

Peddling, Politics, and Winnipeg's Jews, 1891–1895: The Political Acculturation of an Urban Immigrant Community

HENRY TRACHTENBERG*

Peddlers, a largely Jewish marginal socio-economic group in Canada, played a particular role in the political acculturation of an urban immigrant community, the Jews of Winnipeg, in the late nineteenth century. Winnipeg Jewry was in a state of continuous anxiety in the early 1890s, mainly because of the attitudes and policies of Winnipeg municipal politicians, especially increases in peddlers' fees and the enforcement of early closing and other municipal bylaws. Seeking to guarantee their well-being, the city's Jews turned to political activity as a defence mechanism to avert enmity from the larger society and to gain its approval.

Les colporteurs, un groupe socio-économique marginal à forte prédominance juive au Canada, ont joué un rôle particulier dans l'acculturation politique d'une communauté d'immigrants urbains — les Juifs de Winnipeg — à la fin du XIX^e siècle. La communauté juive de Winnipeg se trouvait dans un état de constante anxiété au début des années 1890 en raison principalement du comportement et des politiques adoptés par les élus municipaux de Winnipeg, notamment les hausses des frais imposés aux colporteurs ainsi que l'application du règlement sur la fermeture des commerces de bonne heure et d'autres arrêtés municipaux. Cherchant à garantir leur bien-être, les Juifs de la ville se lancèrent dans l'arène politique pour se défendre contre l'hostilité du milieu et gagner la faveur de celui-ci.

MORE THAN ONE-QUARTER of a century ago, American Jewish humorist, novelist, publisher, and newspaper editor, Harry Golden, describing the paucity of published materials about peddlers and peddling in the United States, commented: “[T]he peddler — is not even in an index; his place in

* Henry Trachtenberg is a Winnipeg historian who has taught Canadian history at the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba. This article is a revised and enlarged version of a paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Canadian Jewish Historical Society in Kingston in June 1991. The author is grateful to the Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship for making it possible for him to deliver the paper. He also thanks, for their helpful comments and suggestions, Royden Loewen of St. Paul's College, University of Manitoba; Randy Rostecki, Winnipeg historical consultant; Samuel Trachtenberg, Winnipeg historical researcher; and two anonymous referees.

the pageant of America is ignored. Oh, you come across the peddler here and there, but only by accident and then only when you are looking for something else.”¹ Golden’s observations still ring true. If relatively few specialized treatments have been published in the United States about the occupation of peddling and about those who engaged in it, even less attention has been paid by historians to peddling and peddlers in Canada. Despite this apparent lack of importance, however, peddlers in the United States and Canada played a notable role in economic development.²

Before the advent of large department stores, mail-order houses, and modern means of transportation, many Canadians and Americans in cities, in small towns and villages, and on farms bought or bartered for goods from peddlers who carried their stock-in-trade on their backs or pulled them in little carts. In Canada, peddlers frequently secured their merchandise on credit from a Toronto, Montreal, or Winnipeg wholesaler, generally an earlier immigrant himself; instead of cash from customers, they often accepted livestock, produce, scrap metal, and hides or furs, which they sold in turn to dealers or other customers.³

Until fairly recently, most historians of Canada thought of peddlers only in terms of the condescending designation used by personnel of the Hudson’s Bay Company to describe their fur trade rivals of the North West Company in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As the boundaries of Canadian social, urban, immigration, and ethnic history grew and expanded over the last 20 years, however, more attention has been paid to peddling and peddlers. Nevertheless, there have not been any in-depth studies amplifying what British historian John Benson noted a few years ago: that in Canadian urban centres peddling performed many “significant economic and social functions”, not only helping to fill gaps left in the

1 Harry Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer* (Cleveland, N.Y.: The World Publishing Co., 1963), p. 13.

2 *Ibid.*, pp. 14–16, 27, 33–45; Howard Sachar, *A History of the Jews in America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), pp. 40, 42–43, 48–51, 55, 72, 75, 78–79, 124, 140, 143–144; Hasia Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration, 1820–1880*, The Jewish People in America Series, vol. 2 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 66–76; Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York’s Jews 1870–1914*, Torchbook ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 55–56; Oscar Handlin, *Adventure in Freedom: Three Hundred Years of Jewish Life in America* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1954), pp. 52–53, 86–88; Irving Howe, *World of our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976), pp. 77–80.

3 Edwin Wolf, 2nd, and Maxwell Whiteman, *The History of the Jews of Philadelphia from Colonial Times to the Age of Jackson* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1975), p. 184; Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester Publishing Ltd., 1992), p. 162; Irving Abella, *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1990), pp. 49–78; Harry Gutkin, *Journey into our Heritage: The Story of the Jewish People in the Canadian West* (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1980), pp. 37–39, 41–50; Isabel Reekie, “Home Life of the Pioneers” in R. M. of Edward History Book Committee, ed., *Harvests Time: History of the R. M. of Edward [Manitoba]* (Altona, Man.: R. M. of Edward History Book Committee, 1983), p. 24.

retailing system by established agencies, but also providing employment and income to non-English-speaking immigrants on the “margins of Canadian society”.⁴

Perhaps one reason peddlers, with rare exceptions, have not been the subjects of detailed monographs or biographical treatments is that immigrants eagerly accepted prevailing popular values, which accorded prizefighters, for instance, more respect than peddlers. Jewish novelists, writers, and historians, undoubtedly anxious to identify with the larger society, therefore wrote about prizefighters, not peddlers.⁵ Another reason is that in many instances, especially for nineteenth-century Canada, there is a lack of documentation, including diaries, ledgers, private and official letters, and recollections, of audiotaped interviews with peddlers and their children, and of an existing oral tradition. This is certainly the case for the Jews of Winnipeg in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Perhaps this is not surprising, because the Jewish immigrants of this time were concerned not with preparing a record for future generations to interpret, but with the maintenance of religious values, the establishment of religious and educational institutions, and in the larger world economic survival and, more slowly, cultural accommodation.⁶

The absence of primary sources, in either Yiddish or English, creates considerable difficulty in determining answers to some of the questions often posed by social historians about household shapes, family economies, and the role of women and children. Instead, in the case of Winnipeg peddlers in the late nineteenth century, the historian is forced to rely almost exclusively on newspapers, periodicals, and City of Winnipeg minutes and correspondence, rather than on the interpretations of events by the immigrant peddlers themselves. Furthermore, when examining the involvement in the late nineteenth century of the Jewish community in politics at all levels of government, the historian faces the same situation: there are no individual or political party records which shed light on individual and

4 Robert Harney and Harold Troper, *Immigrants: A Portrait of the Urban Experience, 1890–1930* (Toronto: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1975), pp. 54–55; Stephen Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: A History to 1937* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1979), pp. 72–73, 122; John Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada, 1867–1914”, *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 18, no. 35 (May 1985), p. 76; Deena Nathanson, “A Social Profile of Peddlers in the Jewish Community of Toronto, 1891–1930”, *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études juives canadiennes*, vol. 1 (1993), pp. 227–240.

5 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, p. 16. In this tradition, see most recently Seymour Brody, *Jewish Heroes in America* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1991).

6 Arthur Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba: A Social History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 30–60, 68–81, 92–96, 108–112, 129–132; Abraham Arnold, “The Contribution of the Jews to the Opening and Development of the West” in Frank Hall, ed., *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transactions 1968–69*, series 3, no. 25 (May 1, 1970), pp. 26–27, and “The Earliest Jews in Winnipeg 1874–1882”, *The Beaver: Magazine of the North*, outfit 305, no. 2 (Autumn 1974), pp. 4–11; Henry Trachtenberg, “‘The Old Clo’ Move’: Anti-Semitism, Politics, and the Jews of Winnipeg, 1882–1921” (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1984), pp. 13–291.

communal participation, and the researcher is relegated to utilizing newspapers and periodicals.⁷

Winnipeg's Jews were anxious and apprehensive in the 1890s, largely because of the policies adopted and the attitudes manifested by Winnipeg municipal politicians. Chief among the policies were increases in peddlers' licence fees in 1891 and the passage and enforcement of early closing and other municipal bylaws which had an adverse impact on the Jewish community. Winnipeg Jewry, because of its experiences, determined that involvement in municipal politics was the most effective means of guaranteeing both individual and communal well-being, which have as basic foundations equality and recognition. The city's Jewish community turned to political participation, and even to fielding its own candidate for alderman in 1895, as a defence mechanism to ward off aggression and hostility and to seek the acceptance and respect of the host society.⁸

In 1891, 645 Jews lived in Winnipeg, comprising 2.5 per cent of the city's total population of 25,639. One of the city's most sizable ethno-cultural-religious groups of foreign-born ancestry, they constituted 86.8 per cent of Manitoba's Jewish population, as well as Canada's third largest — Montreal's and Toronto's were bigger — Jewish community. Most Winnipeg Jews had immigrated to Canada from Russia during the course of the previous decade, a majority of them as refugees. Many had become small business people, dealers in ready-to-wear clothing and second-hand goods in shops and stores on and around the city's north Main Street. While peddling in Winnipeg was not exclusively a Jewish occupation, in 1891 large numbers of Jews were also hawkers or peddlers, individuals who, in any place other than a fixed shop, sold and delivered their goods at the same time.⁹

There were Jewish peddlers in Winnipeg as early as 1878. In most instances, Jews in Winnipeg, as in the rest of Canada, became peddlers because of poverty, misfortune, discrimination, and the desire to resist assimilation and to control acculturation. Peddling was the "last, desperate resort of the unskilled, the unemployed, the very young and the very old, the sick, the injured and the victimized". Consequently, the number of peddlers in the Manitoba capital grew significantly after the arrival in 1882 of about 350 impoverished Russian refugee Jews. Almost one-half of hawkers purchasing licences in the city's 1889 fiscal year were Jews; undoubtedly, many other Jewish peddlers avoided, or did not bother, obtaining licences.¹⁰

7 Trachtenberg, "The Old Clo' Move", pp. 148–272.

8 *Ibid.*, pp. 133–190.

9 Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics, *Census of Canada 1890–91*, vol. I (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1893), pp. 14, 224–329; Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of the Jews in Canada* (Montreal: Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1939), pp. 18–23, and *A Population Study of the Winnipeg Jewish Community: A Statistical Study* (Montreal: Bureau of Social and Economic Research, Canadian Jewish Congress, 1946), pp. 10–11; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 55; Benson, "Hawking and Peddling in Canada", p. 76.

10 Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 16–20, 25–42; Benson, "Hawking and Peddling in Canada",

While it is difficult to generalize about the occupations of the Russian Jewish refugees who came to Winnipeg in the 1880s — Sir Alexander T. Galt, Canada's High Commissioner to Great Britain, described those of 1882 variously as “partly farmers, but generally trades people”, “farmers and mechanics”, “mechanics of useful trades”, “small traders”, and a “certain proportion ... agriculturists” — substantial numbers of Jews in the Old Country had been peddlers. Peddling had been an important source of livelihood for European Jews for hundreds of years; in the Pale of Settlement of Czarist Russia, particularly the eastern part where the vast majority of Russian Jews lived and were forced to live, it would remain so until 1917. In the late nineteenth century, a rapidly growing Jewish population in the Pale's cities and towns and expulsion from permanent residence in the rural countryside led remarkable numbers to take up peddling. Indeed, many Jews who immigrated to Canada from Eastern Europe, including the Russian Ukraine, and who became peddlers came from towns and *shtetlech* (small rural villages with Jewish populations) where travelling salesmen and merchants were common. In Poland, where itinerant Jewish peddlers were familiar figures and peddling was an expressly Jewish domain, and in Lithuania, part of Russia, male and female market hawkers and rural peddlers proliferated; in Lvov (Lviv) a guild of Jewish street vendors was established.¹¹ In their daily battle to eke out a subsistence living, Russian Jewish men frequently left home for a week or several weeks and months at a time to peddle their wares through villages and hamlets in the countryside.¹²

While the Russian government applied the term “retail commerce”, which meant small shopkeeping and petty trade, to one-half of the Jewish inhabitants of the Pale, this hardly described “the marginal existence” scraped out by hundreds of thousands of miserably impoverished people. Living a “grudging and bitter” life in a “keen and continual” competition for economic survival, many Russian Jews turned to peddling because they became frantic in their efforts to provide for their families. In so doing, they accepted that peddling was exhausting and often degrading work and bore the

pp. 80–81; City of Winnipeg, *Comptroller's Report of Receipts and Expenditure for the Fiscal Year Ending 30th April, 1889* (Winnipeg: McIntyre Bros., Prtrs., for the City of Winnipeg, 1889), pp. 49–52, and *Comptroller's Report for the Fiscal Year Ending 30th April 1890*, pp. 46, 52–54.

11 National Archives of Canada (hereafter NAC), Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, MG26A, vol. 219, pp. 93327, 93343, 93351, Galt to Macdonald (Private), February 3, 1882; (Confidential), February 11, 1882; February 21, 1882; and Records of the Department of the Secretary of State, High Commissioner's Office, RG6 A4, vol. 242, file 41, 1882, “Emigration of Jews, in Russia, to Canada”, Galt to J. A. Mousseau, Secretary of State, February 24, 1882; Howard Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1977), pp. 190–191; Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union 1881 to the Present* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), pp. 14, 71–81.

12 Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence*, pp. 78–79.

concomitant insults and abuse of peasants, nobles, and officials as long as their work led at least to a modicum of independence.¹³

Jews in Russia also became peddlers because they had been forbidden by law not only to own land, but to engage in any but a very few kinds of business and to work in any but a very few of the handicraft trades. As well, they found that learning a trade was incompatible with their religious observances. Even when Russian Christians would accept Jews as apprentices, Orthodox Jews could not accept the positions because they could not work or handle money on the Jewish Sabbath, embracing sundown Friday evening to sundown Saturday evening, and on the myriad of Jewish holy days. Judaism's dietary laws, involving, for example, the consumption of only kosher food and the separation of meat and milk products and utensils, also prevented Jews from becoming apprenticed in non-Jewish households. Russian Jews, therefore, came to North America with fewer specialized skills and more limited experience than their non-Jewish fellow immigrants and in North American cities tended to petty trade and shopkeeping. Moreover, Jewish immigrant craftsmen in the late nineteenth century found their skills were not easily adaptable to the mass-production factories in American and Canadian industrial cities. Lack of knowledge of the dominant language was a further initial hindrance.¹⁴ As occurred in New York, Russian Jews who arrived in Winnipeg were escaping an urban "pale" to seek refuge from economic hardship as well as from persecution, and for the most part they filled the lowest-paying jobs.¹⁵

The Russian Jews in Winnipeg had entered "such callings as were open to men with such limited capital"; hence, many "took to the streets for an income", as "precarious" as that may have been, "stepping onto the lowest rung of the entrepreneurial ladder as vendors and peddlers". As was the case for many Italian immigrants to urban Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who also started at the bottom of the occupational ladder, for the Jewish newcomers small petty trade initially became the major avenue of economic mobility, offering them the best chance to break free from grinding poverty or heavy work, if any could be found, and permitting them to escape the constraints of the wage system and to achieve some degree of economic independence. Indeed, having come to North America with considerable entrepreneurial experience but little ready cash, peddling was a "logical avenue" of commerce for Russian Jews. While they could not afford stores or large inventories of sewing supplies, stationery, cutlery, and other housewares, with a few pennies they could purchase small

13 Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, pp. 190–191.

14 Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: The History of a National Minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 23–26, 31–32, 34; Rischin, *The Promised City*, pp. 22–26; Richard Wade, "Foreword" in Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City, 1880–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. viii; Kessner, *The Golden Door*, pp. xiii, 18, 38, 50, 60, 86.

15 Wade, "Foreword" in Kessner, *The Golden Door*, p. viii; Kessner, *The Golden Door*, p. 17.

stocks that could be carried in a drummer bag or knapsack or pulled or pushed in a cart or wagon. Many Jewish peddlers in Winnipeg, elsewhere in Canada, and in the United States used the trade to “get a start” in establishing their own businesses, as had significant numbers of Jews from Germany who had immigrated earlier.¹⁶ Russian Jewish immigrant peddlers, who could not speak English and who looked “different” in appearance, could earn a living, however meagre, while they learned English and became acculturated to North American ways.¹⁷

The sweet smell of commercial success was alluring to an “especially vigorous” minority of peddlers who believed fervently in the proposition that through “extensive self-exploitation” they would save some money with which to start a small, if not humble, business. In the 1880s and early 1890s many Winnipeg Jewish peddlers, like others in North American cities, were convinced that, through peddling, “fine combs” could be turned into gold. Over time the more successful, as in Toronto, also “became middlemen and shopkeepers”.¹⁸

Shortly after his arrival in 1882, for example, Tevel Finkelstein, a former merchant in Russia who had worked unloading lumber on his first day in Winnipeg, established a small grocery store. Supplying the newcomers with provisions, he did a thriving business in the summer of 1882 and became the equivalent of a wholesale supplier to many of the Jews who began to peddle goods in 1883. One woman who received a parcel of merchandise from Finkelstein hung her wares in the front window of the family shanty and became an owner and manager of her own business.¹⁹ The woman's daughter, Bella Weretnikow Rosenbaum, recalled:

At his [Finkelstein's] store, those of the group who became peddlers were given their first start, and later their stocks were replenished. They went off to trade with the Indians, ... Scotch [*sic*], and English in the surrounding territory. Business was nearly always good — they had customers waiting for them. Thus they prospered and, in due time, most of the peddlers opened stores of their own.²⁰

16 F. H. Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*, vol. 1 (Winnipeg: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1913), p. 384; Chiel, *The Jews in Manitoba*, pp. 16, 19–20, 58; Bruno Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada*, Canada's Ethnic Groups Booklet, no. 14 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1989), p. 22, and *On the Move: French Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy, 1860–1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991), p. 144; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 55; Kessner, *The Golden Door*, pp. 19, 60; Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, pp. 16, 19–21.

17 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, pp. 20–21.

18 Rischin, *The Promised City*, p. 55; Howe, *World of our Fathers*, p. 80; Kessner, *The Golden Door*, p. 60; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 55; Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, pp. 72–73.

19 Moses Finkelstein, “Personal Reminiscences of an Early Jewish Settler in Western Canada”, *The Reform Advocate*, “Jews of Winnipeg” Edition (Chicago, 1914), pp. 3–4; Bella Rosenbaum, “In My Lifetime”, *American Jewish Archives*, vol. 19, no. 1 (April 1967), p. 8; Mrs. S. A. Ripstein, interviewed by Louis Matlin, “Passover in Pioneer Days in Winnipeg”, *The Jewish Post*, April 23, 1929.

20 Rosenbaum, “In My Lifetime”, p. 7.

In 1885, Walter Abel, an agricultural delegate from Germany, accompanied by Dominion Immigration Agent W. C. B. Grahame, visited several Manitobans. Among them was a Jew who had arrived from Russia in 1882 and had embarked in peddling. Abel reported:

He [the Russian Jew] had no knowledge whatever of the English language, and some friends of the same faith made him learn these two insignificant words: "Buy something." These two words and a couple of dollars were the start to a successful business career. The same Russian Jew keeps now a large fruit store on the main street of Winnipeg.²¹

Despite these examples of "success stories", many peddlers did not become middlemen or shopkeepers. Peddling in Winnipeg, as in other Canadian and American cities, was "backbreaking and soul-destroying work", and the peddler could only become successful through very considerable physical exertion during which he or she "had to be as tough as any navy".²² Tramping innumerable miles in the scorching sun, torrential rains, mosquito swarms, strength-sapping humidity, and blinding dust clouds of summer and in the deep snows and biting frigid winds of winter, the peddlers followed their instinct that success would allow them to enter the mainstream society; failure would emphasize their alienation as foreigners.²³

In addition, Jewish peddlers in Winnipeg, as in other Canadian and American cities, had to contend with economic disasters such as horses and wagons becoming stuck in mud in the streets during and after heavy rains. A horse often had to be destroyed because it broke its leg trying to extricate itself. Frequently, as in Russia, where they had dared to walk great distances both in towns and through the countryside amid a hostile population, the peddlers also faced humiliations, including the "rebuffs of housewives, the torments of young rowdies, and the harassment of the police" which "intimidated the less venturesome and the more sensitive".²⁴ Common were incidents such as the one in 1895 involving a Winnipeg Jewish woman peddler and two small boys, recalled by Laura Sapper Rackow, then a young Jewish girl living on Jarvis Avenue in the city's North End, whose father was a Winnipeg-based "country peddler":

21 Addenda no. 23, *Report of the Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion of Canada for the Calendar Year 1885*, Sessional Paper no. 10, Canada, *Sessional Papers 1886*, vol. 19, no. 7 (Ottawa: MacLean, Roger and Co., 1886), p. 134.

22 Laura Sapper Rackow, "I Remember Winnipeg: Childhood" in Susan Turner, ed., *Jewish Life and Times: A Collection of Essays*, vol. 4 (Winnipeg: Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada, 1985), p. 67; Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, pp. 19–21, 121–153; Handlin, *Adventure in Freedom*, p. 52; Rischin, *The Promised City*, p. 56.

23 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, pp. 14, 20.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 14; Rackow, "I Remember Winnipeg", pp. 66–67; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 86; Rischin, *The Promised City*, p. 55.

I heard their high-pitched little voices raised in an anti-Semitic jingle that ... I knew well, and which always made me flinch as from hard blows — “Any rags, any rubbers, any bottles today,” and they ended with shouting, “Ikey, Ikey”, as they waved their little hands under their chins in a well-known anti-Semitic gesture.... [T]heir onslaught was ... directed ... at ... a familiar figure trudging towards them ... raising the dust of the road in little billows that flitted in and out of the folds of her unusually long, wide skirt.... She appeared to be quite unperturbed by the tirade directed at her by the boys.... [She] addressed the boys quietly in broken English, “You breng me rubbers and bottles and I giff you tsents for dem [*sic*].” The boys burst into peals of laughter and one of them shouted, “Come on, let’s go find some,” and they ... ran away, still chanting, “Any rags, any rubbers, any bottles today.”²⁵

Winnipeg’s Jewish and Gentile peddlers sold notions, razors, carpet slippers, snuffboxes, tobacco, fruit, fish, vegetables, milk, bread and other food-stuffs, spectacles, hair and clothes brushes, wearing apparel, sewing supplies, and household utensils and often purchased old clothes, rags, bottles, and scrap metal. By the 1890s Jewish peddlers were active throughout Canada, and the initial popularity of peddling among Winnipeg Jews paralleled the situation in Toronto,²⁶ Montreal, and other North American cities.²⁷

That a relationship between peddlers and politics developed among Winnipeg Jewry in the late nineteenth century is perhaps not surprising. In a letter to Sir Alexander T. Galt concerning immigration to Western Canada in 1882, Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald commented that: “The Old Clo’ move is a good one — a sprinkling of Jews in the North West would do good. They would at once go in for peddling and politics and be of much use in the New Country as Cheap Jacks & Chapmen.”²⁸ In this, as in many other matters, Macdonald demonstrated considerable intuition. As Abraham Arnold observed, the first of Macdonald’s predictions came true almost immediately: “Jews are remembered as peddlers and politicians.” Indeed, in western Manitoba, two villages — Shilo and Leon — were named after itinerant Jewish “country peddlers”.²⁹

25 Rackow, “I Remember Winnipeg”, pp. 61, 64–67.

26 Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, p. 72; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 55; Tulchinsky, *Taking Root*, p. 131; Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada”, pp. 77–78, 80–81; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 1890.

27 Rischin, *The Promised City*, pp. 55–56; Howe, *World of our Fathers*, pp. 77–80; Paul-André Linteau, René Durocher, and Jean-Claude Robert (trans. by Robert Chodos), *Quebec: A History 1867–1929* (Toronto: James Lorimer, 1983), p. 47; and Michael Brown, *Jew or Juif? Jews, French Canadians, and Anglo-Canadians, 1759–1914* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1987), p. 182.

28 NAC, Sir John A. Macdonald Papers, MG26A, vol. 524, *Letter Book 21*, p. 680. A “Cheap Jack” has been defined as a travelling hawker, and a “chapman” as a peddler. H. W. Fowler and F. G. Fowler, eds., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 5th ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 200, 203.

29 William Kurelek and Abraham Arnold, *Jewish Life in Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1976),

There was also a ready identification between Jewish peddlers and the Winnipeg Jewish community. Peddling offered Eastern European immigrant Jews an opportunity to maintain traditional Jewish values that might have been endangered in other types of employment, which often could not be obtained in any event. This was very important in Winnipeg's and Canada's small and compact, almost completely Orthodox Jewish religious environment. As one historian of Canadian Jewry noted, in the late nineteenth century Russian Jewish immigrants to Canada brought with them a "deeply pious, rigid orthodoxy", and in the 1880s and 1890s Canadian Jews "overwhelmingly" remained tied to Orthodox Judaism with tradition "firmly in place". Peddlers could attend services in the synagogue each morning and linger to study a page of Talmud (Babylonian and Palestinian compilations of the records of academic discussion and judicial administration of Jewish law) afterwards. By not working on Jewish holy days, they lost income, but their jobs remained secure. The observation made about Toronto's immigrant Jews also was applicable to those in Winnipeg; peddling allowed them "to retain [their] dignity, which depended, at least prior to 1900, on [their] role within the Jewish community, on piety and learning rather than on wealth or occupational status".³⁰

The bond between Jewish peddlers and the larger Winnipeg Jewish community also was strengthened when peddlers acted on behalf of other Jews. For instance, in 1891 peddlers who traded in the Mennonite settlements in southern Manitoba represented the interests of the Hebrew Benevolent Society to which they belonged. They negotiated for Russian Jewish refugees to work on Mennonite farms. One hundred and twenty male Jews did so; they earned average or above average wages and returned to Winnipeg in the fall of 1891 each with \$80 or \$90 in cash.³¹

The granting of licences as a method of both raising municipal revenues and regulating peddlers was not new in Winnipeg in 1891. As early as 1874, the eleventh bylaw passed by the City Council was one "to license and regulate Hawkers, Transient Traders, etc.". Bylaw 15 (1874) provided for the appointment of an inspector and for regulating licences. In succeeding years, many bylaws were introduced or passed amending or repealing others specifically pertaining to peddlers' licences. Additional bylaws which affected Jews in commerce regulated and licensed pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers, the sale of liquor, hotels, saloons, theatres, public markets, vendors of cigarettes and cigars, auctioneers, the proper observance of the Sabbath, and early closing for a variety of occupations and establishments.

p. 49; Geographic Board of Canada, *Place-Names of Manitoba* (Ottawa: King's Printer for the Dept. of the Interior, 1933), p. 81.

30 Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, p. 72; Gerald Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History", *Journal of Canadian Studies/Revue d'études canadiennes*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Winter 1982-1983), pp. 46, 52; Nathanson, "A Social Profile of Peddlers", pp. 36-37.

31 *Manitoba Free Press*, November 26, 1891.

Some rural municipalities in Manitoba also used licensing to regulate peddlers and to raise revenues. The rural municipality of Woodworth in western Manitoba instituted a \$10 licence fee in 1892; peddlers found guilty of not having licences were subject to payment of the fee and a maximum fine of \$10.³²

In North America in the late nineteenth century, peddlers, establishing regular routes, calling on the same people, selling on credit, and accepting payments “on time” (weekly or monthly), gradually became effective economic competitors for storekeepers. Merchants who paid a variety of municipal taxes were influential members of local communities with vested interests in their businesses. Their profits threatened by the itinerant interlopers, they urged municipal councils, in some instances those on which they served, to introduce bylaws and licensing regulations to protect them and “to regulate” the peddlers.³³

In Canada, where local trade associations mounted increasingly insistent campaigns against every type of hawking and peddling, the Retail Grocers' Association was particularly active, urging the strict enforcement of all applicable regulations and bylaws. In the Manitoba capital in 1887 and again in 1889, the organization appeared before the City of Winnipeg's Market, License and Health Committee to complain about unfair competition from the proliferation of peddlers who travelled “house to house, up and down the stairs, knocking on doors, and hoping to cajole a housewife”. As in Toronto, the peddlers' “only edge on their native Canadian competition was their willingness to go to the customer, to give the emerging ... middle classes the same custom service that had been the privilege of the rich.” Hit in their pocketbooks, the grocers sought redress of grievance through the introduction of increased peddlers' fees. By December 1890, with the onset of a severe local, national, and international economic depression, merchants alleged that the “peddling business” had “so developed that householders ha[d] no occasion to leave their homes for any ... furniture, dry goods, groceries, vegetables, fish”.³⁴

The Retail Grocers' Association in Winnipeg, none of whose members appear to have been Jews, formed part of a national “chorus” of “well-orchestrated complaints” about peddlers which reached a “crescendo” in the

32 City of Winnipeg, *By-Laws of the City of Winnipeg from the Date of its Incorporation in 1874 to the 8th May, 1899, inclusive, as reported by the Special Committee Appointed by the Municipal Council on the 25th Day of March, 1899* (Winnipeg: The Stovel Co., Ptrs., for the City of Winnipeg, 1900), pp. xxvi–liv; Dorothy Vipond, *Proudly We Speak: A History of the Rural Municipality of Woodworth* (Kenton, Man.: The Woodworth Centennial Committee, 1967), p. 26; *The Minnedosa Tribune*, May 22, 1890.

33 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, p. 19.

34 Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada”, p. 82; Howe, *World of our Fathers*, p. 79; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, pp. 55, 86; *The Daily Manitoban*, March 31, 1887; *The [Winnipeg] Sun*, May 7, 1889; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 1890, and February 9, 1891.

depressed years of the early 1890s, when pressure to extend and to increase licence fees was bolstered by demands for “new and stricter controls”. The merchants also found a formidable ally in Washington Frank Lynn, an artist, publicist, former journalist, and unsuccessful municipal politician whose wife operated a notions store, and in the mayor of Winnipeg, Alfred Pearson, himself a merchant. At meetings of the Market, License and Health Committee in December 1890 and January 1891, Pearson put forward motions instructing the inspector not to issue any more peddlers’ licences until further notice from the Committee and recommending increases in fees from \$10 to \$50 (for a peddler on foot) and from \$25 to \$100 (for a peddler with a horse and wagon). According to Lynn, who also spoke at the January meeting, “the Jews” were not paying taxes and were doing two-thirds of the business, while Gentile merchants, paying two-thirds of the city’s taxes and doing little business, were forced to sell Jewish peddlers goods at 33 per cent discount or at wholesale prices to meet their payments.³⁵

Although they were somewhat tardy in responding to the serious threat to their economic existence — Winnipeg License Inspector Thomas English claimed that the peddlers “were mostly Jews” — Winnipeg Jewry articulated its opposition to increased peddlers’ fees. In February 1891 several petitions opposing fee increases, signed by many Jewish peddlers and small businessmen, were presented before the committee and City Council.³⁶ One petition, signed by more than 90 individuals, about 50 of whom were Jewish, claimed:

[P]resent fees are quite as much as the poor class of peddlers now fallig [*sic*] that calling are able to pay for their stocks in trade [which] does [*sic*] not amount to much more than five or Ten Dollars at one time.... [A] larger number would thereby be deprived of the possibility of making their present poor living [if fees were increased].³⁷

The peddlers received support from organized labour. The working class was opposed to increases in fees because goods purchased from peddlers

35 Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada”, pp. 78, 82; Henderson Directory Co., comp., *Henderson’s Manitoba, Northwest Territories and British Columbia Gazetteer and Directory for 1891* (Winnipeg: The Henderson Directory Co., 1891), pp. 947, 978; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 11, 1890, January 23, 1891, February 4 and 5, 1891; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 11, 1890, and January 23, 1891; City of Winnipeg Archives and Public Records Control (hereafter CWAPRC), *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 5*, pp. 200, 204.

36 *Manitoba Free Press*, January 23 and February 6, 10, and 19, 1891; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, February 6, 9, 10, and 19, 1891; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1890–91, nos. 1702, 1706, 1707, 1715, 1725; *Council Minute Book L 1891*, pp. 15, 18, 28; *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 5*, p. 207. According to the 1890–1891 Canadian census, there were 78 “Hucksters and pedlers [*sic*]”, all males over the age of 15, in Manitoba. Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics, *Census of Canada 1890–91*, vol. 2 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1893), pp. 149, 190.

37 CWAPRC, Council Communications 1890–91, no. 1725.

were cheaper than those from retail merchants. As was the situation in New York and other North American cities at the time, peddlers who were able to sell in small quantities, from a penny's worth up, accommodated a bargain-eager clientele with limited storage space, especially for perishable foods. Avid competition among sellers, furthermore, crippling to the peddlers, reduced living costs for many families. The Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, the Manitoba Trades and Labour Council, and the Canadian Pacific Railway employees all presented petitions or appeared before the City Council or Market Committee opposing increases. Labour representative George Rice, for example, maintained that "the Jew peddler" paid as much tax on his goods as a Main Street merchant, and that fee increases would injure not only consumers, but also Mayor Pearson and other merchants who had sold Jews goods which "they hadn't cheek enough to sell to their customers". The Jews received editorial support from the illustrated Winnipeg weekly, *Town Talk*, ironically since the periodical often belittled them in anti-Semitic stories and jokes.³⁸ The weekly observed:

Because a man named Goldbloom is supposed to have considerable stock which the accessor [*sic*] didn't find, the dozens of poor wretches whose peddling just keeps them above starvation, are to have their fees doubled.³⁹

A number of letters to the editor also protested the fee increase. One from "Live and Let Live" stated:

[The increase would] virtually ... prohibit a number of poor people, be they Jew or Gentile, from earning what is at best a scanty livelihood.... The few dollars which these peddlers receive ... are expended ... in the city in replenishing their stock and in living.... I do not believe there is one among them ... worth a hundred dollars.⁴⁰

On February 23, 1891, a deputation of Jewish peddlers attended City Hall to advance their arguments against the increases, but "were disappointed in not being able to put their side of the case" because the City Council did not meet due to lack of a quorum.⁴¹

The adamant opposition of both Winnipeg Jewry and of organized labour

38 Rischin, *The Promised City*, pp. 55–56; CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 5*, p. 207; Council Communications 1890–91, nos. 1715, 1725; *Council Minute Book L 1891*, p. 28; *Manitoba Free Press*, February 19, 1891; *Town Talk*, April 5 and 26, 1890, and January 31, 1891.

39 *Town Talk*, February 28, 1891. William Goldbloom had purchased a hawker's licence for \$20 in January 1890. City of Winnipeg, *Comptroller's Report*, p. 53.

40 *The Winnipeg Tribune*, February 5, 1891; also *Manitoba Free Press*, February 10, 1891.

41 *Manitoba Free Press*, February 24, 1891; CWAPRC, *Council Minute Book L 1891*, p. 18. The composition of the deputation and how and by whom its members were chosen are not known.

was overcome, however. At a special City Council meeting on March 31, 1891, fees were increased from \$10 to \$25 for a foot peddler, and from \$25 to \$50 for a peddler with a horse and wagon. *The Winnipeg Tribune* noted that “the promoters kept a solid front and forwarded their measure step by step.... Those opposed ... fought hard and relinquished their ground only on a majority of the council being recorded against them.”⁴²

The passage of the bylaw enacting the increases created great consternation among many members of the Jewish community, especially as the measure appeared to be directed against it. The protracted debate represented the first time the community as a whole, through lobbying and “class action”, became directly involved in municipal politics. The issue of fee increases galvanized Winnipeg Jewry into further political activities, and its political acculturation grew apace.⁴³

Peddling was a “hard, bare livelihood”. Immigrant peddlers encountered great difficulty in successfully breaking into the peddling “trade” and in earning an adequate, let alone comfortable, living. They were also frequently sold short measure or even refused service by wholesalers. The increases in fees, similar to ones that occurred in Montreal and Quebec City in 1892, resulted in considerable additional financial hardship for Jewish peddlers. The *Manitoba Free Press* reported in the fall of 1891 that “[a] good many of them have been squeezed pretty tightly while securing the first dollar with which to purchase from Winnipeg merchants some ‘inferior goods’ as their whole stock in trade.”⁴⁴

For several years after 1891, Jews believed that peddlers’ fees were outrageously high. As a result of the increases, combined with the economic depression, many could not afford to purchase a licence. In addition, high fees “encouraged evasion” with “subterfuges” taking “many forms”. City of Winnipeg License Inspector Alexander Polson noted in 1894 the significant decline in the number of peddlers who had obtained licences — from 31 in 1891, to 16 in 1892, to 12 in 1893, to four as of April 10, 1894; of the latter, he had collected from two “in court under great hardship to the parties themselves and to their friends who helped them out”.⁴⁵

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in North American cities, police made wholesale arrests daily, charging peddlers with offences such as obstructing street corners, peddling without licences, and creating public disturbances. Because of its concern for sufficient revenues in a

42 CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 5*, p. 207; *Council Minute Book L 1891*, p. 28; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, April 1, 1891; *Manitoba Free Press*, April 1, 1891.

43 City of Winnipeg, *By-laws ... from ... 1874 to ... 1899*, p. xxxix; *Manitoba Free Press*, January 23, 1891; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, February 5, 1891.

44 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, p. 28; Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada”, p. 81; Brown, *Jew or Juif?*, p. 182; *Manitoba Free Press*, September 23, 1891.

45 Benson, “Hawking and Peddling in Canada”, p. 77; CWAPRC, *Council Communications 1894–95*, no. 2600; Harney and Troper, *Immigrants*, p. 86.

period of financial stringency resulting from the prolonged depression, by 1894 the city of Winnipeg vigorously began to enforce its bylaws, including the one for the licensing of hawkers. As a result, Jewish peddlers received summonses and were fined in court for bylaw violations. In August two Jewish peddlers, father and son, were found guilty of peddling for eight months without a licence and were fined with an option of two weeks in jail in lieu of payment of the fine.⁴⁶ The two peddlers' legal difficulties were reinforced by the humiliation they suffered after publication of the following report:

J. Seegismund, ... a typical Hebrew, stood with downcast face at one side of ... Magistrate [A. Peebles], while his aged patriarchal parent stood opposite.... Old Seegismund proffer[red] for the consideration of the court a license issued in his name. The trick fell flat, for the younger Seegismund had already stated that his name was J. Seegismund. They were severely rebuked by the Magistrate. In a most pathetic manner they both pleaded poverty.... When the words "fourteen days in jail" were uttered the younger Seegismund raised his eyes heavenward in a plea for mercy, much to the fun of the many onlookers.⁴⁷

Other Jewish "street-hawkers" appeared before the magistrate for not having obtained licences and were found guilty and fined. In early 1895 B. Pearl and J. Bloominthal were charged with and convicted of selling diseased meat. As far as much municipal legislation was concerned, Winnipeg Jewry believed as Abraham Lechtzier, a Jewish city businessman, had contended in court, in "the injustice of the law".⁴⁸

It is not surprising, therefore, that peddlers' fees continued to be a municipal issue. Deputations were made and petitions, signed by Jews and Christians, were presented to the City Council requesting a reduction in fees.⁴⁹ One petition in March 1894, signed by 20 Gentiles and 28 Jews, described the critical position of peddlers in Winnipeg:

[A]t the present hard times, we have no means, nor ways to earn anything, for the maintenance of ourselves, and our families, except by Peddling with some

46 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, p. 28; CWAPRC, *Council Minute Book N 1895*, pp. 6, 20, 51–52, 79, 234; *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, pp. 168–169, 177, 200, 206, 208, 215, 218, 222, 226, 229; Council Communications 1894–95, nos. 2842, 2861; *Manitoba Free Press*, July 4, 1895; *The People's Voice*, November 2, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, June 6, 1895; *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, March 1 and 2, 1894; August 10, 1894; February 1, 1895; October 31, 1895; November 15, 16, 19, and 23, 1895.

47 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, August 10, 1894. S. Sigismund had purchased a \$10 hawker's licence in April 1890. City of Winnipeg, *Comptroller's Report*, p. 53.

48 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, March 2, 1894; January 17, 1895; October 31, 1895.

49 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, March 6, 1894; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, March 1, 1894; *Manitoba Free Press*, March 1, 1894; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1894–95, no. 2600; *Council Minute Book M 1893–94*, p. 227; *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, pp. 138, 140.

Small Stocks of Goods, through the City[;] but [we] are prevented [from] doing so, by the high License fee, imposed on us, which amount, we find impossible to pay[.] [I]n the most cases, the stock carried for sale, is not worth as much as the License fee, and quite a number of the undersigned, have been supported during the past winter, by your relieve [*sic*] Committee.⁵⁰

On the advice of Polson, who believed fee reductions would result in collection of fees from all peddlers because “they would then have no excuse” not to pay, and on the recommendation of the Market Committee, Winnipeg City Council passed a bylaw on December 10, 1894, reducing the fees to \$15 for a peddler on foot and to \$30 for one with a horse. In the preceding months, however, several Jews had been fined for not obtaining peddlers’ licences.⁵¹

The critical identification of Jew and peddler in the minds of many journalists and editors, politicians, and members of the public, especially when it was tied to expressions of opposition to Jewish immigration at a time when Jews were enduring persecution and pogroms in Eastern Europe, also troubled Winnipeg Jewry in the early 1890s. Goldwin Smith, lecturer, prolific essayist, and social critic, former Regius Professor of Modern History, Oxford don, and professor of English and constitutional history at Cornell University, was a leading example of the intellectual anti-Semite characteristic of late Victorian Canada. His virulent antagonism to Jewish immigration to Manitoba, first manifested in 1882, remained constant.⁵²

In a letter in 1891 to *The Winnipeg Tribune*, which he had helped to establish the previous year, Smith warned against Canada accepting Jews as immigrants, claiming that they had “want of agricultural aptitude” and fed “like parasites, on the produce of native labor”. Smith, who had lectured in Winnipeg in 1879 and 1887, was well respected by many politicians and by much of the press. *The Tribune* agreed wholeheartedly with Smith’s “unanswerable logic”, observing that “If there is anything this country does not want it is parasites and unprofitable acquisitions of the class described by Mr. Smith. We have had abundant experience with that class in past years.” *The Brandon Sun* newspaper, which earlier had sounded the immigration alarm against “unassimilable” and “undesirable” Europeans constituting a “migratory horde”, authoritatively cited Smith in this

50 CWAPRC, Council Communications 1894–95, no. 2600.

51 *Ibid.* and no. 2646; *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, p. 140; *Council Minute Book M 1893–94*, pp. 257, 371; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 11, 1894; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 11, 1894.

52 Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, p. 22; Sachar, *The Course of Modern Jewish History*, pp. 244–247; Gerald Tulchinsky, “Goldwin Smith: Victorian Canadian Antisemite” in Alan Davies, ed., *Antisemitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1992), pp. 67–91, and “Goldwin Smith: Victorian Liberal Anti-Semite”, *The [Kingston] Whig-Standard Magazine*, September 22, 1990.

instance and contended that Canadians and Americans were the preferable settlers for Manitoba.⁵³

One historian of immigration studies has contended that Canadians viewed the Lower East Side of New York City not as “a cauldron of nascent Jewish renewal in the New World”, but as “a validation of Jewish marginality, disruptive competitiveness and social clanishness exacerbating the worst features of urban life”. If so, then “guardians of the Canadian gate” looked south with loathing and apprehension at immigrant Jewish hawkers, peddlers, and “foreign despoilers” of the American urban landscape. In Winnipeg, as in New York, the “unsightly wagons and baskets filled to overflowing with foods and other merchandise offended the sensibilities” of some citizens, for whom peddling was “repugnant” and the people who practised it “even worse”. The *Manitoba Free Press* claimed, “We get Jews, some of whom peddle, which is very bad. Canadians never heard of peddling until the Jews came.” Another editorial stated that Manitoba wanted settlers “established on farms and not merely landed in destitution in Winnipeg”.⁵⁴

The Colonist, a Winnipeg periodical devoted to Western Canadian development, asserted that Jews were “to be found throughout the country trucking in garbage and second-hand goods” and engaging in “rag and bottle picking”, had been “found by every town and city which has tolerated them, to be the most undesirable kind of citizens”, and were “not wanted in Canada”. This view seems also to have been shared by Joseph Martin, former Attorney-General of Manitoba and in 1894 Liberal Member of Parliament for Winnipeg, who protested in the House of Commons that “Jew peddlers” were being assisted by the Department of the Interior to locate on farms in the North-West Territories.⁵⁵

In 1890 it was reported that the Baron de Hirsch, a Jewish philanthropist, proposed to establish agricultural colonies consisting of “Russian Jews of the agricultural class” in Manitoba and the North-West Territories. *The Winnipeg Siftings* protested that it was dismayed to learn that “the regeneration of these wretched people is to be essayed in our midst”. The periodical contended that the “power of absorption of such lesser — indeed vicious elements — has been stretched ... to all it can bear” and that Jews “should not be allowed to add their large contingent of helplessness to our sufficiently stressed population”.⁵⁶

53 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, August 16, 1879; *Manitoba Free Press*, August 13, 1887; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, January 24 and February 11, 1891; *The Brandon Sun*, January 15 and 29, 1891.

54 Harold Troper, “Jews and Canadian Immigration Policy, 1900–1950” in Moses Rischin, ed., *The Jews of North America* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987), p. 45; Kessner, *The Golden Door*, p. 61; *Manitoba Free Press*, August 25, 1893.

55 *The Colonist: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Western Canada*, November 1891; Canada, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada, 1894*, vol. 37 (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1894), pp. 2417–2418.

56 *The Winnipeg Siftings*, February 15, 1890.

In 1894 and 1895 Winnipeg Jews also were also concerned with the position of the city's Central Relief Association respecting immigration to Canada. An umbrella private relief organization for various religious and charitable institutions in Winnipeg, the association distributed money and provisions to destitute families and individuals and worked closely with municipal officials in its charitable work. The Association's executive committee included the mayor of Winnipeg, the chairman of the Market, License and Health Committee, responsible for city relief, and the city medical and relief officers. Alexander Polson, Winnipeg License Inspector, was elected secretary in 1895.⁵⁷

That year, Alexander Macdonald, president of the Central Relief Association, wrote to the mayor and the council. Given that it had representatives from charitable and religious organizations "irrespective of creed or nationality" and that municipal officials dealt with several cases of Jews requesting financial assistance in 1894 and 1895, presumably the organization aided destitute Jewish families during these years. Perhaps because of the number of cases involving Jews seeking financial relief, Macdonald urged the municipal government to appeal to the federal government to pass legislation restricting the entrance of pauper immigration, which he termed "a burden on the community".⁵⁸

The City Council referred Macdonald's letter to the Market, License and Health Committee, where it was read on February 27, 1895. Although the communication was filed subsequently and apparently no action was taken, Macdonald's comments were indicative of the public opposition in Winnipeg to Jewish immigration.⁵⁹ Observing favourably that other countries had passed legislation restricting entry, Macdonald noted ruefully:

Canada has done nothing in this direction and the more other countries shut their doors, the greater will be the diversion of the current of undesirable immigration in our direction. A large percentage of the cases of poverty handled by the Relief Association is composed of newcomers from foreign lands, who can never become useful [s]ettlers and whose only claim upon us, is that they are here.⁶⁰

There were other reasons for insecurity and tension within the Winnipeg Jewish community. When Jews sought financial relief from the Market, License and Health Committee, aldermen discussed cases involving "a Jew",

57 Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Alexander Polson Papers, MG14, B38, *The First Annual Report of the Central Relief Association of Winnipeg and Constitution of the Central Relief Association of Winnipeg*.

58 *Ibid.*; CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, pp. 152, 157, 162, 172, 208, 219; Council Communications 1895, no. 2913.

59 CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, p. 186.

60 CWAPRC, Council Communications 1895, no. 2913.

“Jew relief”, “a Jew woman”, and “a Jew family”. Rarely were the names of potential recipients, or those applying on their behalf, mentioned in the Committee minutes, whereas in cases of non-Jews individuals were almost always identified by name.⁶¹ On August 1, 1894, for example, the committee considered a request from a Jew with chronic rheumatism for financial assistance to enable him to move to Toronto, noting also that another Jew named Benjamin had collected \$25 to aid the infirm man. Elisha Hutchings, the committee chairman and alderman for Ward 5, stated that requests for financial help were “getting so frequent as to become ... serious ... especially where the tribe of Benjamin was concerned” and that Jews “would not work” and were of “no use to the country”. Two years later *The Winnipeg Tribune* claimed that, except at election time, Hutchings had been Winnipeg Jewry’s “greatest hater”, had not “hesitate[d] to show it”, and as chairman had “continually submitted” Jews to “the greatest abuse”, often going “out of his way to get a slap at them”.⁶²

Throughout the mid-1890s, the Winnipeg press continued to devote considerable attention to the alleged misdeeds and court appearances of Jews. Jewish speech, dress, and “business methods” continued to be parodied. *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, a Winnipeg newspaper, described William Moscovitz, a Jewish businessman who was charged with theft in 1895, as “a Hebrew with dark and thick whiskers all over his face; his shoulders are built somewhat on the Shylock plan, and his sharp eyes increase the Shakespearean effect.”⁶³

Snide references frequently were made to “New Jerusalem” or to “Jew town”, identified in 1894 as the area across the Canadian Pacific Railway tracks, bounded by King and Main streets and by Dufferin and Sutherland avenues. News reports about Winnipeggers often simply identified nameless individuals as “a Jew”, “a Jewess”, “Jews”, “Jewesses”, “Hebrews”, “Israelites”, “Jew householders”, and “Jew peddlers”. Readers presumably would understand the implications of such identification — the words were used as terms of opprobrium or reprobation and social condescension, and to mean grasping or extortionate businessmen or businesswomen, money-lenders, or usurers. Furthermore, although “Jew” is a noun, Winnipeg newspapers sometimes used “to jew” as a verb meaning “to cheat”.⁶⁴

Continuing confrontations with municipal authorities in the mid-1890s gave

61 CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, pp. 151–152, 157, 162, 172, 178, 208, 219; *The Sun*, April 12, 1888; *Manitoba Free Press*, August 2, 1894; July 4 and August 15, 1895.

62 *Manitoba Free Press*, August 2, 1894; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, June 22, 1896.

63 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, March 1, 1895.

64 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, March 1, 2, and 6, 1894; August 10, 14, and 22, 1894; February 27, 1895; March 1, 1895; April 13 and 15, 1895; October 31, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, May 11, 1894; August 14, 18, and 21, 1894; April 13, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, March 3, 1894; August 11 and 15, 1894.

Jewish peddlers and businessmen, and the Jewish community in general, a feeling of unease and insecurity. In the summer of 1894, six Jews, residents of “New Jerusalem”, were charged with breach of the city health bylaw for keeping “dirty” yards and premises. Through an interpreter, they pleaded guilty. The police magistrate ordered them to clean up the area of “Jew town” where they were squatted together in one block or else to move away.⁶⁵

In 1894 temperance organizations, as they had done in previous years, protested the granting of liquor licences to several Winnipeg hotels, including the White Rose, owned by David Ripstein. As the hotel was owned by a Jew and maintained a kosher eating establishment, threats to rescind its liquor licence, which could have meant the closure of the hotel, caused anxiety in the Jewish community.⁶⁶ This was illustrated in a letter to the editor of *The Daily Nor'-Wester*:

[T]here must be one Jewish hotel in this city.... The explanation was also given last year and as the temperance people are supposed to be religious, I hope that they will take off their masks and frankly say that they do not want to give a Jew justice; but justice will be given regardless of their malice.... [T]he license will be obtained cost what it may, as the Jews will not have their rights trampled upon.⁶⁷

Winnipeg Jews became involved in the political process to ward off aggression and hostility and to achieve acceptance and equality; they wanted the host society to consider them as something more than “Jew peddlers”, “laughable individuals with a foreign accent”. The behaviour of Winnipeg Jewry in this instance was comparable to that of Jewish immigrants in the United States, whose “political interests”, according to social scientist Daniel Elazar, were derived directly from their experiences, whose highest priority “was to become fully accepted as members of the American body politic”, and who, because they encountered “immediate hostility, usually in the form of social and economic discrimination”, had “to engage in a struggle for acceptance”.⁶⁸

One ought to be wary of easy analogies with United States examples. Nevertheless, as one historian of Canadian Jewry has noted:

[T]here are many significant — almost overpowering — similarities between American and Canadian Jewish historical experiences and in certain respects

65 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, August 14, 1894; *Manitoba Free Press*, August 15, 1894; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, August 14, 18, and 21, 1894.

66 *Manitoba Free Press*, May 12, 17, 18, and 22, 1894; *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, May 15, 1894.

67 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, May 15, 1894.

68 Golden, *Forgotten Pioneer*, pp. 41, 44; Daniel Elazar, “American Political Theory and the Political Notions of American Jews: Convergences and Contradictions”, *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 9, no. 1 (June 1967), pp. 13, 15–16.

the communities in both countries are so similar as to be indistinguishable.... And the historical developments of both American and Canadian Jewries were also ... highly similar.⁶⁹

In this respect, an observation by Stephen Isaacs in his study, *Jews and American Politics*, is instructive.⁷⁰ Explaining what he termed Jews' "hyperactivity" in politics, Isaacs advanced this argument:

Fear undoubtedly is the greatest single factor accounting for Jews' high level of political activity.... Jews in politics are ... striving for a "just" society.... The Jews of America are ... a product of the psychic ravages of the Western world's deeply entrenched pattern of Jew-hating.... The fear is pandemic among Jews and, whether that fear is at the surface of those Jews who involved themselves in politics, or buried deep within them it is there and is the prevailing motive for a great part of their activity.⁷¹

In Winnipeg, municipal matters had heightened insecurity and tension in the Jewish community and, combined with the more general anti-Semitic sentiments of the time, resulted in a rapidly growing interest in civic politics after 1891. This was illustrated that year when the names of about 200 Jewish ratepayers, male and female, were included in the list of electors in the municipal election. Jews, many of them designated as peddlers, were shown to be eligible to vote in all 13 polling subdivisions in the city's six wards.⁷²

Winnipeg Jews demonstrated their growing political influence through the ultimately successful effort at lobbying the City Council to reduce peddlers' licence fees. The experience was a step along the road to further communal political participation. Jews were unhappy, however, that it took almost four years to achieve a reduction in fees. As well, many were made apprehensive and angry by the passage and enforcement by the city of Winnipeg of additional early closing bylaws — some had been in effect and of concern to the city's Jews since 1885. City Council refused to amend the legislation or to make exceptions, despite petitions from Simon Ripstein and 14 other Jewish men's clothiers and a court test case of one of the bylaws by Ripstein. Jews were also anxious about the passage and application of other municipal bylaws governing trade and commerce which resulted in Jewish vendors being fined.⁷³

69 Tulchinsky, "The Contours of Canadian Jewish History", p. 46.

70 Stephen Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1974).

71 Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics*, pp. 15–16.

72 City of Winnipeg, *List of Electors 1891* (Winnipeg: McIntyre Bros., Prtrs., for the City of Winnipeg, 1891). Approximately 50 Jews were listed as ratepayers in Ward 4 and 119 in Ward 5, with lesser numbers in other wards.

73 Trachtenberg, "The Old Clo' Move", pp. 171–177, 182–183, 200.

For Russian Jews, as for the Russian people in general in the 1880s, knowledge of and participation in democratic politics was foreign because of the existence of Czarist autocracy and repression. In Winnipeg, as in other North American cities including New York, Russian Jewish immigrants,

fresh from the Old World, suspected all government and were untrained in its forms. Only eventually did they learn to use the tools of politics. They were [not] bound to ... [any] party by interest, habit, or sentiment, and their humble place in the city's economy only buttressed their alienation. [They] [g]rop[ed] toward political identity.

To become involved in the political process, even solely as voters, immigrants had to become naturalized British subjects; this the Russian Jews did.⁷⁴ Moses Finkelstein, a Winnipeg Jewish merchant, signatory to various petitions to the Winnipeg City Council and its Market Committee, and later a Winnipeg alderman, subsequently recalled: "As our people became more acquainted with the language ... their interest in the country's welfare began to increase. They became naturalized, and began to look into and take advantage of their citizenship."⁷⁵

Believing that its interests were not being well served by non-Jews on the City Council and having gained some collective political experience during campaigns for the federal election in 1891 (conducted during the peddlers' fees debate), the provincial election of 1892, and the federal by-election in Winnipeg in 1893, Winnipeg Jewry decided to attempt to elect a Jewish alderman. The city's Jewish community comprised one of several Canadian, regional ethnic groups of non-British, non-French ancestry in the late nineteenth century which gradually attempted to involve their own representatives in the political process. A large and enthusiastic meeting of Jews to discuss municipal politics and to choose a Jewish aldermanic nominee was held in 1894. No nomination was made, however, because the meeting concluded that the time was not yet propitious to select a Jewish candidate.⁷⁶

Jews took the political plunge in 1895, when Louis Wertheim, a Winnipeg Jewish bookseller and stationer, formerly a tobacconist and pawnbroker, was nominated as an aldermanic candidate in Ward 5, where 78.4 per cent, or 506 in 1891, of the city's Jews lived. Even then, there may have been

74 S. M. Dubnow (trans. by I. Friedlaender), *History of the Jews in Russia*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1920), pp. 221–225, 243–376; Howe, *World of our Fathers*, pp. 360–362; Rischin, *The Promised City*, pp. 221–222; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, March 3, 1891.

75 Finkelstein, "Personal Reminiscences", p. 5.

76 Trachtenberg, "The Old Clo' Move", pp. 155–161, 208–232; Howard Palmer, *Ethnicity and Politics in Canada since Confederation*, Canada's Ethnic Groups Booklet no. 17 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), p. 3; Finkelstein, "Personal Reminiscences", p. 5.

some hesitation in the Jewish community, and Wertheim's candidacy was forthcoming only at the last minute. After nomination day, *The Daily Nor'-Wester* commented: "There were a few surprises. In ward five where a contest was hardly looked for up till yesterday there will be no less than four candidates." *The People's Voice*, Winnipeg's working-class newspaper, noted that in Ward 5 "Quite a surprise was in store ... in the number of dark horses [three including Wertheim] brought to light by the nomination proceedings."⁷⁷

One of the *Deutsche Yuden*, or German Jews, in Winnipeg who predated the arrival of the Russian refugee Jews in 1882, Wertheim was respected by the Jewish community as a "pioneer" and as a participant in many communal endeavours over several years. He was, for example, the liaison between the Mansion House Committee, a British organization of prominent Jewish and Christian political, business, religious, and intellectual leaders formed to aid Russia's Jews, and a group of Russian Jewish refugees who left Winnipeg in 1884 to establish the farming settlement of "New Jerusalem" near Moosomin in the North-West Territories. The settlement often was referred to in the 1880s as the "Wertheim Colony."⁷⁸

Wertheim's concern for the welfare of other Jews and his position as a leading spokesman of Winnipeg Jewry — he was described in 1896 as "one of Winnipeg's foremost Hebrew citizens" — was demonstrated in 1895 when he appeared before the Market, License and Health Committee seeking financial assistance for a destitute Jewish family to enable it to move to California. Although there is no conclusive evidence, Wertheim may have been angered by the aldermen's discussion about the circumstances of the "Jew family"; this further example of Jewish interests not being well served by non-Jews on the City Council may have served as an additional impetus in his desire to seek election.⁷⁹

The desire of the Jewish community to nominate a Jew may have been reinforced by changes in municipal voting qualifications in 1887. Women were granted the right to vote in Winnipeg elections if they could meet the property qualifications, were over 21 years of age, and were British citizens. Reduction of the property qualification for aldermanic candidates in 1895 to \$500 from \$2,000 may also have been significant in Wertheim's nomination.⁸⁰

77 Canada, Department of Agriculture and Statistics, *Census of Canada 1890-91*, vol. 1, pp. 14, 227, 230-231; *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 10, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 14, 1895.

78 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 10, 1895; June 5, 1896; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 11, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 14, 1895; *The Sun*, April 12, 1888; Trachtenberg, "The Old Clo' Move", pp. 14, 24, 77, 81.

79 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, June 5, 1896; CWAPRC, *Market, License and Health Committee Minute Book 6*, p. 219.

80 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 10, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 11, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 14, 1895; *The Sun*, November 20,

Wertheim had been a signatory to an 1891 petition against increases in peddlers' fees, and one of the seconders of his nomination, Simon Ripstein, had been a signatory to two 1891 petitions and the 1894 petition seeking a reduction in fees. Furthermore, Ripstein had organized petitions against the early closing of gentlemen's clothing stores and had challenged the governing bylaw in court. Both men had had cause to be aggrieved by the actions of the City Council. Another seconder of Wertheim's nomination, Philip Brown, also had petitioned the City Council.⁸¹

Wertheim, Brown, and Ripstein had gained political experience in the federal election campaign of 1891 in Winnipeg and had been active participants in the provincial election campaign in 1892, as well as the federal by-election campaign in Winnipeg in 1893. Wertheim was among those who had nominated George Campbell, the Conservative candidate, in Winnipeg North in 1892. Wertheim had spoken at an election meeting and sat on the platform with two of the "establishment" figures in Winnipeg and in the Conservative Party, Joseph Wolf, a businessman and Winnipeg alderman who may have been a convert from Judaism to Christianity, and Hugh John Macdonald, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg and son of the former Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.⁸²

In 1893 Wertheim was chairman of a meeting called by Jewish Conservatives at the Rosh Pina Synagogue Hall, but then temporarily abandoned the Conservatives and was active in supporting the Liberal candidate, Joseph Martin. Wertheim's nomination in 1895 was moved by Joseph Wolf and George Frankfurter, the latter also one of the *Deutsche Yuden* and a businessman who had encountered difficulties with city authorities over the passage and enforcement of early closing bylaws in the 1880s.⁸³

Wertheim's opponents were Alexander Black, a well-known ex-alderman and lumber merchant who had considerable political and organizational experience; John Hamilton, a self-styled workingmen's candidate; and Daniel J. Macdonald, who had accepted the nomination several weeks earlier on behalf of "workingmen", had been endorsed at a public Ward 5 meeting called by retiring aldermen, and was supported officially by the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council.⁸⁴

1888; Alan Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History of Urban Growth 1874–1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 40.

81 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 10, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 11, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 14, 1895; see also note 73.

82 Mrs. S. A. Ripstein, "Passover in Pioneer Days in Winnipeg"; Feivel Lechtzier quoted by Melvin Fenson, "1882 — 70th Anniversary of Winnipeg Jewish Pioneers — 1952", *The Jewish Post*, May 22, 1952; NAC, Sir John S. D. Thompson Papers, MG26D, microfilm reel 30, vol. 187, Political Correspondence Received, p. 23381, Wolf to Thompson, October 7, 1893; Trachtenberg, "'The Old Clo' Move'", pp. 156–158, 160–161, 183, 208–209, 214, 222–225.

83 Trachtenberg, "'The Old Clo' Move'", pp. 14, 149–152, 171–173, 220–231.

84 *The People's Voice*, November 9, 23, and 30 1895; December 7, 14, and 21, 1895; *The Daily Nor'-*

His enthusiastic Jewish supporters worked diligently to obtain Wertheim's election. They opened campaign committee rooms on Main Street and solicited electoral support for their candidate through advertisements in two Winnipeg daily newspapers, *The Tribune* and *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, claiming that Wertheim had "been requested by a large number of ratepayers to stand". Wertheim, nevertheless, was beaten soundly. The Jewish candidate received 145 votes and ran a distant third to Black, who was elected, and to Macdonald. Wertheim came third in three polls and last in another.⁸⁵

Wertheim's defeat was attributable to many causes. He entered the campaign very late — just previous to the deadline for nominations — probably because of a conscious attempt to establish a viable base of non-Jewish, as well as Jewish, political support in advance of formal nomination. Although he attended at least one important public campaign meeting, he missed several others. While it is not clear that all or any of his opponents campaigned door-to-door, Wertheim almost certainly did not, as his advertisements stated that it would be impossible for him to see personally all electors in Ward 5. In addition to not being able to obtain advance publicity and to make known his positions on civic matters, his political organization, planning, and strategy must have suffered.⁸⁶

It is true two of Wertheim's opponents were also nominated just previous to the deadline for nominations. One of these late candidates, however, Alexander Black, was a signatory to one of the 1891 peddlers' petitions; this may have resulted in support from a few Jews at the polls. The other "dark horse", John Hamilton, held political meetings "for the benefit of foreigners" in Ward 5. Although Hamilton ran last in the contest, he was nominated by, among others, a Jew, F. Gilman. Along with his specific labour appeal, this may have drawn a few Jewish voters away from Wertheim.⁸⁷

Moreover, it is quite possible, even though the civic franchise had been extended to eligible female voters in 1887, that many Jewish women could not vote because they could not meet the property qualifications, consisting of ratings on the assessment roll of property valued at \$100 for freeholders and \$200 for leaseholders or tenants. Indeed, several Jewish men, especially those engaged in peddling in the midst of an economic depression, probably

Wester, November 27, 1895; December 4, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 18, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 4, 10, 13, 17, and 18, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 14, 16, 18, and 19, 1895; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1890–91, no. 1725.

85 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 12, 13, 14, 16, and 18, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 12, 13, 16, and 18, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 14, 18, and 19, 1895.

86 Finkelstein, "Personal Reminiscences", p. 5; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 4, 10, 12, 13, 16, 17, and 18, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 14, 18, and 19, 1895; *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, November 27, 1895; December 4, 10, 12, 13, 14, 16, and 18, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 21, 1895.

87 *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 10, 12, 13, and 14, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 13, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 14, 1895; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1890–91, no. 1725.

were disqualified from voting for the same reason. As a social historian of Winnipeg has observed, property qualifications necessary for participation in the civic electoral process not only discriminated against the working class, but “were also effective in minimizing the participation of Winnipeg’s various ethnic groups”, including Jews. This development likely worked to Wertheim’s detriment in 1895.⁸⁸

Another contributing cause to Wertheim’s defeat was that he did not obtain the official endorsement of organized labour through the Winnipeg Trades and Labour Council, which was at the centre of working-class political action at the municipal level. This was significant because of the substantial working-class population in Ward 5, more than three-quarters of the electorate according to one estimate. Wertheim failed to obtain labour support not only because he was a self-employed bookseller and stationer and not a union member, but because the Trades and Labour Council earlier had announced its support for Macdonald.⁸⁹

John Hamilton and Alexander Black also made particular appeals to workingmen and undoubtedly took away from Wertheim even the possibility of any working-class support. *The People’s Voice* demonstrated the opposition of organized labour to Wertheim’s candidacy when, after the election, it contended that Wertheim and Hamilton had engaged in collusion with Macdonald’s political enemies, Black’s supporters, to ensure the defeat of Macdonald, the official working-class candidate.⁹⁰

The reasons for the nomination of ... Hamilton and Wertheim were not ascertained until the day of election. It was conceded ... that neither ... had a ghost of a chance of securing election, but it was not presumed that Mr. M[a]c[d]onald’s opponents would go to the length of bringing out three men in order to defeat him.... Hamilton and Wertheim never were *bona fide* candidates; then in whose interests did they run? If not in their own, and not in M[a]c[d]onald’s, it must have been Black’s.⁹¹

The People’s Voice understandably was disappointed and angered by Mac-

88 *The Sun*, November 20, 1888; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, February 5, 1891; *Manitoba Free Press*, February 10, 1891; *Town Talk*, February 28, 1891; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1890–91, no. 1725; Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History*, p. 41.

89 Artibise, *Winnipeg: A Social History*, pp. 37–38, 41; A. Ross McCormack, *Reformers, Rebels and Revolutionaries: The Western Canadian Radical Movement, 1899–1919* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), pp. 78–79; *The People’s Voice*, November 9, 23, and 30, 1895; December 7, 14, and 21, 1895; *The Daily Nor’-Wester*, December 4, 9, and 10, 1895; *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 10, 13, and 16, 1895; *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16, 1895.

90 *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 13 and 16, 1895; *The People’s Voice*, November 9, 1895; December 14 and 21, 1895. The labour newspaper estimated that 1,300 workingmen lived in Ward 5 (December 21, 1895).

91 *The People’s Voice*, December 21, 1895.

donald's defeat and by Black's victory. There is no evidence, however, to indicate that Wertheim did not wish to gain election, thought of himself as a "spoiler", or engaged in a political conspiracy to deny Macdonald election. Wertheim thought of himself, as did most of his supporters, as a potential spokesman for the Jewish community and its concerns on the City Council.⁹²

The newspaper also claimed that the "Hebrew vote" abandoned Wertheim, and that "the most of those who [we]re numbered in the 145 votes secured by ... Wertheim were Gentiles." Given the level of anxiety and apprehension in the Jewish community in 1895, and that this was the first time in Winnipeg's political history that a Jew was contesting any elected office, the interpretation of *The People's Voice* may be seriously questioned.⁹³

Of particular importance in Wertheim's defeat was his largely unsuccessful attempt to obtain the political support of other "foreign" communities in addition to the Jews in Ward 5. Wertheim, who spoke German and had belonged to a local German society, must have thought his candidacy would have appealed to the German community. For instance, he addressed his meeting of "foreign electors" in German. During the brief campaign, however, a meeting of about 50 Germans and Poles in Ward 5 was held on Logan Avenue and their support was pledged to Hamilton. After the election, *The People's Voice* observed that the "German vote, which was alleged to be for ... Wertheim, mysteriously forsook its candidate shortly after the poll opened."⁹⁴

Wertheim's failure to obtain a non-Jewish "ethnic vote" perhaps had its roots in an action of the Independent Political Club of Foreigners, consisting of Germans and Poles. In June 1895 the association expelled Isaac Barrett, a Jewish peddler and apparently a major organizer of the club. Barrett was turned out on the grounds that he had "deceived" the organization and was "always looking to destroy [its] work". He most likely was attempting to encourage the organization to support a particular candidate or party, possibly even in the election of 1895. The resolution of expulsion, moved by one Gustave Schumacker and seconded by one Philip Hartz,⁹⁵ expressed the following desire:

[We should] ... publish in the daily papers of Winnipeg [a message] to warn everybody to have nothing to do with Isaac Barrett in political and election

92 *Ibid.*; Finkelstein, "Personal Reminiscences", p. 5.

93 *Ibid.*; Abraham Rhinewine, *Der Yid Een Kanada (The Jew in Canada: From the French Period to Modern Times)*, vol. 1 (Toronto: Farlag "Canada", 1925), p. 133; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1894-95, no. 2600, and 1895, no. 3041.

94 *The Winnipeg Tribune*, December 12, 1895; *The Daily Nor'-Wester*, December 14, 1895; *The People's Voice*, December 21, 1895.

95 *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1895. Barrett was described in 1895 as an "interpreter". Henderson Directory Co., comp., *Henderson's Manitoba and Northwest Territories Gazetteer and Directory for 1895* (Winnipeg: The Henderson Directory Co., 1895), p. 743.

matters; let him stay with his own people and work with them, as our Germans and Polanders [*sic*] do not want to have anything to do with him.⁹⁶

The Barrett expulsion demonstrated that Jews were not welcome in the Independent Political Club of Foreigners and that united “ethnic” political action would be difficult, if not impossible. In the election of 1895, Wertheim’s German background was not significant enough to outweigh what appears to have been considerable anti-Jewish sentiment by some Germans and Poles.

The most plausible explanation of his loss, however, was advanced by historian Abraham Rhinewine, who ascribed Wertheim’s lack of success to the limited voting strength of Winnipeg Jewry. This interpretation was reinforced by Moses Finkelstein, proprietor of The Big Boston Clothing House and a scrutineer for Wertheim in the election.⁹⁷ Finkelstein recalled:

We were fighting a hopeless battle, and as we lost in that fight, the hopes of our people weakened, and they did not offer, as they thought another lamb on the altar for a long time, realizing that our forces would have to increase a great deal to combat ... the prejudice that was then existing ... towards ... Jews.⁹⁸

Defeat in the election of 1895 may have weakened the hopes of Winnipeg Jews, as Finkelstein observed. They gained, however, both political experience and sophistication, attributes that were demonstrated in their activities in other political contests in the 1890s and the early years of the twentieth century. The political acculturation of Winnipeg Jewry, a Canadian urban immigrant community, was hastened by its experiences from 1891 to 1895, resulting in subsequent years in a growing interest and involvement by its members in politics at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels. Jews in the Manitoba capital continued to be anxious and apprehensive because of manifestations of aggression and hostility — sometimes from Winnipeg municipal politicians and officials — directed towards them. They utilized the political process as a means to ward off these attitudes and actions and to seek the acceptance and respect of the larger Canadian population. In so doing, Winnipeg Jews, part of an economically deprived, non-charter Canadian ethnic group evolving from their entrance status on the social and economic margins of Canadian society, slowly increased their political power.⁹⁹

96 *Manitoba Free Press*, June 12, 1895.

97 *The People’s Voice*, December 21, 1895; Rhinewine, *Der Yid Een Kanada*, p. 133; CWAPRC, Council Communications 1894–95, no. 2600, and 1895, no. 3041; Finkelstein, “Personal Reminiscences”, p. 5.

98 Finkelstein, “Personal Reminiscences”, p. 5.

99 *Ibid.*; Palmer, *Ethnicity and Politics in Canada*, p. 3.