gabay* (Treasurer), and three other gentlemen sat apart from the other members of the congregation, on a raised seat known as the *Banca*. They were known as the *Junto*; all who had served as members of the Junto became Elders. The rules of the new congregation were strict and it was not easy to be a member in good standing. Number 13 of the Bye-laws stated that the 'inhabitants of this town' must sign the Bye-laws 'within twenty days' and those out of town 'within six months' or they would 'forever be

exempted from having any privileges, honours or employment in the congregation'.

As fur-traders who ranged as far as present-day Detroit, where they spent the winter, Benjamin Lyons and Chapman Abrams were unable to sign within the allotted time. Because of the circumstances, they were allowed a special dispensation and permitted to sign the Bye-laws within twenty days of their return to Montreal. It was not unusual for members of the congregation to trade so far afield. For many years, the majority of the early settlers had been established in the British possessions to the south. There they had been fur-traders and merchants who supplied the goods for barter with the Indians; Hyam Myers, who settled in Quebec City, dealt with many of his former associates, and Levy Solomon continued his business ties with Albany.<sup>4</sup>

## II

### Founding Fathers

Little is known concerning many of the early families but a few interesting facts and amusing tales have been recorded.

SOLOMON: The Solomons, Levy and Ezekiel, are believed to be brothers. Ezekiel, with his brother and several associates, was a member of a fur-trading firm and the partner responsible for business conducted at the outlying trading posts. During the Indian uprising at Michilimackinac, known as 'Pontiac's Rebellion', he barely escaped with his life.<sup>5</sup> In later years, Ezekiel served the congregation on the committee which drew up the 'Rules and Regulations' governing the members.

### PROSPERITY LOST

The firm of Levy Solomon and his partners prospered for several years; but the refusal of the Government to grant fur-trading licences for a period after the Rebellion, combined with other adverse circumstances, forced Levy Solomon to declare the business bankrupt in 1767. Though he remained a merchant until his death in 1792, he never regained his former pros-

<sup>4</sup> *Early American Jewry*, Vol. I, pp. 76-77.

<sup>5</sup> Marcus, *Early American Jewry*, Vol. II, p. 227.

perity. A widower, Levy Solomon married Rebecca, daughter of Abraham Franks, in 1775. Two daughters of this marriage were Rachel, who married Henry Joseph; and Mary, who married Jacob Franks, the younger. A son, Benjamin Solomon, carried on his father's business and played an active part in the war of 1812.

FRANKS: The relationships of the Franks family are not clear but there is persistent mention in early documents of a John Franks, son of Abraham. He was a chimney overseer in Quebec in 1778. The description of a 'giddy head, insolent spark,' was applied by A. L. Burt, a Canadian historian, to David Salesby Franks.<sup>6</sup> This gentleman was gaoled for knocking down M. de Bellestre in a quarrel arising from the defacement of a bust of King George III.

In 1775 Abraham Franks moved to Montreal, but the date of John's arrival is unknown.<sup>7</sup> Documents exist,<sup>8</sup> however, to show that he opened a tavern and open-air dance-hall on Beaver Hall Hill, almost opposite the present location of the Bell Telephone Building. Unfortunately, this was not a success and in 1790 John Franks is back in Quebec, where he became that city's first fire chief. David Salesby Franks played a prominent part in the early days of the Portuguese Congregation. As an active sympathiser with the cause of the American Revolution, however, he settled in the United States after 1779.<sup>9</sup> There he had a distinguished diplomatic career until his death in 1793, a victim of yellow fever.

### ASTOR COMPETITION

Jacob Franks, the younger, was an important fur-trader in the West, where he established a trading-post in Green Bay, Wisconsin, with the help of his nephew, John Lawe.<sup>10</sup> They were very successful, at one time having business

<sup>6</sup> *The Storied Province of Old Quebec*, by A. L. Burt.

<sup>7</sup> B. G. Sack, *History of the Jews in Canada*, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> McCord Museum, Montreal, J. Beek, Notary Public, *Index of Sale*.

<sup>9</sup> Papers of the Continental Congress, No. 79, Vol. III, p. 276.

<sup>10</sup> *Wisconsin Historical Society Papers*, Vols. III, XIX, XX.

connections with John Jacob Astor. One of Jacob Franks's correspondents was Moses David, Lazarus David's youngest son. He had settled first in Detroit and later in Sandwich, Upper Canada. During the war of 1812, the news that the Americans had seized some of his goods first reached Jacob Franks in a letter from Moses David. After the war, the Western District, which included Green Bay, was ceded to the United States and the Franks company gradually dwindled away in the face of Astor competition. John Lawe remained in Green Bay but Jacob Franks returned to Montreal, where he died in 1840.

JUDAH: The Judahs were prominent both in Shearith Israel and in mercantile affairs. Samuel Judah was active in the synagogue and in business during the 1760s and early 1770s but left Canada before the American Revolution and settled in New York. One of his daughters married Moses, son of Aaron Hart.

Isaac Judah, Samuel's brother, lived in Montreal, where his two sons were born. This information was recorded in the Register of the Shearith Israel Synagogue by the Rev. Jacob Cohen, the congregation's first Minister. When the Rev. Mr. Cohen left Montreal to become the Minister of the Mikveh Israel Synagogue in Philadelphia, he took the Register with him. It is still there, with the early Mikveh Israel records entered in the same book. In earlier times, the attitude to these Registers of Vital Statistics was far more casual than it is today. Later the Hazan, Mr. Piza, took the Register of the Portuguese Congregation back to London, though admittedly by mistake. Isaac Judah was a supporter of the early Montreal congregation. He also signed several of the Petitions addressed to England concerning the establishment of a Legislative Assembly in Quebec.<sup>11</sup>

#### REFORMS PETITIONED

A third brother, Uriah, lived in Three Rivers, later moving to Montreal, where he was a merchant for 17 years. In 1784 he was of sufficient prominence in the community to be included in a group of Montreal merchants

<sup>11</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Series Q. Vol. 11, p. 98.

who gathered to draw up a Petition to the English Government.<sup>12</sup> This document asked for constitutional reforms, including government based on fixed and liberal principles.

DAVID: Lazarus David carried on an extensive trade with the French and Indians. Settling in Montreal, he soon became a large landowner and, as early as 1767, his name appears in the Montreal real-estate records.<sup>13</sup> Concerned by local government regulations, he signed a Petition on 12 November 1774 which requested the repeal of the Quebec Act and an elective Legislative Assembly.<sup>14</sup> Lazarus David died in 1776 before the fulfilment of the plan to build a synagogue for the already established congregation. But his family supported the project personally and financially and helped to make possible the construction of the building and the synagogue's continued progress.

By 1778 the second generation was beginning to take its place in the synagogue and in the community at large. Lazarus David's older sons, David and Samuel, became prominent Montreal merchants; Moses, the youngest, moved to Detroit and engaged in trading furs with the Indians and supplying goods to the fur-traders.<sup>15</sup> The signatures of David and Samuel David appear on a Petition in 1779, which requested the modification of import regulations, as a result of which Montreal became a Customs port of entry.<sup>16</sup>

In December 1805 the Davids attended a Ball and Assembly held to celebrate the news of Nelson's victory at Trafalgar. As representatives of the Jews of Montreal, they attended a dinner in celebration of Trafalgar, held in January 1806. Both gentlemen subscribed to the Nelson Monument, which stands on Notre Dame Street, at the top of Jacques Cartier Square.

David David was a charter member of the Bank of Montreal, founded in 1818, and later was appointed a Director.<sup>17</sup> He was also an

<sup>12</sup> Public Archives of Canada, Vol. 31, p. 249, Series Q.

<sup>13</sup> 'Livre-Terrier de la Seigneurie de Montréal', in *Mémoires et Documents of the Montreal Historical Soc.* Vol. II.

<sup>14</sup> *History of Canada*, B. Sulté, p. 230.

<sup>15</sup> *McCord Correspondence*, McCord Museum.

<sup>16</sup> *Chronology of Montreal*, F. W. Terrill.

<sup>17</sup> *Borthwick's Gazeteer of Montreal*.

original member of the Committee of Trade, the forerunner of today's Montreal Board of Trade.

#### NORTH-WEST WINTERS

Samuel David, Lazarus's second son, was a merchant with far-flung interests.<sup>18</sup> His nephew, Lazarus Hays, was apprenticed to him in 1798, 'to be taught the business of being a merchant'. He was the son of Samuel's sister, Abigail, who married Andrew Hays. A diary kept by Samuel David gives invaluable insight into the fur trade and contains many references to Myer Michaels, who was married to Samuel's sister, Frances. The entry dated 2 January 1801 mentions that his brother-in-law had arrived the previous day from the Mississippi via New York. An April entry in the same year notes that Myer Michaels left for the 'western country'. Frequent mention is made of Samuel David and Myer Michaels accompanying Alexander Mackenzie, the McGillivrays, and other partners of the North West Company to the Grand Portage, which was situated near present-day Fort William, Ontario. Trips such as those noted in the Diaries enabled Myer Michaels to become a member of the original Beaver Club.<sup>19</sup> It was a strictly observed rule that all who belonged to this famous club must have spent time in the 'interior' and many had been 'wintering partners' of the North West Company.

Samuel David and his wife, Sarah, a daughter of Aaron Hart, had seven children. Three of their sons became prominent citizens of Montreal and the names of Eleazer, Aaron Hart, and Moses Samuel appear often as active supporters of the Shearith Israel Congregation.

Moses David, the third brother, married Charlotte Hart, also a daughter of Aaron's, and they settled first in Detroit and later in Sandwich, Upper Canada. This family, too, kept alive its connection with the Portuguese Congregation in Montreal. The Canadian Jewish Congress *Bulletin* No. 2 records a donation received from Moses David in 1798, to be used towards the erection of a wall around the

<sup>18</sup> *Congress Bulletin*, No. 5, Vol. I, p. 12.

<sup>19</sup> Beaver Club Minute Book, McCord Museum.

cemetery. Moses Ezekiel, only child of Moses and Charlotte David, laid the corner-stone for the Chenneville Street Synagogue in 1838.

JOSEPH: Henry Joseph arrived in Canada in 1792 as a youth of 17.<sup>20</sup> A nephew of Aaron Hart, he settled first in Fort William Henry and later in Berthier, Quebec. Connected with the fur trade, Henry Joseph is believed to have been one of the first to establish shipping on the Great Lakes. He had interests too in the transatlantic trade and leased the well-known ship *Ewretta*, which each spring arrived in Montreal with a cargo ranging from items used in trade with the Indians to the latest fashions. Each autumn she returned to England, laden with furs garnered the previous year, to be sold at the London auctions. In 1803 Henry Joseph married Rachel Solomon and their children played an active part in the congregation and in the Montreal community.

#### BRINGING HONOUR

It was because of their contributions to Canada down the years that the writer Gerard Maclerosse wrote in his *Les Juifs dans l'histoire Canadien*, 'I wish at the same time to acknowledge that if the Harts, Davids . . . the Judahs, the Solomons and the Josephs did occupy important positions, it was without doubt due to their own attributes. They brought honour to their kind'.

#### III

##### Chenneville Street

In 1825 David David died and the land on which the synagogue stood reverted to his estate. Until a new building could be erected, it was decided to place the religious articles of the synagogue in the custody of M. J. Hays and Benjamin Hart. Meanwhile, services were conducted in a small building which stood in the garden at the rear of Benjamin Hart's house, on the corner of St. Helen and Recollets Streets.<sup>21</sup>

The congregation had not had a Minister

<sup>20</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 25.

<sup>21</sup> Told by Miss Dorothy Hart, great-grandniece of Benjamin Hart.

since the departure of the Rev. Jacob Cohen in 1784. Services were read by various lay members, with the assistance of Ministers from the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation, New York, who journeyed to Montreal for special occasions.<sup>22</sup> From 1825 to 1832, the congregation lay dormant. Then, on 15 October, a meeting was convened at the Montreal Court House, the Hon. Austin Cuvillier in the chair, for the purpose of re-forming the Shearith Israel Congregation and for appointing their Trustees and Officers. This having been accomplished, at a further meeting of the Trustees it was decided to invest the legacy left to the Portuguese Synagogue by the late David David in Government securities, and to accept a donation from the executors of his estate towards the building of the new synagogue.

#### SEEKING FUNDS

Mr. Eleazer David was delegated to visit the Congregation of the Portuguese and Dutch Jews in London 'and such parts of Europe that he may travel' to seek subscriptions towards the new building. Unfortunately, he had little success; the single donation received was £5 from Moses Montefiore. The furnishings of the synagogue were not gathered together nor the *Sefarim* examined for fitness for service until 1834, when a committee was formed to solicit subscriptions for the synagogue building from the citizens of Montreal.

There was still no building in 1837 but the congregation was sufficiently well established to pass a resolution that 'The Jewish Congregation shall hereafter adopt and follow the Portuguese Service of Prayers and Ceremonies and will only use the Form of Portuguese Service from now on.' During this interim period, the President, Isaac Valentine, agreed to act as Minister.<sup>23</sup> He was married to Phoebe Hays, Andrew's daughter, and from 1820 to 1835 he had officiated in the synagogue maintained by the Harts for themselves and for the other Jewish families in Three Rivers.

Revitalised, the Shearith Israel Congrega-

<sup>22</sup> *Berit* certificates for Henry Joseph's sons are one example.

<sup>23</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 499.

tion prepared once more to take its place in the community. In 1838 the officially re-formed congregation petitioned for permission to keep a Register of Vital Statistics; the furnishings were gathered together; a lot was purchased and plans for building a new synagogue and a house for the Hazan were approved; and it was agreed to engage a Minister. The following year, a committee composed of Dr. Aaron Hart David and Moses H. Hays drew up a new set of Rules and Regulations, which were approved and ordered to be printed. Extended negotiations were begun with A. Hart, Jr., of London, and with the Rev. David Meldola in order to engage a Hazan and a Shochet-Shammash, the latter offices to be combined in one person. The Hazan's salary was to be a mere £100 a year, with £20 paid for his passage. This salary offer was later raised to £125 with an additional £35 for his expenses, which included furniture and rent, as the Reader's house was still not ready. The Shochet-Shammash, whom the Trustees desired to be a married man, would receive £30 a year, 10 cords of firewood in the winter, and the use of the synagogue basement as a residence, rent free. His passage money would be £10, but his wife's passage, if he had one, would not be included.

#### NO EXTRAS

Applicants for these positions were to be warned that, as the congregation was extending itself to the utmost to pay these salaries, they could expect no extra emoluments. They would receive those fees as laid down in the Bye-laws for performing their required duties, as at marriages, the naming of children, and at funerals. It was also requested that the future Hazan be a person 'whom we can introduce into the same circle of society as that in which we . . . move.'

The corner-stone of the new building was laid by Moses Ezekiel David, and the new synagogue was consecrated in September 1838, to which ceremony the Trustees decided 'no strangers would be invited'. The Rev. David Piza, the new Hazan, and Mr. Aaron, the Shochet-Shammash, arrived from London in 1839. In 1844 Mr. Piza was notified that he was

expected to deliver two sermons in English, appropriate for the approaching Festival of Passover. The first sermon to be given in English instead of in the usual Portuguese had been delivered in 1831 by the father of Abraham de Sola, future Minister of Montreal's Shearith Israel Congregation. In 1830 the Elders of the Bevis Marks Synagogue requested that anyone capable of giving a sermon in English communicate with the Secretary of the Congregation, and Hazan David Aaron de Sola was the only one to do so. It was 13 years before this custom crossed the Atlantic and a similar request was made to the Hazan in Montreal.

#### NEW MINISTER SOUGHT

Mr. Piza left Montreal in 1846 to accept a position in London and the congregation was faced with the problem of finding a replacement. Fortunately, Mr. Mendels, who had held the position of Shochet-Shammash since 1843, remained with the congregation and continued to hold these offices until 1861.

The Trustees again entered into correspondence with New York and London in order to engage a new Minister. This time an extra qualification was included: the Hazan must possess the ability to give sermons in English, in addition to performing his regular duties. From a list of three candidates, they chose 21-year-old Abraham de Sola. He arrived in Montreal, via New York, after an ocean voyage of 43 days.<sup>24</sup> As had his predecessor, Mr. de Sola boarded, since the house for the Reader was not finished until 1849.

In October 1848, Rabbi Nissan arrived in Montreal to make an appeal for the Persian Jews and Abraham de Sola based his Kol Nidré sermon on their plight. So impressive was his plea that he was requested to give a public lecture on the subject, which was delivered to a packed house on 26 October.<sup>25</sup> This success enhanced the Rev. Mr. de Sola's reputation as a speaker gained by an address on 'Hebrew and Oriental Literature', given the previous April

at the Mechanics Institute.<sup>26</sup> Thus in a very short time the Hazan had taken his place in the Montreal community as well as in the congregation. The Rev. Mr. de Sola's interest in education was a life-long involvement and received added scope when he became Lecturer, in 1853, and later Professor of Semitic and Oriental Literature at McGill College.<sup>27</sup> In the same year, he was appointed Lecturer in Spanish Literature, and a short time later he wrote *A History of the Congregation*, which he presented to the synagogue.

Abraham de Sola (see Plate XXXIV, Fig. 2) married Esther, Henry Joseph's youngest daughter, in 1853, and their eldest son, Meldola, was born a year later. The Hazan and his family were now living in the Reader's house provided by the congregation. It was situated adjacent to the synagogue at 1 Près de Ville Place, a terrace on Lagachetière Street. The Hebrew School was on the top floor of this house, under Mr. de Sola's supervision. By 1854, it was well established. This was also the year in which a Jewish Calendar was compiled by the Rev. J. J. Lyons, Minister of the Shearith Israel, New York, and the Rev. Abraham de Sola.<sup>28</sup> It was printed in Montreal and contained 'calendaristic material' for the next fifty years, as well as valuable historical information about the Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, and the West Indies.

#### BUILDING A MIKVEH

In 1858 a *Mikveh* was begun in the basement of the synagogue but unfortunately this could not be completed owing to a lack of funds. In the same year it was found that the cemetery, in use since 1772, was no longer able to serve the needs of the congregation. Therefore, the Trustees decided to buy land adjoining the Protestant Cemetery. Donations were requested to pay for this land and also to defray the cost of building a *Mikveh*; for their subscriptions, the donors would be entitled to a lot in the cemetery—and the free use of the *Mikveh*.

<sup>24</sup> Abraham de Sola correspondence, 30 Dec. 1846.

<sup>25</sup> Given at Temperance Hall, Oct. 1848, reported in the *Montreal Transcript*, 28 Oct. 1848.

<sup>26</sup> See *Montreal Herald*, 21 Apr. 1848.

<sup>27</sup> McGill University Archives.

<sup>28</sup> See *An Old Faith in the New World*, Dr. D. de S. Pool, p. 180.

The new cemetery was finished in 1855, plots were allotted to subscribers, and a new set of Cemetery Bye-laws was passed. A committee called on M. J. Hays, executor of the David estate, to request him to turn over the notarial deed for the old cemetery to the congregation. This deed had remained in the hands of the David executors in 1838 when more land had been added to the old burying ground. It had been agreed that the 90 feet immediately adjoining the old cemetery would remain in the possession of the David heirs, to ensure that the remains interred there would not be disturbed. In 1856 Mr. Hays, on behalf of the David heirs, agreed to accept 80 square feet in the new cemetery in lieu of the old ground, and the old deed was turned over to the synagogue.

#### HONORARY LL.D.

In May 1858 the Trustees of the congregation received a letter from the Rev. Abraham de Sola informing them he had received an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws from the McGill College Faculty of Arts. Dr. de Sola mentioned that this was 'the first time a Jewish minister received this title on the continent of America or in the Mother Country'. It was a great honour to the 'most orthodox adherents of our time-honoured faith'.

At the annual meeting on 6 September 1858, it was announced that the *Mikveh* building was paid for. It was suggested that laws be passed to make it self-supporting but, meantime, subscriptions were sought.

In 1863 the City Clerk of Montreal sent a letter to the Corporation of Portuguese Jews requesting them to sell the congregation's old burying ground to the city, the land being needed for city improvement. The Corporation agreed to the sale for a sum which included the estimated expense of removing remains, memorials, and tombstones to the new cemetery, and in September 1865 the arrangements were completed and the city acquired the land. The German and Polish Congregation, today's Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue, raised some objections to the move, as the families of some of their congregants were buried in the Shearith Israel cemetery. However, after a consultation

between the two congregations, the matter was settled to mutual satisfaction.

Dr. de Sola was President of the Natural History Society in 1870. In his official capacity, he gave an address entitled 'Study of Natural Science' before an audience which included H.R.H. Prince Arthur of Connaught. Copies of the address were sent to Queen Victoria and Prince Arthur, and the Canadian Jewish Congress now possesses letters of acknowledgment and thanks received by Dr. de Sola.

#### ANGLO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Because of the 'Alabama' incident during the American Civil War, relations between the United States and Great Britain had been strained for some time. The *Alabama* was a Confederate 'raider' built in English shipyards. Since the Government of Great Britain was sympathetic to the Confederacy, it had turned a blind eye to this violation of the laws of neutrality. In 1872 the United States Government made a generous gesture towards improving Anglo-American relations and asked Dr. de Sola to deliver the opening prayer before the House of Representatives on 9 January 1872. To this day, Dr. de Sola is the only Canadian Minister to have been so honoured. The *Evening Star*, of Washington, D.C., gives the following front-page account: 'Prayer in Congress by a Hebrew Clergyman: The prayers of the House were opened this morning by a Hebrew clergyman: Professor Abraham de Sola, LL.D of McGill College, Montreal. A marked effect was produced by the reverend gentleman's fervent appeal to the Throne of Grace which was free from sectarian allusion. The peculiarity of his wearing his hat during the delivery of the prayer, which is the prevailing custom among all orthodox Jews, was the subject of comment by those not familiar with it'. In a letter to Dr. de Sola, the British Ambassador, Sir Edward Thornhill, mentioned his approval of the remarks contained in the prayer concerning relations between Great Britain and the United States, which had shown a great improvement.

As noted in the 31 December 1871 minutes of a general meeting, the congregation decided to



mark the occasion of Dr. de Sola's 25th anniversary as Minister. This recognition was to have taken the form of an address composed by the Trustees, to be printed on vellum and handsomely framed, accompanied by a testimonial. At a subsequent meeting, however, a difference of opinion arose about the form such recognition should take and it was finally decided to present a gold cup. This kiddush cup is still used on the Holydays by Dr. de Sola's granddaughter, Mrs. George Mosely (of London). At this same meeting, it was agreed that, as the Minister's house was in poor condition, it was desirable that he rent a more fitting residence—providing that the rent did not exceed \$400 a year.

#### REVISED PRAYER-BOOK

Because of increasing ill-health, in 1876 Dr. de Sola spent a year's leave in England, and his son Meldola acted as Minister in his place. So well did he perform these duties that the Trustees presented him with a testimonial in appreciation in December 1877. Upon his return, Dr. de Sola resumed his duties and in addition revised and published a new edition of Sephardic Prayer Books. This task was undertaken at the request of the Haham in London, Dr. Artom, and the revised edition was published in 1878. Dr. de Sola continued his teaching and other activities, but never regained his former health. While visiting his sister and her family in New York in June 1882, he died. The *Parnass* of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue was among those who accompanied the body back to Montreal. Dr. de Sola's nephew, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, Minister of the New York Congregation, conducted the burial service.

A general meeting of the Shearith Israel Congregation in July unanimously chose Meldola de Sola as Minister, and he became the first native-born Hazan to minister to a Canadian congregation (see Plate XXXV, Fig. 3).

David Aaron de Sola married Rica, daughter of the Rev. Raphael Meldola, Haham of Bevis Marks, and Meldola de Sola was given the name of his grandmother's family. There had

been scholars and rabbis in the Meldola family for generations; they were also a musical family and had composed much sacred music. The Rev. Raphael Meldola had composed a hymn for a special service held at Bevis Marks in 1824 and, in addition to this hymn, several parts of the service had been sung by a choir. This was a great innovation, as there was no permanent choir at Bevis Marks till 1839. The de Solas, too, were musical and in 1897 a hymn composed by David Aaron de Sola was sung during the Dedication Service held in the new Seventieth Street building of the Shearith Israel Congregation, New York.<sup>29</sup> A familiar melody for *Adon 'Olam*, sung during the Sabbath Services, is also a D. A. de Sola composition. It is not surprising, then, that the Rev. Meldola de Sola manifested a life-long interest in the choir and in perpetuating the beautiful music of the Sephardic Service. His brother, Gershom, possessed a bass voice, which enriched the choir for many years. Another brother, Clarence, was much interested in the choir and in the continued use of the traditional music.

#### OPPOSING MISSIONARIES

The Rev. Raphael Meldola had been instrumental in preventing the attendance of Jewish children at missionary schools in London. The Rev. Meldola de Sola was also very outspoken against missionary activities. He preached many sermons and wrote numerous letters on this subject.<sup>30</sup> Because of these efforts, Meldola de Sola received a letter of commendation from the Maskil El Dal Society, a group organised to combat missionary effort in Palestine.<sup>31</sup>

In 1889 the Rev. Meldola de Sola married Miss Katherine Samuel, daughter of the Rev. I. Samuel, Reader of the Bayswater Synagogue, London. A son, Abraham Charles, was born in 1890 and several years later a daughter, Louisa.

The association between the New York and Montreal Congregations Shearith Israel had

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 69.

<sup>30</sup> One example, a letter written to the *Montreal Star*, 19 June, 1890.

<sup>31</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 79.

always been close. In 1886 the Rev. Meldola de Sola was invited by Dr. H. P. Mendes, Minister of the New York congregation, to participate in a memorial service held thirty days after the death of Sir Moses Montefiore.<sup>32</sup> Again, on 8 March 1889 he delivered a sermon in that Congregation's Nineteenth Street building.<sup>33</sup> In 1897, Meldola de Sola offered a prayer from the pulpit on the occasion of the Dedication Service for the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue's new building on Seventieth Street. Like his father, he was a frequent public speaker. To cite but one instance, his name appears on the 1890 list of speakers for the Sommerville Lectures.<sup>34</sup> This was a series sponsored by the Natural History Society; his subject was 'The Jewish Dietary Laws'.

An ardent upholder of Orthodox Judaism, Meldola de Sola wrote and spoke untiringly for this cause. In 1886, at the request of Dr. Mendes, he visited New York.<sup>35</sup> There, with several others, the organisation of a theological seminary was discussed and on 31 January 1887 the Jewish Theological Seminary of America was formed. Later, de Sola wrote many articles in both the local papers and the New York Jewish press, urging the Seminary not to compromise their principles in the name of 'conservatism'.<sup>36</sup> In like manner, when the issue arose of holding 'supplementary services' on Sunday, he wrote articles strongly opposing the idea. In addition, he took part in a symposium of opinions printed in the Jewish press of New York, in which he upheld the 'nay' side of the debate.<sup>37</sup>

#### IV

##### The Old Order Changeth

HART: Benjamin Hart was the fifth son of Aaron and Dorothea Judah Hart. Born at Three Rivers in August 1779, he was educated in New York and Philadelphia, as was his younger brother, Alexander. Their education

<sup>32</sup> See *An Old Faith in the New World*, p. 135.

<sup>33</sup> 'The Necessity of Revelation'.

<sup>34</sup> Thursday, 27 March 1890.

<sup>35</sup> See *An Old Faith in the New World*, p. 386.

<sup>36</sup> *Jewish World*, 6 Feb. 1891.

<sup>37</sup> *Jewish Messenger*, 19 Jan. 1891, and *Jewish Tidings*, 9 May 1890.

was a constant concern of their father's, as shown in letters to his older son, Ezekiel, then living in New York.<sup>38</sup> As an adult, Benjamin Hart moved to Montreal<sup>39</sup> and in 1829 he served on the Montreal Commission of Trade. Three years later, because of the wording of the Act of 1832, he and Moses J. Hays had to refuse the position of Magistrate.<sup>40</sup> This Act gave the Jews of Canada all the civil rights of other citizens but the oath taken during the swearing-in ceremony contained the words 'on the true faith of a Christian'. Although this Act is regarded as the Magna Charta of Jewish rights in Canada, no position could be legally held if these words were omitted—yet no Jew could include them. The matter had to be referred to the Secretary for the Colonies in England and the difficulty was only resolved on 5 August 1837, when Benjamin Hart and Moses J. Hays could receive their commissions at last, as magistrates for the District of Montreal. These were personally signed by Queen Victoria, a most unusual circumstance.<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Hart's commission was lost in the Parliament Buildings fire in 1916; of Mr. Hays's commission there is no trace.

#### RIVER BOATS

Benjamin Hart was a merchant and ship-owner; he owned at least three river boats which plied the St. Lawrence River, the barque *Benjamin Hart* being one of them.<sup>42</sup> As was the custom of the time, shares in a vessel were held by others as well as the owner and in the *Benjamin Hart* his cousins, Jacob Henry and Abraham Joseph, were shareholders. Included in Hart's other interests was the Grand Trunk Railroad, founded in 1851.<sup>43</sup> In 1849 there was a change in British tariffs and many prominent Canadian merchants, including Benjamin Hart, signed a 'Manifesto' which advocated joining the United States. As a result, those whose signatures appeared on this document

<sup>38</sup> 7 Nov. 1793, McCord Museum, and 4 June 1794, *Seminaire St. Sulpice*, Three Rivers.

<sup>39</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 39.

<sup>40</sup> William IV, Chap. 57, Act 1, 5 June 1832.

<sup>41</sup> Gerald Hart's Notes, McCord Museum.

<sup>42</sup> Entry in Abraham Joseph's Diary, 6 Oct. 1839.

<sup>43</sup> *Storied Province of Old Quebec*, p. 304.

were stripped of all offices by the Canadian Government. Benjamin Hart lost his magistrate's commission and his rank in the militia. After this occurrence, he moved to New York and, though the Canadian Government subsequently offered to restore his former offices, he respectfully declined the proffered reinstatement.<sup>44</sup> He died one week later, on 17 February 1855.

HAYS: Moses Judah Hays was the son of Andrew Hays and Abigail (Branny) David and was born in Montreal in 1789. From the time the synagogue was reconstituted in 1832, M. J. Hays was actively engaged in congregational affairs. He served as Treasurer and Trustee until 1839 and was a member of the committee authorised to purchase land on Chenneville Street for the new synagogue building. It was his responsibility to oversee the plans and construction. When the house for the Hazan was being erected, he was requested to perform the same duties. In 1838, when the synagogue was completed, the Trustees passed a resolution which stated that 'M. J. Hays is entitled to the prayers and thanks of the Congregation for the elegant way he has caused the synagogue building to be made'.

Before the Chenneville Street structure was completed, many Trustee meetings of the congregation were held in the office of the Montreal Water Works, a company owned by Hays. According to Canadian historian William Atherton, the Municipal Council also met in these rooms, which were situated under the reservoir—and at one of these meetings the reservoir overflowed. When offered the position of magistrate by Lord Aylmer, Moses J. Hays, as noted above, refused the honour. He did so on the legal advice of Aaron Phillip Hart, because of the legal obstacle presented by the Christological oath until 1837. Moses J. Hays and Benjamin Hart were the first Jewish magistrates in Canada. Mr. Hays was also one of the founders of the Hebrew Philanthropic Society and became its first President in 1848.<sup>45</sup> This Society later became the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Obituary, *New York Times*, 1 Mar. 1855.

<sup>45</sup> *Occident*, Vol. VI, Nov. 1848.

<sup>46</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 193.

## HOTEL AND THEATRE

In 1848 he built a four-storey hotel, Hays House, with a theatre behind it. This structure stretched from Champs de Mars Street to Notre Dame and stood on the north-east corner of Dalhousie Square.<sup>47</sup> In 1849 the Parliament Buildings were situated in Montreal; during the riots of that year, they were burned down by the mob and M. J. Hays lent Parliament the use of Hays House till the end of the session. In 1852 there occurred another of the disastrous fires which periodically plagued Montreal and the hotel burned down.

Moses J. Hays became Chief of Police in 1845. The typhus epidemic of 1847 occurred during his term of office and he has left a graphic description of the measures used to protect both the immigrant sufferers and the population of Montreal.<sup>48</sup> Mr. Hays later rose to the rank of Superintendent and then to Commissioner of Police, which office he held at the time of his death in 1861.<sup>49</sup>

DAVID: A. H. David,<sup>50</sup> born in Montreal in 1812, was the second son of Samuel David. He received his medical degree in Edinburgh at the age of 23 and also obtained a diploma from the University Lying-In Hospital and a certificate from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. After completing his medical education, Dr. David returned to Montreal, where he took up his practice. In 1836 he married Catherine Joseph, eldest daughter of Henry Joseph, in a ceremony performed by Isaac Valentin.

## DR. DAVID'S CAREER

Dr. David soon became an active supporter of the Shearith Israel Synagogue. As a Trustee and Secretary of the congregation, in 1837 he sat on a committee empowered to draw up the Rules and Regulations for the reconstituted Corporation of Portuguese Jews. As Secretary,

<sup>47</sup> *Les Cahiers des Dix*, 1939, No. 4, pp. 185–186, and James Duncan watercolour, McCord.

<sup>48</sup> M. J. Hays as quoted in Edgar Collard column, *Montreal Gazette*, 1 June 1968.

<sup>49</sup> *Les Cahiers des Dix*, 1939, No. 4, pp. 185–186.

<sup>50</sup> Funk and Wagnall's *Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, p. 458.

he entered into correspondence with London, the result being the engagement of Abraham de Sola as Minister of the congregation. During the years 1858–1860 he wrote Sir Moses Montefiore several times to inform him that the Shearith Israel Congregation was sending donations to the fund Sir Moses was raising to help 'our distressed brethren of Morocco'.

A doctor of outstanding ability, Dr. David was appointed attending physician to the Montreal General Hospital in 1849.<sup>51</sup> In 1851 he became one of the first doctors in attendance at St. Patrick's, formerly on Guy Street, a branch of the Hôtel Dieu Hospital. The author of many medical and scientific articles,<sup>52</sup> he was an officer in many medical societies.<sup>53</sup> He was a man of varied interests and held office in the Natural History Society; was a corresponding member of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec; and was one of the founders of the Hebrew Philanthropic Society, under whose auspices he provided free medical care and medicine to the needy for many years.<sup>54</sup>

But Dr. David's main accomplishments in the medical field are associated with Bishop's College. One of the founders of the Medical Faculty, he was appointed Professor of the Theory and Practice of Medicine.<sup>55</sup> Though the College was situated in Lennoxville, Quebec, the first medical lectures were given in Montreal in rooms rented at McGill and St. James Streets; it was here that Dr. David gave his opening lecture in October 1871. In 1872, at the first Convocation, each Faculty member was awarded the degree of D.C.L. *honoris causa*. Later, Dr. David succeeded Sir William Hingston as Dean of the Faculty of Medicine and taught until 1880, when, as Professor Emeritus, he delivered his last lecture. On 1 March 1882, the Faculty of Bishop's College founded the David Scholarship, later changed to a silver medal, 'to perpetuate his valuable services to

the University'.<sup>56</sup> In November 1882, he died, widely mourned.

JOSEPH: Jacob Henry was the fifth son of Henry Joseph and was born in Berthier, Quebec, on 14 September 1814.<sup>57</sup> When his father and an elder brother died in the cholera epidemic of 1832, his mother 'petitioned for the appointment of a Tutor or Trustee for her minor children, as only two of her nine children were over twenty-one'.<sup>58</sup> Also attached to this document is a letter stating that as 'Henry Joseph had been appointed Tutor to the five minor children of Benjamin Solomon, brother of the Petitioner, who died in 1831, a Tutor is needed for them as well'.

#### RAILROADS AND TELEGRAPH

But Jacob Henry Joseph dispensed with the services of the Trustee as quickly as possible. He early acquired a financial interest in railroads and 'actively promoted the construction' of the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad, the first line built in Canada, which opened in 1836;<sup>59</sup> the branch line which extended to Rouses Point, New York; and the extension from Joliette to Rawdon of the Lanoraie and Joliette Railroad. This was the first railroad built north of the St. Lawrence River. Another invention which attracted his interest was the telegraph. He was one of 'the original group of thirty who organised the first telegraph company' in Canada and 'one of the builders of the first line to the United States via Plattsburgh, New York'.<sup>60</sup> He was also a partner in the Newfoundland Telegraph Company, which company formed the last link in the first transatlantic cable.

One of the original shareholders in both the Bank of British North America and the Union Bank, at one time Jacob Henry Joseph was Vice-President of the Montreal Board of Trade. 'It was to him that the initiation of the office of port warden and harbour inspector was due'.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Article by Dr. H. Ballon in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 20 Jan. 1962.

<sup>52</sup> *Reminiscences Connected with the Medical Profession in Montreal during the Past 50 years* (Bibliography, Wm. Atherton's *Canada 7595-7374*).

<sup>53</sup> Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, non-resident member, American Medical Association.

<sup>54</sup> See *The Jew in Canada*, p. 45.

<sup>55</sup> Bishop's College Papers, McCord Museum.

<sup>56</sup> Obituary notices in scrap-book of his daughter, Harline David Rubin.

<sup>57</sup> Family Bible, Henry Joseph.

<sup>58</sup> Document, McCord Museum.

<sup>59</sup> Obituary notice, *Montreal Herald*, Feb. 1907.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

His brother, Abraham Joseph, was a business associate until 1853. Despite his commitments in the business community, Mr. Joseph was an active member of the synagogue. In 1839 Moses J. Hays resigned as Treasurer and Jacob Henry Joseph was elected in his stead. Seven years later, he received the thanks of the congregation for his years of service in this office. Mr. Joseph also came to the financial aid of the synagogue on many occasions. He was on the Board of the Montreal General Hospital and a member of the Mechanics Library and of the Art Association, which later became the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts.

#### DORCHESTER HOUSE

In 1848 he married Miss Sara Gratz Moses, of Philadelphia. For many years their home was Dorchester House, situated on approximately the present site of the Queen Elizabeth Hotel.<sup>62</sup>

Jesse, the seventh son of Henry Joseph, was born on 17 July 1817. He, too, made his mark in the business community and served the synagogue well.<sup>63</sup> Several times between 1847 and 1860 he held the position of Trustee, and from 1860 to 1900 there were few years in which he did not hold office or give financial aid to the congregation. As Jacob Henry had done, Jesse took advantage of the burgeoning commerce of the city. Beginning as a clerk in a wholesale business, he became interested in the importation of Belgian goods and developed close commercial ties with that country.<sup>64</sup> Jesse Joseph is credited with establishing the first shipping links between Canada and Belgium and in 1850 the Belgian Government appointed him its diplomatic representative. He was the first Belgian Consul in Canada, holding this post until his death in 1904. In 1890 he was created a Chevalier of the Belgian Order of Leopold.

His interests included many of the business enterprises in Montreal. A founder and director of a number of banks and telegraph com-

<sup>62</sup> Information received from Miss Kathleen Moore, granddaughter of J. H. Joseph.

<sup>63</sup> Family Bible, Henry Joseph.

<sup>64</sup> Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue 150th Anniversary Book, pp. 43–44, and obituary in the *Montreal Gazette*, 25 Feb. 1904.

panies, Jesse Joseph owned much real estate, including the well-known Theatre Royal, built and operated under his direction. He was President of the Montreal Gas Company; President of the Montreal Street Railway Company, a forerunner of the present Montreal Transportation Commission, and held directorships in many other companies. He never married, but from his home, Dilcoosha, he played the rôle of benevolent uncle to thirty nieces and nephews and their families.

#### FAMILY TRADITION

Abraham Joseph, sixth son of Henry, settled in Quebec City.<sup>65</sup> His branch of the family does not enter the Montreal picture until the marriage of his daughter, Celine, to her cousin Horace Joseph, son of Jacob Henry. Their son-in-law, Captain William Sebag-Montefiore (1885–1966), was President of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue for many years. A granddaughter of Abraham Joseph's became Mrs. Martin Wolff (1885–1940). She and her husband (who for many years acted as the Montreal correspondent of the London *Jewish Chronicle*) were well known as devoted workers for the synagogue and for many organisations in Montreal. In the present generation their daughters carry on this family tradition.<sup>66</sup>

Gershom Joseph, born 29 December 1820, was Henry Joseph's youngest son.<sup>67</sup> He was educated at Upper Canada College and Osgoode Hall, Toronto, where he obtained a degree in law. During the Gold Rush of 1849 he went west to California. There he married Miss Celine Lyons, of San Francisco, whose family had emigrated from France. In 1863 Mr. and Mrs. Joseph returned to Montreal, at which time he resumed his law practice. He was appointed Q.C. by Lord Stanley and is believed to be the first Jewish lawyer to receive this honour in Canada.

As did his brothers, Gershom Joseph, too, served the congregation. Before his departure

<sup>65</sup> Family Bible, Henry Joseph.

<sup>66</sup> Mrs. E. H. Blaustein and Mrs. J. Esar, co-authors of this essay, are two of Mr. and Mrs. Wolff's daughters.

<sup>67</sup> Family Bible, Henry Joseph.

for the West, he had held the office of Secretary, and from the time of his return he gave legal help to the congregation. In 1890, when an amendment to the synagogue charter was thought advisable, he was one of the committee responsible for placing the changes before the Provincial Legislature of Quebec. On 15 September 1887, as President of the congregation, Gershom Joseph laid the corner-stone for the synagogue's new home on Stanley Street. The silver trowel used at this ceremony may be seen in the show-case, with other mementoes of Shearith Israel's past, in the main Hall of the building.

## V

### Stanley Street

Because of the shift of the population, it had been felt for some time that the synagogue should move to a more accessible location. At a special general meeting of the congregation in April 1887, a report recommending the purchase of a lot on Stanley Street, above St. Catherine, was unanimously adopted, and the property, formerly owned by the Protestant Orphan Asylum, became the new site of the Shearith Israel Synagogue. The cornerstone was laid by Gershom Joseph, President of the Congregation, on 22 September 1887. On 31 August 1890 the Dedication Services were held in the new building (see Plates XXXIII, Fig. 1, and XXXVI, Fig. 5). A guest, the Rev. E. Friedlander, of Montreal, read the Ten Commandments; another visitor, Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, of New York, offered the Prayer for the Congregation; and the Rev. Meldola de Sola delivered a sermon 'admonishing the congregation to uphold Orthodox Judaism and to remain faithful to its teachings.'<sup>68</sup> Dr. Mendes also delivered 'a very forceful sermon after the Afternoon Service had been chanted, taken from the text Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord of Hosts, All the earth is full of His Glory'.<sup>69</sup>

The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York gave a donation of \$500 for the new Stanley Street building, on the understanding that the Shearith Israel Congregation of Mont-

real would continue to follow the orthodox Sephardic Ritual.

At a special general meeting of the congregation in January 1890, it was agreed that the synagogue's Act of Incorporation should be amended. One of the changes was to alter the name of the congregation from 'The Corporation of Portuguese Jews' to the 'Spanish and Portuguese Corporation Shearith Israel Montreal'. Lewis Hart and Gershom Joseph were responsible for having the amendments placed before the Provincial Legislature, where they were enacted on 20 April 1891.

The Convention of Orthodox Congregations was held in New York in 1898 and the Rev. Meldola de Sola was appointed First Vice-President and one of a committee of three which was charged with drawing up the organisation's 'Declaration of Principles'.<sup>70</sup>

### SUPPORT FOR ZIONISM

Meldola de Sola was a strong supporter of Zionism from its inception. At the B'nai Jacob Synagogue on 30 January 1898, a mass meeting was held which marked the beginning of the Canadian Zionist Society; de Sola was one of the speakers and he held office many times in this organisation.

In the 1880s and 1890s large numbers of Jews from middle and Eastern Europe arrived in Canada and the Montreal Jewish community found itself no longer able to finance schools of its own. The Jewish children attended Protestant schools and came under the jurisdiction of the Protestant School Board. Meldola de Sola was very much involved in the school question and played an active part on the committees set up when required to regulate or improve the position of the Jewish pupils.<sup>71</sup> Always deeply concerned with the cause of Hebrew education, as a young man he taught Hebrew at Dufferin School, a grade school administered by the Protestant School Commission.<sup>72</sup> In addition, he frequently taught in the synagogue's Sunday School, of which he was the Supervisor.

In 1914, the Great War broke out and many

<sup>70</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, pp. 87, 291.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> B. G. Sack, *op. cit.*, pp. 233, 201.

<sup>68</sup> *Montreal Herald*, 1 Sept. 1890.

<sup>69</sup> *The Jewish Messenger*, 12 Sept. 1890.

members of the congregation volunteered for the Armed Forces. The minutes record that during the High Holydays special seats were set aside for all men in the Services. The congregation's war effort also included a donation for the relief of Polish Jews who had suffered from the effects of war. So many members of the synagogue had joined the Forces that it was decided to commemorate the Shearith Israel's 150th anniversary with a Roll of Honour. This list would contain the names, inscribed on a bronze plaque in the vestibule, of all members who had served in the 1914–1918 war.

#### MELDOLA DE SOLA'S DEATH

In May 1917 Meldola de Sola began to suffer serious ill-health. He officiated for the last time at the High Holydays that year, and died in New York on 29 April 1918. His body, like that coincidentally of his father's before him, was brought home to Montreal and the funeral arrangements were similar to those for his father. The appreciation of the de Sola family for tributes, special prayers, etc., in New York was expressed by the gift of a silver pointer to the Shearith Israel Congregation of New York, 'in grateful recognition of their unflinching courtesy to him'. 'An international leader of Orthodox Jewry, an able writer and speaker and an influence in Canadian Jewish affairs for many years'—this is but one of the many tributes paid to his memory.<sup>73</sup>

Meldola de Sola was succeeded by the Rev. Dr. Raphael Melamed, of Philadelphia. Education was of great concern to Dr. Melamed and under his guidance the Sunday School flourished. The Sisterhood of the Shearith Israel was also started under his ægis, the natural outgrowth of the Ladies' Sewing Circle first started by Mrs. Meldola de Sola. Unfortunately, neither Dr. Melamed nor his successor, Mr. M. Hadad, remained with the congregation. In 1922 the Rev. Joseph Corcos was engaged as Minister and continued to serve until his untimely death in 1925.

The death of Clarence I. de Sola in 1920

<sup>73</sup> See minutes and a letter of condolence to the congregation, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Montreal.

marked the end of an era on the history of the congregation, which, as well as the larger community, deeply mourned the disappearance of the last male representative of his generation of the de Sola family.

Attendance in the school, the Sisterhood, and the Men's Club had dropped noticeably by 1922 and the newly elected officers, Captain William Sebag-Montefiore, P. B. Hart, and A. L. Kaplansky, made a concerted effort to strengthen the congregation. In 1923, to stimulate interest in synagogue affairs, it was decided that 'suitably bound Prayer Books be given to each Bar Mitzvah by the President or Parnass, after the Minister's address'. At the same time, efforts were renewed to train a volunteer choir and so continue the melodious tradition of the service.

#### MOVE WEST SUGGESTED

At a general meeting the same year, it was first suggested that a move should be made to the western end of the city; since the Stanley Street location was no longer central for the Jewish population, it was difficult to increase the membership. But for the time being, the present building had to serve.

Because of his love for the congregation and interest in its welfare, the Rev. Meldola de Sola had given years of service without recompense. At the time of his death, a large sum was owed him by the congregation. After much correspondence, in 1924 his heirs agreed to withhold all claims, providing that the synagogue adhered to the original charter and the established Spanish and Portuguese *minhag*. Should this ever be changed, the entire matter could be reopened and recompense would be claimed.

The period 1920–1928 was a time of uncertainty for the synagogue. After the death of Mr. Corcos, the assistant Minister, the Rev. I. de la Penha,<sup>74</sup> who had served the congregation

<sup>74</sup> The Rev. Mr. de la Penha was a direct descendant of Joseph de la Penha, of Rotterdam, to whom and to whose descendants William III made a grant of Labrador. See R. D. Barnett, 'The Correspondence of the Mahamad', *Transactions XX* (J.H.S.E.), p. 3. and note 6. (We are indebted to Dr. Richard Barnett for this note.)



Fig. 1. Exterior of the Stanley Street Synagogue (1890-1946) of the Montreal Spanish and Portuguese congregation



PLATE XXXIV

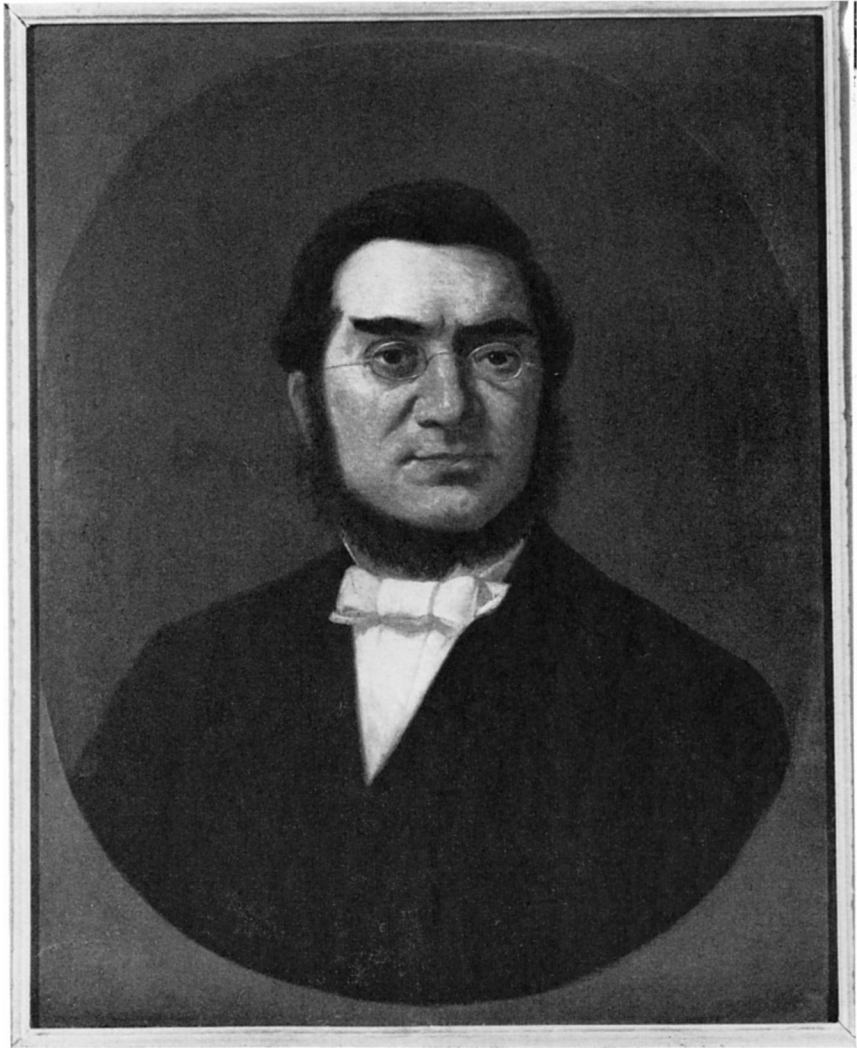


Fig. 2. The Rev. Abraham de Sola (1825–1882), Montreal. From a painting by William Raphael, 1870



Fig. 3. The Rev. Meldola de Sola (1853–1918), Montreal

PLATE XXXVI

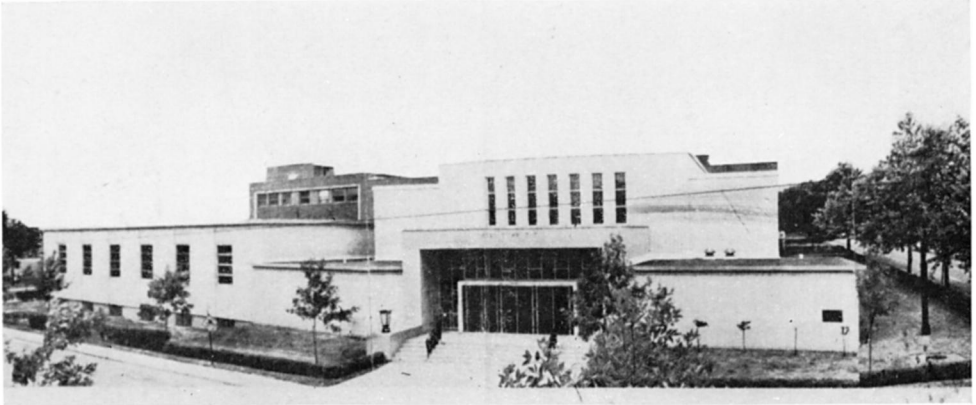


Fig. 4. The present Lemieux Street building of the Montreal Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, opened in 1960



Fig. 5. Interior view of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Stanley Street, Montreal (1890–1946). The Ark and marble steps leading to it were transferred from former synagogue buildings.

since 1908, conducted services, ably assisted by Isaac Kirschberg, and also supervised the Sunday School. Mr. de la Penha was much loved by the congregation but the results of the constant change of Ministers and lack of a sustained policy were apparent in both the synagogue and Sunday School. At this time, too, the financial position of the synagogue was precarious and it was necessary to discontinue the daily morning *minyan* services; later, the afternoon and evening services were also abolished.

Emancipation for women came in 1926, when a change in the Bye-laws permitted the first ladies to be elected to the synagogue Board. They were Mrs. Martin Wolff and Miss Reba Goltman.

Dr. Henry Pereira Mendes, Minister of the Shearith Israel Synagogue in New York, came to Montreal on several special occasions to help the congregation. In 1927 he officiated at High Holyday Services.

#### NEW MINISTER'S INFLUENCE

In November 1928, the Rev. Charles Bender<sup>75</sup> was appointed Minister for a three-year term. Mr. de la Penha continued as assistant; a reception and presentation in honour of his 20 years' devoted service was held later the same year.

Almost immediately Mr. Bender's presence was noted, in both the synagogue and the school; attendance and interest rose because of his encouragement and assistance. In order to explain the ceremonials and make the Passover story live, miniature *Sedarim* were held; for the women classes in Hebrew were started, to help them understand and follow the service. The same year, 1930, the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue asked Mr. Bender to conduct a series of lectures in their auditorium. Owing to the difficult times, Mr. Bender's efforts to revitalise the congregation could not achieve the full goal. This was the period of the great Depression, when synagogue finances were

<sup>75</sup> The Rev. Charles Bender, born in London, came from England via the U.S.A. His career is briefly outlined in details of the Bender family in 'Nineteenth Century Jewish Colonists in Cyprus', by J. M. Shaftesley, *Transactions XXII* (J.H.S.E.), especially p. 106 and notes 80, 82, 91.

strained to the breaking-point; yet no one was ever turned away because of his inability to pay his dues.

In April 1953 I. de la Penha died and Isaac Kirschberg stepped into the breach and ably assisted in chanting the services. Mr. Bender took on the duties of Hazan, shammash, teacher, and fund-raiser for the synagogue, as well as starting a news bulletin for distribution to the congregation. For a time he received only part of his salary, and on one occasion he presented a donation to the synagogue, whose welfare was his greatest concern.

After twelve years of devoted service Mr. Bender reluctantly left the congregation to become Rabbi of the new synagogue, Adath Israel, Montreal; but for several years he continued to perform many ministerial functions for the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. War prevented the congregation from bringing a Minister from England, but between the years 1940 and 1945 several refugees ably assisted the congregation.

#### LONG-RANGE VISION

Throughout this twenty-year period of strain and distress, three men devoted many hours to the welfare of the congregation; Captain William Sebag-Montefiore, the President; Mr. Philip Hart, the Secretary; and Mr. Martin Wolff, the Treasurer. The President's love for the ceremony and ritual of the Sephardic *minhag* was known to all and his keen sense of duty and lack of pettiness were integral parts of his character. These qualities of responsibility and long-range vision were of great value in guiding the congregation through this difficult time.

No history of Stanley Street would be complete without mention of the McAdams family, who were the caretakers from 1906 until the building closed. They felt themselves to be part of the synagogue family and each year they were thanked in the synagogue reports for their devoted interest.

For two decades far-sighted men of the congregation were sensitive to the need of resiting the synagogue but realisation of this ambition was never possible. The Depression,

followed by the Second World War, prevented any action; but it was the Board's firm decision to carry out this plan as soon as conditions permitted. On 31 March 1946, the Stanley Street property was sold. A Building Committee was formed, Samuel Rosenberg, later President of the congregation, chaired a Campaign Committee to raise funds, and excavations started at the Lemieux Street property in the summer of 1946.

## VI

### Unto the Third Generation

This is a convenient point at which to mention some further congregational figures.

**HART:** David Alexander Hart was the son of Alexander Thomas Hart and a great-grandson of Aaron Hart. His mother, Miriam Judah Hart, was the daughter of Bernard Samuel Judah, a miniature of whom is in the Main Hall showcase in the synagogue. Born at Three Rivers, Quebec, in 1844, David Hart attended primary school there but continued his education in Montreal. He then studied for his medical degree at Bishop's College and there is a list of medical graduates for 1874 which includes the name of David A. Hart, Israelite, of St. Zephyrim, Quebec.<sup>76</sup> He practised in Upper Bedford, where he settled with his bride, Miss Sarah Matilda David, daughter of Dr. A. H. David. They were married in 1876 and their six sons were born in Bedford. At some time during the 1890s, the Hart family moved to St. Lambert and from there to Montreal. Dr. Hart was active in many philanthropic societies and was the first doctor to be connected with the Baron de Hirsch Institute and with the first Jewish dispensary, which was attached to it and which he started.<sup>77</sup> He was also a founding member and first President of the Canadian Zionist Society.

The six sons of the Hart family were active in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue and held offices on the Board. Vivian Hart held the office of Secretary for several years but then moved to New York. Reginald J. Hart served the congregation before he was an official

<sup>76</sup> Bishop's College Papers, McCord Museum.

<sup>77</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 411.

member of the synagogue, and worked on countless committees. These committees were concerned not only with the day-to-day running of the synagogue but encompassed many of its social activities. His service continued throughout his lifetime, and at an advanced age he was actively collecting funds for the Lemieux Street building.

The youngest son, Cecil, was well known in sports circles. He was the Manager and coach of the Montreal 'Canadiens' Hockey Team from 1925 to 1932 and again from 1936 to 1938. The Hart Trophy was presented to the team by Dr. Hart in 1923, to be given to the most valuable player of the year. In 1960 this Cup was retired and placed in the Hockey Hall of Fame, Toronto, and replaced by the Hart Memorial Cup, donated by the National Hockey League and members of the Hart family.

### YOUNGEST UNDERGRADUATE

Lewis Alexander Hart was the youngest son of Alexander Thomas and Miriam Judah Hart. He was born at Three Rivers in 1847 and was three years old when his father was killed in an accident. The family remained in Three Rivers, where Lewis received his primary schooling; he then attended the Montreal Collegiate Institute and McGill College, entering the latter at the age of 15, the youngest undergraduate at that period. Graduating with a B.A. degree in 1866, he received the further degrees of M.A. and B.C.L. in 1869. As a prominent notary, Lewis Hart was appointed Lecturer in the Theory and Practice of Notarial Deeds and Proceedings at McGill, the first notary to become a member of the Law Faculty.<sup>78</sup>

He was keenly interested in Jewish affairs. He served on many committees for the congregation and was Treasurer and Trustee for many years. With Mr. Gershom Joseph, in 1890 he was responsible for framing the new Act of Incorporation for the synagogue and for presenting it to the Legislature in Quebec. An ardent defender of Judaism, Lewis Hart was the author of a book, *A Jewish Reply to Christian Evangelists*. At one time President of the Baron

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

de Hirsch Institute, he was also a charter member of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society and later served the organisation as President. He married Miss Fanny Benjamin in 1878 and their family numbered four sons and four daughters. The eldest son, Alan Judah, was a life-long member of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. He married Miss Eva Vineberg, the daughter of Harris Vineberg, long an active member and Trustee. The second son, Claude, was also active in the congregation until he moved from Montreal.

Arthur Daniel, the third son, was the editor of a classic history, *The Jew in Canada*. His wife, née Rubenstein, of Sault Ste. Marie, is Mrs. Mollie Hart. After her husband's death she resumed her nursing career and was a well-known and well-loved figure at the Jewish General Hospital until her retirement in 1969.

Lewis and Fanny Hart's youngest son, Philip Byfus, was a devoted supporter of the congregation and held the position of Treasurer for more than twenty-five years. He also headed the Cemetery Committee for almost the same length of time.

The four daughters of the Hart family were equally devoted to the synagogue. Mabel married Albert Freedman and lived abroad, but the names of Mrs. M. A. Michaels and the Misses Gladys and Dorothy Hart will be long remembered as dedicated workers for the Sisterhood and the synagogue.

#### DE SOLA FAMILY

DE SOLA: Clarence I. de Sola, third son of the Rev. Abraham and Esther de Sola, was born in Montreal in 1858 and educated at the local public schools and at McGill College. A member of the Board of Trustees, at one time President of the Congregation, Clarence de Sola served the synagogue as *Parnass* for many years. As Secretary of the Building Committee, he provided the design for the much-admired Judeo-Egyptian style of the Stanley Street Synagogue.<sup>79</sup> His life-long interest in the history of the Jews in Canada led him to write many articles, which included contributions to

<sup>79</sup> 150th Anniversary Booklet, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, p. 51.

J. D. Borthwick's *The Gazetteer of Montreal* and to the *Jewish Encyclopedia*. Of greatest interest to the congregation was the history he compiled to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the synagogue.

Clarence de Sola's interests were not confined to the history of Canadian Jewry. He was one of the incorporators of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies and an officer in many charitable organisations.<sup>80</sup> In 1898 he was one of the first officers of the newly founded Canadian Zionist Society and was President of this organisation from 1903 until his death in 1920. A noted businessman, he had interests in several shipbuilding firms and was an officer in various steamship companies.<sup>81</sup> For many years he was the manager and director of the *Comptoir Belgo-Canadien*, an international manufacturer of structural steel and builder of bridges and canal locks.

#### SERVICES TO BELGIUM

In 1901 de Sola married Miss Belle Goldsmith, of Cleveland, Ohio, who shared wholeheartedly in her husband's interests. She was an active Zionist; a member and officer in many organisations, both Jewish and non-sectarian; and was a charter member of the Shearith Israel Sisterhood. In 1904 Clarence de Sola became Belgian Consul, as his uncle, Jesse Joseph, had been before him. During the Great War he was responsible for organising the mobilisation of Belgian reservists settled in Canada. For this and other services to Belgium, he received the title of Chevalier and was decorated by King Albert. The membership of the Order of Queen Elisabeth was awarded to his wife.

Engaged in his routine activities, Mr. de Sola travelled to Boston, where he suddenly collapsed and died on 10 May 1920. His body was brought back to Montreal and he was buried from his former residence on Pine Avenue. Mrs. de Sola later moved to England with her family. A son, Gabriel, died in 1931 but Raphael de Sola and his two sisters live in

<sup>80</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, pp. 196, 292.

<sup>81</sup> See obituary notice, *Montreal Star*, 12 May 1920.

London. Mme Belle de Sola died in 1965, shortly after celebrating her ninetieth birthday.

KIRSCHBERG: Abraham Kirschberg served the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation for twenty years as Assistant Minister, in addition to performing many charitable services for the larger Jewish community. When he died in 1902, the Rev. Meldola de Sola, in the funeral address, described his life in the following words, 'faithfully he served the Congregation and earnestly he strove to preserve the spirit as well as the outward form of our religious institutions'.<sup>82</sup>

A son, Isaac Kirschberg, was leader of the choir at Stanley Street, and for over fifty years his melodious voice enhanced the service. He died in 1951.

#### FIRST JEWISH PRINTER

KAPLANSKY: A. L. Kaplansky, long an active member of the synagogue, came to Montreal in 1893.<sup>83</sup> After establishing the first Jewish printing business in Canada, he left the firm in 1897 to study law. In 1910 he was appointed Superintendent of the Legal Aid Department of the Baron de Hirsch Institute. Active in many charitable organisations, he also devoted himself to the welfare of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. He was a member of the synagogue's School Committee for many years; served as Synagogue Treasurer from 1917 to 1924; and was *Parnass* from 1924 until his death in 1939.

LIGHTSTONE: Michael Lightstone was an active member of the Shearith Israel Synagogue for over fifty years. His fiftieth anniversary as a member coincided with his eightieth birthday and the congregation presented him with a silver ashtray at a party given in his honour.<sup>84</sup> Four of his sons served overseas during the First World War, and one of his daughters, Mme. Pauline Donalda, is a world-renowned singer. Mme. Donalda lived in Paris till 1937, when she returned to Montreal. Founder

<sup>82</sup> Personal papers of his daughter, Mrs. Annie Borkowitz.

<sup>83</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 91.

<sup>84</sup> As told by Mme. Donalda's sister, Miss May Lightstone.

of the Montreal Opera Guild, she has been acclaimed for her contribution to Canadian music. In 1967, Canada's Centennial Year, she was one of the first to be made member of the Order of Canada and also received the Centennial Medal.

## VII

### The Lemieux Street Building

The completion of the Lemieux Street synagogue, whose beginnings we noted earlier, was another milestone. Now Shearith Israel prepared to occupy its fourth building, in the west-end area, to which the Jewish population had been drawn. This unique 'Remnant' found itself surrounded by a thriving Ashkenazi community. There was a crying need for a house of worship and educational facilities in the area. As the congregation at Stanley Street had long felt that a synagogue's future depends on the religious training of the children, they determined to concentrate primarily on this need. By placing emphasis on religious education the growth of the synagogue would be assured, thus the first phase of this project was the construction of classrooms and a chapel for services.

It was not until Rosh Hashanah 1960 that the sanctuary, a cherished dream of Morris Markowitz, the President, was opened for services. With increased membership, and consequent increase in social functions, the Board of the synagogue felt it necessary to extend the facilities. Under the guidance of Max Brandt, the President, enlarged offices and the hall which became the Lawee Auditorium were completed in 1967. (See Plate XXXVI, Fig. 4.)

### DR. SOLOMON FRANK

We go back in recent history a little. Dr. Solomon Frank's appointment as Rabbi was ratified in October 1947. He came from Winnipeg, and conducted the first services in a bleak hall, in which Quebec heaters were placed to give warmth and dry out the damp air.

The continuity of the synagogue from

Stanley Street to Lemieux can best be exemplified by noting two appointments. In 1938, Mr. J. Pessah, who had come from Turkey, was appointed Shammash. Rabbi Bender trained him to carry out those duties, which he fulfils to this day. On the death of A. L. Kaplansky in 1939, Mr. Max Fineberg was named *Parnass* of the congregation. This post he still holds and maintains with the dignity which the honour suggests. At the age of 93, he is still a regular attendant at all services.

Two other members deserve special attention. In 1922, Mr. Jess Ginsberg's name first appears in the minutes, and he has been on the Board since 1932. Mrs. A. B. Regenstreif has devoted herself to the welfare of the synagogue and the Sisterhood. She first became active in the Young People's Group, has attended synagogue meetings since 1928, and has been on the synagogue Board for many years.

#### OVERFLOW SERVICES

In the twenty years during which, from an unfinished structure, the present great institution has grown, the membership, which at Stanley Street had numbered only 125, has increased many times. From 1949 the facilities of the Main Hall were not sufficient for the High Holydays, and overflow services had to be held in the chapel. By the following year the needs of the surrounding community were so great that two overflow services, plus a service for the children, were conducted. In 1967, the requirements taxed even the facilities of the new wing as six services were in progress at the same time, with sermons given in English, French, and Judeo-Arabic.

The expansion was in no small part due to the efforts of Dr. Frank. Daily morning and evening services were started again in 1949 and have continued ever since. In this new building at the close of Sabbath morning prayers the custom of holding a Kiddush was reintroduced after a lapse of many years. A bulletin of synagogue news was first compiled and distributed by Rabbi Bender in the 1930s. This was issued intermittently for some years, but is now a regular feature.

In 1953 the congregation joyously celebrated

its 185th anniversary. Over the years, both at Stanley Street and at Lemieux, the synagogue has been host to special groups, such as the Masons and the Girl Guides, for religious services, thus carrying on the tradition of being a part of the larger community.

One of the most important facets of the synagogue on Lemieux was the Day School. It was run by the congregation for four years, but owing to financial problems was turned over to the United Talmud Torahs. It was carried on, under contract with the congregation, for a short time and thereafter the Talmud Torahs leased the building to run their own school, which continues. Because of the growth of the school, more classroom space was needed, and in 1957 the synagogue sold the adjacent piece of land for the school's expansion.

The 200th anniversary of the settlement of the first Jews in Canada was appropriately celebrated in 1959–60. Among other activities a week-end of festivities was centred at the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue. A Friday evening service, followed by a dinner, and a Saturday morning service and Kiddush were attended by many distinguished guests.

The synagogue membership of both Sephardim and Ashkenazim rose and fell over the first 175 years. Under the pressure of persecution a few Sephardic Jews from the Balkan countries arrived in Montreal before the end of the Second World War. The initial group numbered about fifteen, but since then thousands of Sephardim have arrived in Montreal from different countries and many have come to the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, where they found a familiar *minhag*.

#### VIII

##### Links in the Chain

When the synagogue was founded, it was stated in the Bye-laws that the *minhag* (custom) of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in London would be followed. This is the Sephardic *minhag* which the Jews brought from Spain and Portugal when they fled from the Inquisition in 1492. From the first, relations with the mother congregation in London were close. The ritual was the same, and all ques-



tions that called for a Rabbinical decision were referred to the Haham (Sephardic Chief Rabbi) in London.<sup>85</sup>

The dignity and old-world courtesy developed in the courts of Spain have permeated the service. This is evident in the way the men bow to each other during the performance of ceremonies, rather than shaking hands. Again, as the *Parnass* ascends the *Tebah*, or reading platform, he is greeted by the Hazan with the words of welcome 'Baruch ha-bah'. Anyone entering the House of God wears his best clothes. The officers, who have special seats on the *Banca* at the front of the synagogue, set the example by wearing silk hats. Anyone who is given an honour in the service always wears a hat, as being more dignified than a skullcap.

The Sephardim have always maintained the tradition of having the *Tebah* in the centre of the synagogue, thus giving to every member, including the ladies, a feeling of proximity so conducive to congregational participation. An interesting feature is that the Ark is always closed with a door, whether or not there is a curtain inside. This is said to be a carry-over from the days of the Marranos, when it had to appear to be only a cupboard. The Marranos were those Jews who practised their religion secretly while outwardly appearing to be Roman Catholic.

#### 'GOOD LOCK' ON ARK

In the congregational minutes of 1858, we find an entry in which the Treasurer was ordered to put a good lock on the Ark, and the keys were to be given to the Hazan and Shammash, because the *Sefer* and bells had been removed without permission.

In Sephardic synagogues those who officiate are all called Ministers or Hazanim. These gentlemen take turns at chanting the service and reading the *Sefer* with its particular cantillations, in contrast to the cantorial singing which is such a feature of the Ashkenzai ritual. The congregation and choir join in the hymns and responses; the melodies, being primarily in the major key, reflect the joy and happiness of Temple times.

<sup>85</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 18.

Those members who are capable of doing so have always been given an opportunity to read any part of the service with which they are familiar. Many of the congregation have fond memories of Isaac Kirschberg's melodious contributions to the service. Since his death in 1951, Mr. L. K. Caplin has zealously carried on the tradition of reading the Book of Jonah, the Haftarah of the Day of Atonement. The boys and girls who learned the synagogue tunes in Sunday School at Stanley Street enjoyed joining in the services.

Before the *Sefer* is read, it is raised for all to see, by the Levantador (a Spanish word meaning to raise up). He opens it, so that either three, five, or seven columns can be seen, and, holding it high, turns slowly so that all can see the portion, while the congregation sings 'V'zot ha-Torah . . .' to the Sephardi melody. Until the present day, a prayer is read in synagogue on the eve of Kippur, partly in Portuguese, for those of our brethren imprisoned by the Inquisition. In Bevis Marks, also on the eve of Kippur, a prayer is still offered for the welfare of the sister communities in Montreal and New York.

#### MALE CHOIR

A feature of the service in Shearith Israel has always been a choir of boys or men. Originally a voluntary group, it was recorded in the minutes of 1891 that, in spite of a lack of funds, choir attendance would be stimulated if the members were paid. But the expenditure was not to exceed \$25!

The Rev. Meldola de Sola made devoted efforts to improve the choir, and at a meeting of the Trustees in 1894 a vote of thanks was passed to him for 'rendering the choir so efficient as to conduce to the attractiveness of the service'. In an earlier generation, Myer Levy took a great interest in the choir, and his good voice and handsome appearance attracted all the girls; synagogue attendance rose!

The choir went through good and bad times. A 1933 bulletin at Stanley Street announced: 'We are again fortunate in having the services of a choir whose members are giving their services gratuitously. Those taking

part are Mr. I. Kirschberg, Mr. G. Kirschberg, Mr. Gerald Goldwater, Mr. H. Livinson, and Mr. S. Samuels'. The present choir, adding colour to the service, is no longer voluntary.

The offerings, which should be given as a voluntary donation, have always been announced only in Hebrew, either when a man is called to the *Sefer*, or else in front of the Ark after the *Sefer* has been returned.

In the early days, fines were levied on those who refused to accept posts offered to them, and the Hazan was always fined for every mistake he made in reading the *Sefer*. Members were also fined for speaking too loudly or for walking out while the *Sefer* was held up or being read. In 1779, anyone found guilty of speaking against the character of any other member of the community was fined.

Sermons became a regular feature of the service in comparatively recent times. The first recorded reference is in 1838: 'The Parnass may, on a public Thanksgiving, direct the Hazan or any other suitable person, to deliver a sermon or address in English'. Until then, as in the Mother Country, the official language, after Hebrew, had been Portuguese. In 1909, the Trustees agreed that the choir was of more importance than the sermon to the attractiveness of the service.

#### VALUABLE SCROLLS

The synagogue owns a valuable collection of *Sefarim* and other religious articles and ornaments. The two *Sefarim* used from the beginning were gifts from the London Community. 'They were called old when imported from the Portuguese Synagogue in 1768'.<sup>86</sup> A further gift of *Sefarim* was received from Bevis Marks in 1859, and again in 1947.<sup>87</sup>

In 1862, Miss Dolly Benjamin raised a subscription among the junior members of the congregation to procure a new cover for the

<sup>86</sup> Minutes of Trustees' Meeting, Portuguese Congregation of Montreal, quoted by Benjamin Hart.

<sup>87</sup> See R. D. Barnett (ed.), *Treasures of a London Temple*, p. 29. The bells in this case were made by a London silversmith, William Grundy, in 1773 for the Barbados Congregation, which made Bevis Marks its heir to its properties in 1926 when it was closed down.—R.D.B.

Reader's desk and for one of the *Sefarim*. Through the years members have, as with most synagogues, presented breastplates, bells, crowns, *yadim*, and *Sefer* cloaks. The collection was greatly enhanced in 1963 by the acquisition of some *Sefarim* beautifully encased in silver or velvet, which were donated when Iraqi Jews became members of the congregation. They were part of a large collection which had arrived in Britain in 1948 after extensive negotiations between the British and Iraqi Governments. They were deposited at Bevis Marks, whence the Board distributed them to various Sephardi congregations.

From its inception, many Ashkenazim have joined Shearith Israel, and all have taken pride in belonging to a synagogue with the proud and colourful Sephardi tradition.

#### IX

##### Steps in Time

At the first service in the first synagogue in Canada, the gentlemen wore powdered wigs, lace ruffles, and buckled shoes; and the ladies were dressed in brightly coloured brocades and silks.

Years of longing and planning for a place of worship were rewarded by the completion of a small sanctuary at the corner of Notre Dame and Little St. James Streets. A high white-washed wall surrounded the low stone structure with its high red roof.<sup>88</sup> Services were held in this building from 1783 until 1825, when circumstances beyond their control forced the congregation to look for new quarters. For almost 13 years, they worshipped in temporary premises, until they were able to erect a new building on Chenneville Street at the corner of Lagauchetière.

M. E. David, a grandson of Lazarus David, as we noted earlier, laid the cornerstone in 1838 and the dedication took place the same year. David bought the old cornerstones, following an ancient custom whereby they were sold to the highest bidder, who was awarded prayers and honours in the synagogue.<sup>89</sup> In the corner of the new building

<sup>88</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 17.

<sup>89</sup> *History of the Jews in Philadelphia*, by Wolfe and Whitman, p. 117.

were placed the following contents from the original one<sup>90</sup>: A narrative of the laying of the first corner-stone in 1777, with a list of subscribers, on a piece of vellum; three copper plates in good condition, one in Hebrew, two in English, the latter with the names of Andrew Hays and his wife Branny (Abigail) David, dated 5537 (1777); eight very old coins from Britain, Spain, and Portugal; a small metal box containing soil from the Holy Land; and other small articles. To these were added two Montreal newspapers, dated 30 May 1835, and two American coins of the day, as well as a British one.

As recorded in *Hochelaga Depicta* in 1839, the building was a 'fine specimen of Egyptian style of architecture. The front was of cut stone adorned with a handsome portico with two columns'. Inside were neatly arranged hard wooden benches, and at the east end of the tastefully painted interior stood the semi-circular Ark of beautifully polished mahogany.

#### STRICT RULES

In the Minute Book of 1838 appears the following entry:

- 'To promote Solemnity and Order:
- 'All umbrellas or canes, except those needed for lame persons, shall be left at the door.
- 'All garments taken off, left in the room outside for that purpose, unless put on own seats.
- 'No children of either sex under 3 shall be admitted in the Synagogue under any pretence.
- 'Anyone leaving the Synagogue shall retire quietly, and avoid leaving in bodies, especially during the Reading of the Law or Haphtarah.
- 'Every member, previous to singing any Psalm or Prayer, shall remain silent until the Hazan signifies the tune or key, when those inclined may join in but on equal —[?] not longer or louder than the Hazan.
- 'Anyone infringing the above to be admonished.'

How important this new building was for the

<sup>90</sup> Report to Board members, Shearith Israel, from P. B. Hart, Hon. Treasurer, 12 Aug. 1956.

Jewish community at large can be judged by the following entry in the diary of Abraham Joseph, of Quebec City: 'Yesterday I received under cover from Dr. David a small pamphlet (if so I may term it) containing the By-Laws of the Congregation—KAHAL KADOSH SHEARITH ISRAEL of Montreal!' For Sunday, 26 August, 1838, he wrote, 'I received a circular from Dr. David, Secretary—informing me that the seats in Hebrew Synagogue Montreal will be sold on the 31st Inst. and hoping I will appoint some friend to purchase. I have written to Jacob to buy a seat for me'.

The building on Chenneville Street had served the 107 Jews then living in the community, but with the growth of the Jewish population it was no longer adequate.<sup>91</sup> Following the prevailing trend, Shearith Israel moved westward, and in 1887, as recorded above, Stanley Street was chosen as the congregation's third home. The former building was sold to the Rumanian Jews, who renamed the synagogue Beth David.<sup>92</sup> When this congregation in turn moved away, it was bought by the Chinese for their mission work. It has since been demolished.

Clarence I. de Sola, as Secretary of the Building Committee, was the driving force behind the design and construction of the new grey stone building, in Judeo-Egyptian style. Within the corner-stone were placed the contents from the Chenneville Street stone, encased in a beautiful hand-made glass jar.<sup>93</sup> To these were added a statement in Hebrew and English on vellum, describing the laying of the Stanley Street corner-stone; the history, also on vellum, of the congregation from 1777 to 1887; British and Canadian coins of the day; and copies of various local, English, and American papers. The Ark of polished mahogany the congregation had brought from Chenneville Street. A full description of the ornate decoration of the synagogue interior was given in the local press.<sup>94</sup> The dedication service was held in 1890, and this fine home of the Spanish and Portuguese congregation

<sup>91</sup> B. G. Sack, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

<sup>92</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 68.

<sup>93</sup> See *supra*, Report of P. B. Hart.

<sup>94</sup> *Montreal Daily Star*, 4 Sept. 1890.

was a familiar landmark to Montrealers of the next two generations.

#### WESTWARD TREK

Again the westward trek affected the Jewish population. The minutes of 23 October 1923 record a suggestion by P. B. Hart that the congregation move to western Westmount or eastern Nôtre Dame de Grace. The Depression and World War II, however, as already noted, interfered with the realisation of this plan. During those long and difficult years they struggled on, until, under the general chairmanship of the President, Capt. William Sebag-Montefiore, and the Building Chairman, Mr. Martin Wolff, plans finally materialised for the fourth home of Shearith Israel. Ground was purchased on Lemieux Street, between Ridgeway and Maplewood Avenues—today's St. Kevin and Boulevard Edouard Montpetit—and the first sod was turned by P. B. Hart on 22 September 1946.<sup>95</sup>

A most impressive last service was held in the Stanley Street building on 20 October. Following this, it was sold to Sir George Williams College, who also used it as a place of learning. In fact, one of the members of the synagogue, while attending a Spanish course there, remarked that she was sitting in the former seat of one of the well-known characters of the congregation. In 1956, when the College no longer needed the building, it was demolished.

While Shearith Israel was without a home, the Shaar Hashomayim Synagogue very generously allowed the congregation the use of its chapel.<sup>96</sup> Here services were conducted for ten months until the new building was ready.

#### MODERN BUILDING

The exterior of the new centre was designed in a modern style of brick, stone, and stained glass.<sup>97</sup> The chapel was dedicated to Horace Joseph as an acknowledgment of his years of devotion and generous legacy to the congrega-

<sup>95</sup> Sisterhood Commemoration Book, 1890–1946, p. 15.

<sup>96</sup> *Synagogue Bulletin*, June–July 1947.

<sup>97</sup> 185th Anniversary Bulletin, p. 18.

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tion. It is the latest home of the century-old Ark. On 13 September 1947, the Rev. A. Pimontel, who had for several years served the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation in Manchester, led a joyful congregation in the recitation of *Shehehyanu* at the first service held in the unfinished building. There was still no heat for the Rosh Hashanah services two days later!

Here the synagogue functioned till the present handsome sanctuary was constructed. On 19 June 1960 the corner-stone was laid by Morris Markowitz, the President. Once again, the contents from the former corner-stones were transferred within the glass 'casket', still intact, though now 125 years old. To this was added a second glass jar, containing the 150th Anniversary Booklet; booklets from the London and New York congregations; a series of Canadian commemorative stamps; fifteen coins; and other articles of current interest.<sup>98</sup>

And so the congregation look hopefully to the future, to quote the words of Mrs. David de Sola Pool: 'The synagogue should be the rallying centre of Jewish life from which education, friendly relationships, participation in social and communal work, and above all, the fortification of the spirit of religion in man can radiate'.<sup>99</sup>

#### X

#### The Sisterhood

In December 1918 Dr. Melamed, the Minister, asked the ladies—who already had a sewing circle held in the home of Mrs. Meldola de Sola—to form a Sisterhood, to promote the ideals of the synagogue. This took many forms, such as encouragement of Jewish observances; entertainment on Pureem and Hanucah for the Sunday School pupils; decoration of the *Succah*; philanthropy and sewing; and the repair and replacement of Torah vestments. This last-named task was lovingly undertaken over the years mainly by the Misses Hart and Mesdames Kirschberg and

<sup>98</sup> Report to members of Shearith Israel, by P. B. Hart. Hon. Treasurer, 30 June 1960.

<sup>99</sup> *Montreal Daily Star*, May 1946.

de la Penha. The Sisterhood took a keen interest in the Sunday School. Many of the young ladies filled in as teachers, but later, when paid teachers were found to be necessary, the Sisterhood provided the remuneration.

For Succoth, the young members of the congregation helped the Sisterhood decorate the *Succah*. The abundant decorations were gifts from the congregation, but in the war year of 1943, when fruit was scarce and expensive, cranberries and crêpe paper were the sole decorations.

Members of the Sisterhood served lunches once a week to children at the Baron de Hirsch Institute, and also sewed badly needed articles for the poor. At the request of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies they made flannelette bloomers, which were needed for the severe wintry months. All members gave many hours of work a week to the sewing of garments which were donated to the Hebrew Orphanage, the Maternity Hospital, and, in later years, the Social Service Department of the Jewish General Hospital. In 1920, 200 European orphans were brought to Canada for adoption. Clothing was urgently needed, and all the Montreal Sisterhoods worked together to provide the necessary outfits. Other activities in the community included visiting at the Old Folks' Home and helping the Ste. Agathe Sanatorium and the Helping Hand Fund for Palestine.

#### MUSIC PROGRAMME

The Sisterhood provided not only work for the hands but also nourishment for the mind. Music of the highest calibre was part of the programme for many of the early years, much of it supplied by their own talented members. Among outstanding fund-raising concerts was one given by the famous Lauritz Melchior, at His Majesty's Theatre, on 20 February 1938, when Mrs. Saul Hayes was President of the Sisterhood. Other items included lectures on Biblical subjects, books of Jewish interest, and current events. Hebrew courses were also organised for the ladies.

The Donor Luncheon of 1936, held in the synagogue rooms in Stanley Street, for which

the admission charge was the magnificent sum of 50 cents, was financially and socially successful. Today the Donor Luncheon is an annual affair held in the Lawee Auditorium, one of the fashionable events of the season.

As a result of its endeavours, the Sisterhood has been able to provide caps and gowns for the choir, a fully equipped kitchen for the use of all functions held in the synagogue, as well as a Baldwin organ and many other furnishings. But their main efforts have been bent towards reducing their successive pledges to the synagogue, and their donations have exceeded \$60,000.

In 1941, when the congregation began to hold a Kiddush every Saturday morning, the Sisterhood supplied the wine and refreshments, and they were hostesses at many of the congregational affairs.

#### X I

##### Train Up a Child

The Talmudic Rabbis call the school the 'Sanctuary of the Jewish people'. In Canada, as elsewhere, our forefathers clung tenaciously to the traditions of Judaism and diligently passed them on to their children. As early as 1837 we note that the Portuguese Synagogue of Montreal engaged a Hebrew teacher to instruct both the children and adults in religious and other studies. When the Rev. Mr. Piza was engaged, he was informed that he could always find some pupils to instruct in Hebrew, 'which would occupy his leisure hours'. In 1844 he stipulated, as a condition of staying, that the Board should allow him to 'keep a school for the education of the Jewish children of Montreal without charge, and that he attend them four days a week, at least three hours a day'.

#### SUNDAY SCHOOL

Soon after his arrival in 1847, Abraham de Sola organised a Sunday School. In this, the first Jewish school in Canada, 21 pupils were registered. The curriculum consisted of 'translating passages from the Mishna, the Bible, and the study of prayers'. De Sola himself taught the older boys.

While the congregation was most interested in educating its own members, it was cognisant of the needs of the wider Jewish community. In 1853 there was a discussion about the possibility of establishing a Jewish college in the Eastern Townships, where there were a number of Jews. However, this did not materialise.

Dr. de Sola was dedicated to the needs of educating the young. He offered his services, free of charge, 'if a Free Hebrew School could be established'. This stimulated the thinking of the members, and at a meeting in April 1874 a committee was appointed to meet with members of the German synagogue to discuss the problem. Six months later a further meeting passed a resolution 'that the congregation would open a free school under its auspices'. A committee was set up under the chairmanship of D. A. Ansell to 'devise a scheme for the foundation of a school in connection with the synagogue . . . the school . . . to be conducted in strict accordance with orthodox principles'. The instructions was to consist of 'Hebrew, according to both Minhagim, religious instruction, and a thorough English elementary education. The school shall be free and open to all Jewish children whether belonging to this congregation or not'.

#### FIRST DAY SCHOOL

A Board of School Commissioners, consisting of five gentlemen, rapidly put all the necessary arrangements into motion. Dr. de Sola was delegated to approach the Protestant School Board to request schoolrooms and the free services of a teacher for the English subjects. The Protestant Board appointed Miss S. Miller, who remained with the school for about five years. Within a month, David Levi, of New York, was accepted as teacher of the religious subjects. He was given only five weeks to prepare, and just two months elapsed between the setting up of the school committee and the opening of the doors, which occurred on 11 January 1875. This was the first Jewish Day School in Canada. Fourteen children registered for the opening, although only six desks had been bought in anticipation. As was the custom of the day, the school was to be open

every day of the year except Saturdays and holidays. However, when summer arrived the heat was so intense that the school was closed for six weeks; and over the years the summer holidays were lengthened to two months.

The establishment of the Day School by no means disrupted the functioning of the Sunday School, which carried on every Sunday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Also, for those not attending the Day School, instruction in Hebrew was given each Tuesday and Thursday afternoon for an hour.

Unfortunately, at the end of the first year the Hebrew teacher, Mr. Levi, left to become Reader of the congregation in Charleston, S. Carolina. The leaders of the Jewish community of England were requested to choose a teacher who would be willing to come to Canada at the handsome salary of \$400 a year. Again Dr. de Sola stepped into the breach and offered his services until a suitable person could be found. To fill the post, Mr. A. Jacoby arrived from England in 1876, and in addition to his salary was offered a room in the school house free of charge. The conditions were primitive indeed, in terms of our modern living. We find a year later the synagogue agreeing to improve matters by bringing a 'water pipe' up to his room, provided that it would cost no more than \$10 and that Jacoby would agree to pay any and all upkeep and repair.

From the beginning, finances were the biggest problem facing the congregational school, and as early as 1876 they had difficulty in paying the teacher's salary. Seat-rentals had been raised in an attempt to offset the costs, but the school was still free and open to non-members. Therefore, in 1879 it was decided to seek donations from those who were contributing nothing but were benefiting from the school.

#### NO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Discipline in the school was a matter taken under discussion on various occasions by the Board of School Commissioners. We note references to the use of corporal punishment, which did not meet with the approval of the gentlemen. On one occasion, Jacoby was reprimanded and ordered to pay \$4 to a boy's

father, and was told that no more corporal punishment would be tolerated. In 1882, through continued lack of funds, the teaching in the Sunday School was completely re-organised, and was taken over by the ladies and gentlemen of the congregation, under the guidance of Clarence I. de Sola.

By 1883, as it was no longer considered feasible to continue to hold the daily school in its present quarters, it was moved to the British and Canadian School, where Jacoby agreed to continue teaching. There was no further change until 1886, when the committee decided the educational needs of the children might best be served by the Rev. Meldola de Sola's taking over the teaching of Hebrew. On a couple of occasions 'sickness in the school house' necessitated a search for new premises and there were several different places used over a period of a few years.

A rare moment occurred before the move from Chenneville to Stanley Street: the school had a surplus balance of \$516. Shortly before this, some new legislation was passed which changed the financial status of the Jewish school. When it was planned to move the school to the Stanley Street building, application was made to the Roman Catholic School Board for financial assistance in furnishing the new schoolrooms. Fortunately for the comfort of the children, they agreed to put a hot-water furnace in the school. Thus fifteen years after the first Day School opened, it found a home in the new synagogue building on Stanley Street. By May 1890 there were 54 pupils.

#### SCHOOL CLOSED

The following year Meldola de Sola was appointed Hebrew teacher and superintendent of the school. He gave two consecutive hours each school day at a salary of \$600 a year. In spite of the general enthusiasm, in 1895 it was found necessary to close this pioneer venture, through lack of funds. For the next seven years Meldola de Sola, appointed by the Protestant School Commission, taught Hebrew in the Dufferin School. Of the 600 Jewish children in the Protestant school system, more than half attended this school.

Some of the synagogue Board members felt most strongly about educational problems, and in 1908 another proposal was made for a new Day School to be set up under synagogue auspices; but after investigation the appointed committee found this was not feasible. However, there was no break in the continuity of the Sunday School programme. In fact, the numbers grew and in 1918 had reached 106, about one-third of whom expressed a wish to attend three times a week. It was difficult, after a while, to find suitable volunteer teachers, and so by 1920 the Hebrew teachers were being paid \$2.50 an hour. From 1920 to 1947 the Sunday School continued to function, but with varying fortunes, and when the Stanley Street synagogue closed an era came to an end.

The new environment of Lemieux Street stimulated the congregation and the first Jewish Day School in the west end of Montreal was opened and an ambitious programme put into force. There were two nursery classes, two kindergartens, and two first grades, in addition to three afternoon classes and three Sunday School groups. The total registration was approximately 200 children; all classes were under the supervision of Lionel Kauffman and were taught by trained teachers.

#### FINANCIAL PROBLEMS

As each year began, a new grade was added to the school. However, once again financial problems imperilled the life of the school, and by 1952 the burden could no longer be carried by the synagogue. Fortunately at this time the United Talmud Torahs were searching for premises in the area and agreed to take over the running of the school.

For two years the synagogue continued to sponsor a Sunday School, but by 1954 even this was discontinued and has never been reinstated. Finally, in 1955, the United Talmud Torahs leased the schoolrooms from the synagogue, in order to conduct the school on their own lines. By 1957 they found it necessary to expand, and, as noted earlier, bought from the synagogue a vacant piece of land adjacent to the building.

While under the sponsorship of the synagogue

the highest educational standards were maintained; the Protestant School Board checked on the secular subjects, and the Igud<sup>100</sup> supervised the Hebrew curriculum. At all times Hebrew was taught with the Sephardic or modern pronunciation.

Appropriately, a junior congregation was started to help the pupils co-ordinate their schooling with religious observance. When a Festival occurred the pupils were taken to the chapel, class by class; the Ark was opened and the appropriate holiday explained in its synagogue setting. English was used for the nursery and kindergarten grades, and Hebrew from the first grade up. Dr. Solomon Frank, the spiritual leader of the synagogue and thus of the school, visited the classes regularly.

While the children were being educated during the day, evening classes were held for adults who wished to learn Hebrew and Jewish history.

## XII

### With Heart and Hand

*Tsedakah*—charity—has always been a fundamental part of the Jewish faith. The first Jewish settlers in Canada, though few in number, contributed generously to the community. In 1795, members of Shearith Israel subscribed to a Fund for the Indigent in Montreal;<sup>101</sup> donations were made towards the building of Christ Church Cathedral; and in 1805 towards the purchase of Nelson's monument.<sup>102</sup> They also supported the Patriotic Fund in 1813–1814 for the relief of war sufferers in Upper Canada.<sup>103</sup>

At the same time, the congregation cared for their fellow-Jews. Individuals in need were aided, as the synagogue minutes record. Donations were sent to the New Orleans Congregation 'Hungaria Chassid' in 1853, to alleviate distress caused by the ravages of yellow fever.

Not until 1848 was there apparently need for a Jewish charitable organisation in Montreal.

<sup>100</sup> Organization of Hebrew Teachers.

<sup>101</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 193.

<sup>102</sup> Anglican papers, McCord Museum.

<sup>103</sup> *Montreal*, by Stephen Leacock.

In that year the Hebrew Philanthropic Society was started, with the help of the Rev. Abraham de Sola and Moses Judah Hays as President. Unfortunately this organisation was short-lived. On 23 July 1863 a meeting was held 'to consider the desirability of forming some association to assist their needy or unfortunate co-religionists'. The original document also says 'that it was the opinion of the originators that the Society should be under the entire supervision and control of the young unmarried men of the City'. It was also felt that the Society would enable the Jewish young men of Montreal to become better acquainted. This meeting resulted in the formation of the Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society. During the presidency of J. L. Samuel, in July 1869, the sphere of the Society was enlarged 'whereby married co-religionists became eligible as members'.

On 16 November 1870, Gershom Joseph and L. A. Hart obtained a charter for them 'without any expense to the Society'. For the next decade this Society took care of the work of Jewish relief, but a wave of immigrants from the Russian massacres in 1882 so far strained their resources that they could no longer cope. A mass meeting of all Jewish citizens of Montreal was held in order to gain added support. But a further influx in 1888 so overwhelmed the Society again that it had to appeal to Baron de Hirsch for a grant. Using his very generous cheque, an enlarged committee set to work to organise the Baron de Hirsch Institute. It was opened in a store on 17 June 1891, and was dedicated as 'A Free School for the poor children of the Jewish faith and a home for sheltering distressed immigrants and orphans'. This was the sole Jewish organisation in Canada and it undertook many facets of philanthropic work, including immigrant aid, colonisation, and education.

### HIRSCH INSTITUTE

The permanent home of the Baron de Hirsch Institute was opened on 3 June 1901 in Bleury Street—the first time Jews laid the corner-stone of an institution which concerned the whole community. The stone was laid by



D. A. Ansell, and the opening prayer was recited by the Rev Meldola de Sola. From this organisation developed the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, which in turn has expanded into the Allied Jewish Community Services, now outgrowing their modern building in Sherbrooke Street.

The religious needs of the community also were never neglected. As an example, one of the Rules drawn up in 1838 was that 'Trustees shall always provide a Hazan, Shochet and Shamas'. Therefore, in September 1840, the Secretary of the congregation was instructed to 'notify those members of the Jewish persuasion who had declined to become members of the synagogue until a Hazan and a Shochet were appointed, that these officers had now entered into their respective duties'.

In spite of the opinion given in 1840 by the authorities of the Jewish congregation in London that the cattle here were not kosher, eminent medical men in Canada proved that the imperfections arose solely from the climate; therefore the Shochet of the congregation was told to kill as usual. He was to procure a seal engraved with the Hebrew initials of the congregation with which to stamp all cattle killed.

Mr. Mendels, Shochet to the congregation for almost twenty years, was responsible for visiting certain butchers three times a week, to oversee the killing of the meat. In a later By-law, it was laid down that 'the Shochet shall call twice a week, and on all occasions required, at the house of a member to kill poultry and large meat. He shall receive a half-penny a head for poultry, if sent to him, one penny if he kills at the house, except at the house of the Hazan'.

#### SHECHITA BOARD

For four years there was a Shechita Board, composed of members from both the Portuguese and the German congregations (Shaar Hashomayim). When this was disbanded in 1879, Shearith Israel continued by itself.

One of the duties of the *Parnass* was to secure a suitable person to supervise the baking of Passover bread (*matza*), and to call on the families to learn the extent of their needs. The

supervisor was entitled to 1s. 3d. for 50lb., 2s. 6d. for 80lb., and 5s. for 110lb. Persons unable to pay for *matza* should apply to the *Parnass*, and receive 8lb. per family.

The office of Mohel was often performed by the Shochet. In 1838, the sum fixed for this service was not less than \$1.50, but inflation soon occurred, as recorded in a minute of 1854. When the synagogue permitted the Mohel to go to Quebec City, at Mr. Jacobs's request, the charge was \$50 to the synagogue, \$25 travelling expenses, and \$25 as the Mohel's fee. However, when the President of the German Synagogue inquired the yearly charge for the services of the Mohel, the congregation replied that the services would be performed gratuitously as far as the congregation was concerned. But the standard fee to the Mohel must be paid.

The greatest *mitzvah*, however, was the assistance to new congregations. Thus we find recorded the loan of a *sefer* to a newly formed congregation in Toronto in 1854; and four years later the 'Trustees of Shearith Israel presented the Shaar Hashomayim with a Sepher Torah to enable them to conduct their first service'.

#### AGUDATH ZION

The hope of the Jewish return to Palestine inflamed the imagination of Canadian Jewry no less than of Jews in other parts of the world. In 1898, a mass meeting was held in the B'nai Jacob Synagogue to which all congregations were invited to send representatives to form a Canadian Zionist Society.<sup>104</sup> 'Notwithstanding, that it was held under the most difficult conditions, such as unprecedented cold weather which froze the water and gas-pipes, and a terrific snow storm, the meeting was very well attended'. The audience was enthusiastic, and over 100 names were registered as members. Representatives from six synagogues gathered the next month to appoint delegates. Right from the beginning, the Rev. Meldola de Sola and his brother Clarence, as well as other members of Shearith Israel, took a very active part in the organisation.

At the first general meeting, organised under the name of the Agudath Zion of Montreal (the

<sup>104</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 291.

Zionist Society of Montreal), Dr. David A. Hart was elected first President, with Israel Rubenstein, Treasurer; and C. I. de Sola, Corresponding Secretary. Harris Vineberg, Joseph S. Leo, and the Rev. Meldola de Sola were also members of the Council.

The first Canadian Zionist Convention was held in Montreal on 23 December 1900, with Clarence I. de Sola presiding. The ladies were not far behind the men, and the following year, when they expressed their desire to play an active role, Mrs. Clarence I. de Sola was asked to organise a Ladies' Zionist Society in Montreal. Once again, when it was resolved to form societies for the youth, Shearith Israel members took an active part.

At the 1909 Convention, Mr. de Sola was presented with an illuminated address in recognition of the arduous responsibility which he had carried during the ten years of his presidency. At this convention also, he suggested a fund be set up for the purchase of land in Palestine. This became an accomplished fact within three years. At the 1913 Convention a resolution was proposed to create a Hebrew University in Palestine, and a plea to create a religious Sanhedrin in Palestine was advanced by Meldola de Sola.

Clarence de Sola was called to Ottawa on 29 May 1917 for a very confidential but momentous meeting with the Hon. Arthur J. Balfour. The conference lasted for two hours. After Mr. Balfour's return to England the famous Declaration declaring Britain's approval of a Jewish Home in Palestine was drawn up and signed. The news was received with great enthusiasm in the Dominion.

After twenty fruitful and active years, Mr. de Sola resigned the presidency of the Zionist Federation, as the society was now called, occupying the chair for the last time at the 16th Convention in January 1919.

J. S. Leo had been Recording Secretary for twenty years and President of the Montreal Zionist Federation for its first five years.

### XIII

#### Military Distinctions

Aaron Hart served as Commissary Officer

during the Seven Years' War, at the close of which Canada had become a British possession. From this time forward, the Jews of Canada took an active part in the military forces whenever the country's peace was threatened.

When the American Revolution broke out in 1775, the majority of Jewish settlers remained in Canada and Aaron Hart again provided supplies for the British Army and the Canadian Militia. A letter received from his cousin, Samuel Judah, from Montreal, informed Aaron Hart when the war was over and the United States had won its independence.<sup>105</sup>

#### WAR WITH UNITED STATES

In 1812, when war again broke out with the United States, the younger men of the Jewish community immediately joined the militia. David David, Benjamin Solomon, and Myer Michaels attended the Governor's Levée and then left to join their regiments.<sup>106</sup> Among other engagements, they fought under General de Salaberry at the Battle of Chateauguay. Ezekiel Hart was a Lieutenant attached to the 8th Battalion of Three Rivers.<sup>107</sup> He, too, served under General de Salaberry and ended his military career as a Colonel. Benjamin Hart, who was first refused officer rank in the militia, preceded his enlistment as a private by financing the garrison at Fort William Henry. He then saw active duty till the Battle of Odelltown. As had Ezekiel Hart, Samuel David had joined the militia in 1803. He became a Captain in the 2nd Montreal Regiment of Volunteers and was later gazetted Major.

In the Rebellion of 1837, three members of the David family saw active service and all distinguished themselves. Moses Ezekiel David and his cousin, Moses Samuel David, were racing enthusiasts, so it was natural that both young men should enlist in the cavalry. Eleazer David, Moses Samuel's brother, also elected to join this branch of the militia.

In 1835 Eleazer was gazetted Lieutenant and Adjutant to a cavalry regiment and five months later he and his brother were placed in charge

<sup>105</sup> *Early American Jewry*, Vol. I, p. 239.

<sup>106</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 503.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 535, 536.

of a patrol in Montreal which assisted the police in preventing the incendiarism which preceded the Rebellion.<sup>108</sup>

The first paid military watch in Montreal came into being in November 1836 and Eleazer was detailed Captain in Charge, attaining the official rank of Captain the following year. He was in charge of the cavalry escort to the Sheriff when Queen Victoria's accession was proclaimed in August 1837 and was promoted to the rank of Major in the field. This promotion was for gallantry at the Battle of St. Charles, where, while commanding the Royal Montreal Cavalry Regiment, a horse was shot from under him. Major David later held the rank of Colonel in this regiment, afterwards renamed the Mount Royal Cavalry Regiment.

Moses Samuel David was an Ensign in the militia in 1835 and was sent with a cavalry detachment to arrest the rebel leaders in 1837. The following year, he commanded the cavalry escort which attended Governor-General Sir John Colborne at the swearing-in ceremony. Later, in 1838, Moses Samuel David was appointed Adjutant to the Mount Royal Cavalry Regiment. He retired as lieutenant in 1842 and was presented with a silver cup by the officers and men.

Another brother, Dr. Aaron Hart David, joined the Medical Division of the Montreal Rifle Corps.<sup>109</sup> Later, during the Fenian Raids of 1866, he became Surgeon to the Hochelaga Light Infantry and saw service with three of his sons, David, Tucker, and Sullivan. When he retired from the militia, Dr. David received the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel.

The Joseph family, too, played an active part in the militia.<sup>110</sup> During the 1837 Rebellion Jacob Henry Joseph served at Chambly and at Richelieu, as an officer with troops dispatched to resist an American attack at Lacolle. At one time he was entrusted with dispatches sent from Sir John Colborne to General Wetherall. The papers were hidden in his leather saddle lining to avoid capture by the rebels. His

<sup>108</sup> B. G. Sack, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>109</sup> Miss Fanny Joseph's Diary, containing news-clipping, *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, 20 Jan. 1962, article by Dr. H. Ballon on Dr. A. H. David.

<sup>110</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 504.

brother, Jesse Joseph, also served in the militia; another brother, Abraham, was associated with Aaron Philip Hart and others in a plan to form a British Rifle Corps in Quebec City.

#### READING RIOT ACT

Benjamin Hart, the President of the congregation, was now a man of 58, but again he volunteered to serve his country, as he had in 1812. When the Rebels made their first attack on 6 November 1837, Benjamin Hart went after them; as a Justice of the Peace in Montreal, he read the Riot Act and took their leader, Mr. Naysmith, into custody. At the request of the Attorney-General, he remained on duty for four successive nights at the office of the Clerk of the Peace, taking depositions and issuing warrants for arrest. It was no wonder that Hart wrote to a correspondent in London at this period, 'The various troubles we have experienced for the last nine months have caused us to forget all civil duties to perform military ones'.

The year 1866 saw the first of the Fenian Raids in Canada.<sup>111</sup> These raids were skirmishes at the American border, fomented by Irish patriots who, embroiled with England in their home country, hoped to embarrass Great Britain in trouble abroad. When the militia was mobilised, David Hart enrolled as an officer in the First Prince of Wales Rifles. Captain David Hart fought in a small action at Limeridge and then returned to civilian life until 1870; in that year, the threat of a second Raid caused him to volunteer once more.<sup>112</sup> This time, however, the danger was short-lived and a little over a month later the men were disbanded; but Dr. Hart retained his interest in the militia and was Surgeon-General for many years.

Dr. David Hart's brother, Lewis Alexander Hart, was also a member of the militia. In 1870 he held the rank of Lieutenant and was stationed at Laprairie when the Second Fenian Raid occurred.

#### GREAT WAR VOLUNTEERS

In 1914 the Great War broke out and, as

<sup>111</sup> Gerald E. Hart Papers, McCord Museum.

<sup>112</sup> *The Jew in Canada*, p. 39.

always, Trustees and members of the Shearith Israel Congregation volunteered. Times had changed and it was no longer in the ranks of the militia that they served; this time they joined the ranks of the regular Army. Many members had distinguished military records, among them Captain William Sebag-Montefiore. Retiring as an officer from the British Army before the war, he immediately rejoined and served throughout the conflict. Promoted from Lieutenant to Captain, he served in France, Egypt, and Palestine, where he commanded a cavalry squadron. He was mentioned in dispatches and awarded the Military Cross.

Captain Herbert Lightstone and three brothers, sons of Michael Lightstone, all saw active service.<sup>113</sup> A well-known physician and veteran of the Boer and Spanish-American Wars, Dr. Lightstone joined the Medical Corps in 1914. He was decorated by the French Government for his efforts in stamping out a typhoid epidemic in a French Division. Captain Lightstone was mentioned in dispatches several times and received the Distinguished Service Order. A brother, Ira Lightstone, who was living in France when war broke out, crossed to England to join the British Army. Two other brothers, Albert and Gordon, also were on active service, the latter serving at Salonika and in Malta.

A. Hugh Joseph, grandson of Abraham Joseph, Maitland Leo, son of J. S. Leo, for so many years a Trustee of the congregation, Albert Freedman, and numerous others all served overseas.<sup>114</sup> Many were severely wounded, and Lieutenant Alexander Solomon lost his life at Hill 70 in 1918. He had taken a leading part in

<sup>113</sup> Spanish and Portuguese Congregation Book celebrating the 150th Anniversary, p. 59.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 60, 62.

raising a Jewish Company of Reinforcements, in which company Philip Blumenthal also served. He, too, fought at Hill 70 but fortunately survived.

#### SERVICE IN WORLD WAR II

In 1939, the Second World War began, and again, as so many times before, members of the Spanish and Portuguese Congregation enlisted. The Rev. Charles Bender, Minister of the synagogue, was Jewish Chaplain to the R.C.A.F., and Shearith Israel's present religious leader, Dr. Solomon Frank, was Jewish Chaplain to the Canadian Army. Hy. Zilbert, invaluable in his present position as Executive Secretary of the congregation, was a member of the R.C.A.F., as was E. Henry Blaustein. Synagogue members were in the Royal Canadian Artillery and the Royal Canadian Navy, and Dr. S. Sanders saw service in the First Canadian Survey Regiment.

As in the Great War, so in the Second World War, the ladies of the congregation took their part. Miss Rosetta Joseph, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Montefiore Joseph, of Quebec, had served overseas with the V.A.D. for over three years in the Great War; her example was followed in the Second World War by Mrs Harry Erdrich, who volunteered for the same Service and was overseas.

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This history has dealt with past achievements and the names mentioned are those which have withstood the test of time. It would be presumptuous to acclaim present members of the congregation; the honour due them must be inscribed in the next chapter of the Shearith Israel history.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of Montreal was the first synagogue to be founded in Canada. In 1968 the two-hundredth anniversary of this unique institution was celebrated.

This work, covering those busy 200 years, is the product of the cooperative efforts of a

number of dedicated individuals; while it is not possible to give individual recognition to all those who contributed to it, special thanks are due to Mrs. E. Henry Blaustein, Mrs. J. D. Esar, and Mrs. E. Miller. They more than anyone else deserve credit for this work. They were responsible for the research, the collection of

data, and writing the manuscript. Their love for this synagogue and their devotion to the community deserve respect and admiration. Their families have earned the gratitude of all for their patience and fortitude. Thanks are also due to Miss Betty Saskin, and to Mr. Hy. Zilbert, Executive Secretary of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, for the service he rendered in gathering and processing the research material; and to Mr. Alan Rose and Mr. Ronald Finegold for their valuable suggestions and their contribution to the gathering of pictorial material.

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