

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

807

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Other names/site number: Beth Itzchock Cemetery, Ashley Jewish Cemetery

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast, 3 miles north of Main Street and 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. W near Ashley, ND

City or town: Ashley State: North Dakota County: McIntosh

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

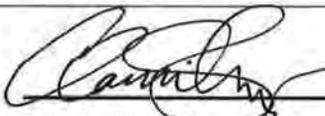
I hereby certify that this x nomination     request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets     does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

    national     x statewide     local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A     B     C     D

	State Historic Preservation Officer	9.24.15
Signature of certifying official/Title:		Date
<u>State Historical Society of ND</u>		
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government		

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

RGN

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

~~As [Signature]~~  
Signature of commenting official:

~~11/17/15~~  
Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau  
or Tribal Government

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

~~As [Signature]~~  
Signature of the Keeper

~~11/17/15~~  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

District

Site

Structure

Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

funerary:cemetery

graves/burials

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

funerary/cemetery

graves/burials

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

N/A

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: marble of varying grades, granite

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery is located approximately three miles north of the intersection of North Dakota Highways 3 and 11, and the city limits of Ashley, the county seat of McIntosh County. McIntosh County is situated in south central North Dakota, the second county east of the Missouri River, and its southern boundary forms part of the border between North and South Dakota. The cemetery sits on privately deeded, treeless prairie land measuring 275 feet by 275 feet. A paved country road that comes out of Ashley and heads north towards Logan County borders the cemetery on the east. The other three sides of the property are adjacent to a cattle ranch and prairie grasses. Homesteader pyramids of cleared rocks and stones dot the landscape nearby. Twenty-two marked graves of Jewish immigrants from the largest Jewish agricultural community in North Dakota<sup>1</sup> are located in two separate fenced areas on the property— one for adults and children and one for infants. There are twenty-two original monuments from the period of 1913-1932. Eighteen of them are marble and four are granite. The grave monuments contain symbols, phrases and language significant to Jewish people for thousands of years. The use of the Hebrew language on the stones and the content of the epitaphs distinguish this cemetery from the non-Jewish prairie cemeteries in the vicinity. The Ashley cemetery property is unique from the other two existing North Dakota Jewish homesteader cemeteries for five main reasons: 1) It is on the site of the largest Jewish agricultural settlement ever in North Dakota, 2) It has the largest number of marked graves of Jewish

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<sup>1</sup> J. Sanford Rikoon, *Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1995), 132, n. 55 and Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, *Annual Report* (New York: JAS 1908), 25, both refer to the Ashley Jewish agricultural settlement as the largest group of Jewish farmers in North Dakota. See also, William C. Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota*, (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies 1983), 53, which refers to the Ashley Jewish homestead community as "perhaps the largest in the state." See *Section 8 Statement of Significance* for more detail.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

homesteader families in either North or South Dakota, 3) It has the largest area of land set aside for Jewish burials of homesteaders in North or South Dakota, 4) It has a separate area for infants who have died, a custom of primarily Orthodox Jews, and 5) The Cemetery has never been close to a major population center. Though the Dakota Jewish homesteaders happily and successfully mingled with their neighbors of different backgrounds and religions, this separate cemetery shows that even on the remote prairie these Jewish immigrants considered it important to bury their dead in accordance with the traditions of their religion.



*Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery (view from northwest on 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast)*

### The Cemetery Land

Approximately three miles north of Ashley's city limits, in a gentle valley about four feet below an adjacent rural road (48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast) sits the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery, a/k/a the "Beth Itzchock Cemetery" (House of Isaac Cemetery).<sup>2</sup> A three-strand, five foot barbed wire fence surrounding the two separate grave areas was erected in 1952,

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<sup>2</sup> Though the entire deeded cemetery property measures 275 by 275 feet, an area 100 by 275 feet of the property, where no known graves are located, is on the other side of the western neighbor's fence. R.C. Miles, H. Larimer, *Plat of Jewish Cemetery, Ashley, ND (1933), Deeds for Ashley Jewish Cemetery*, McIntosh County Courthouse.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

at the direction of an elected committee of Ashley Jewish homesteaders and descendants and under the supervision of one of the former homesteaders.<sup>3</sup> The fenced in portion of the cemetery containing the adult and children graves and monuments contains 20 graves. Approximately 50 feet southwest of this area is the infant area with two marked graves.<sup>4</sup>



***Two separate fenced areas of the Ashley Jewish Cemetery – the main portion with adult and children graves shown on the left, and the infants’ area on the right***

Burials of Jewish homesteaders in the cemetery took place from 1913 – 1932. Twenty of the twenty-two burials took place during the twelve-year period from 1913 – 1924. Over

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<sup>3</sup>*Joseph Bender, Interview by Alfred Thal, Tape Recording (St. Louis Park, MN, May 24, 1974)* refers to Mr. Bender traveling to the area from Minneapolis to oversee the installation of the fence. The 1100-foot fence and railing along with one three and one half foot walk-in gate were purchased for \$1229 from Montgomery Ward, with the ten percent church discount in 1952, and replaced a deteriorating “pasture-like fence.” The jagged portion, normally placed on the bottom was placed on top, as “extra protection against anyone going over the fence.” *Pauline Auerbach Greenberg Letters* to “those interested in the Ashley Jewish Cemetery” and to fellow cemetery association directors Ben Grossman and Joe Bender (September 25, 1951, June 26, 1952 and November 8, 1952). The Pauline Greenberg letters also refer to a suggestion in 1951 by Noah Dorfman, former homesteader and then cattle buyer, that the new fence have a wide enough gate so a team of horses pulling a mower could fit. The idea was rejected as the existing gate was too close to several monuments.

<sup>4</sup> There are perhaps three or more unmarked graves in the infants’ area of the Ashley Cemetery and one more grave in the adult/children section, based upon local newspaper accounts and homesteader family histories. See *The Monuments*, herein. In August 2014, Mark Timbrook, trained in cemetery monument cleaning and restoration, spearheaded the cleaning and restoration of some monuments in this cemetery. Unaware of the evidence regarding additional graves in the infants’ area, after observing the unnatural sloping and indentations in the land Mr. Timbrook believed this area contained unmarked graves, as well. The reason for the separate infants area in some Jewish cemeteries, is that so many infants used to die years ago, religious parents would have been saying the Mourners’ Kaddish (prayer) almost continuously, if they were to say it for all their deceased infants. The placement of the infants in a separate area allows their memories to be honored while removing the requirement from the infants’ parents to “say Kaddish.” Rabbi Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers 1969)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

forty percent, or nine of the burials took place as a result of the Spanish Flu pandemic during 1918-1919, called "Die Sintful" by the German Immigrants, or "the Deluge".<sup>5</sup>

The cemetery land was originally part of the land homesteaded in 1906 by female Russian Jewish immigrant Sarah Bendersky (later Sarah Schlasinger).



**Land Patent issued to Sarah Schlasinger (nee Bendersky) for homestead land, which includes present site of Ashley Jewish Cemetery. Sarah was the daughter of Kiva and Rebecca Bender (nee Bendersky)<sup>6</sup>** In 1907, she obtained title to the land for a payment of \$170.00.<sup>7</sup> In 1910, after moving to her husband's homestead near Lehr, she sold it subject to a mortgage in favor of the Jewish

<sup>5</sup> Ron Vossler, *The Lost Jews of McIntosh*, (North Dakota REC/RTC July 1986), 24. Mr. Vossler's calculation of seven burials from 1918-1919 was based upon examination of the monuments which did not provide the dates of death only in Hebrew. Once the Hebrew dates were translated, it was learned that nine of the twenty-two marked burials took place in 1918-1919.

<sup>6</sup> The Bendersky family from Odessa, was made up of parents Kiva and Rebecca, and surviving children Sarah, Lena and Joseph. They arrived in three different groups to Castle Rock immigration center in New York City. All except Sarah had their original name of Bendersky changed to Bender at Castle Rock by immigration officials.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Agricultural Aid Society to Louis Rubin, a Jewish businessman in Ashley. Mr. Rubin then sold the land, including the land that later became the Cemetery to Wolf and Alta Feneck in 1911. During the time the Fenecks owned this property, it started to be used to formally bury members of the Jewish homesteading community.<sup>8</sup>

In May 1918, once there had been nine marked burials in the cemetery, the Fenecks deeded the cemetery land back to Louis Rubin. In 1948, after Mr. Rubin's death, his heirs transferred the cemetery property to Pauline Greenberg, daughter of Israel and Sarah Auerbach, who are both buried there. Mrs. Greenberg deeded the cemetery to the Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association in 1979.<sup>9</sup>



**Deed for Cemetery Property from Pauline Greenberg to Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation (1979)**

This non-profit North Dakota Corporation, made up of descendants of the Ashley Jewish homesteaders has overseen the maintenance of the cemetery with the assistance of local

<sup>7</sup> Ethel Overby, *Schlasinger Family History* (1970s), North Dakota Jewish History Project, University of Minnesota archives, collected and compiled by Toba Geller, and hereinafter referred to as "The Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project."

<sup>8</sup> *Deeds* at McIntosh County Courthouse

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

farmers hired for the purpose.<sup>10</sup> No Jewish homesteader descendants have lived in McIntosh County for over thirty years, though officers in the Cemetery Association and family members of the homesteaders have made regular trips to the Cemetery to monitor its condition.<sup>11</sup>

The Cemetery property used to have two driveways and a house on its site, as well. The house provided shelter for mourners from the oftentimes severe and unpredictable weather, some of whom had come long distances to bury their dead at this cemetery, as well as for the gravediggers. The building had deteriorated and was removed in the 1950s.<sup>12</sup>

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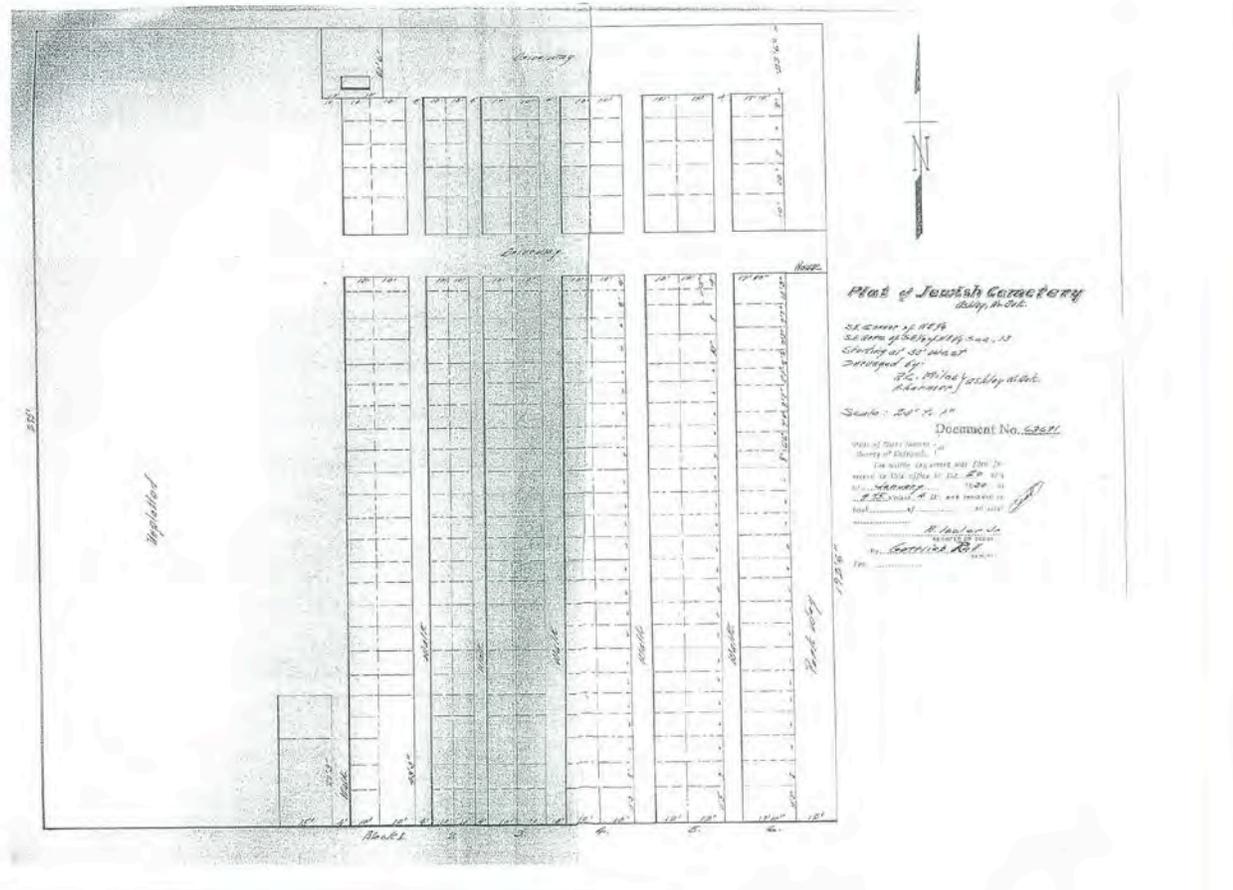
<sup>10</sup> Johnnie Salzer, a McIntosh County Commissioner, and his son Mark were caretakers in the 1960s through the 1980s – mowing, doing repairs and hauling away debris. The present caretaker is Claude Meidinger of Ashley. *Joseph Bender, Interview by Alfred Thal (1974), Pauline Greenberg Correspondence 1921-1952, Kenneth Bender letter to Lionel Greenberg (January 19, 1986), Ted Quanrud, Keeping faith with the past - Descendants of pioneers preserve Jewish cemetery, Bismarck Tribune (December 6, 1987).*

<sup>11</sup> The last homesteader descendant living in McIntosh County, Leo Cohen, died in 1983. He was homesteader Noah Dorfman's stepson, an Ashley dentist for over fifty years, and the nephew of Freda Dorfman, buried in the Ashley Cemetery.

<sup>12</sup> Miles, Larimer Plat of Ashley Jewish Cemetery (1933) and 1951-52 correspondence from Pauline Greenberg to Homesteader Descendants. See also Frances Wold Papers, notes of conversation with homesteader descendent Norman Kamins regarding similar house on site of Wing/Regan, North Dakota Jewish Cemetery (March 18, 1979) at State Historical Society of North Dakota.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Miles, Larimer Plat of Ashley Jewish Cemetery (1933)***

### The Cemetery Location

There were a number of Jewish homesteader cemeteries scattered across North Dakota from the early part of the twentieth century, when approximately 1200 Jewish farmers and their families lived in North Dakota on around two hundred fifty farms.<sup>13</sup> These included cemeteries in Ashley, Glen Ullin, Fallon, Edmore, Mandan, Wilton, Wing, Devil's Lake and Regan. All but three have been entirely or almost entirely lost, with prairie grasses and earth covering the last remnants of these homesteaders' history.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Janet E. Schulte, *Proving Up and Moving Up - Jewish Homesteading Activity in North Dakota, 1900 - 1920*, pp.238, 241-2 (Brandeis University, October 2010), citing William C. Sherman and Playford V. Thorson, *Plains Folk: North Dakota's Ethnic History* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, 1988).

<sup>14</sup> International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies, *International Jewish Cemetery Project*, [www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org](http://www.iajgsjewishcemeteryproject.org). For example, the Jewish cemetery from the first Jewish homesteading settlement in North Dakota (Painted Woods Colony, 1882), seven miles north of Wilton in McLean County "may have existed in a field" or "a ravine", the Mandan cemetery in Morton County "has no markers", the Fallon cemetery in Morton County and the Edmore cemetery in Ramsey County were both listed in 1919 in a

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

In addition to the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery, located in what has been called North Dakota's "German-Russian triangle"<sup>15</sup>, the two other homesteader cemeteries that remain visible and accessible in North Dakota are the Regan/Wing Jewish Cemetery and the Sons of Jacob (Garske) Cemetery.<sup>16</sup>

The Regan/Wing Jewish Cemetery is now forty minutes by car from Bismarck, and considered to be located in the "Bismarck/Mandan area." In 1910, Bismarck had a population of approximately 5500 people. The Sons of Jacob Cemetery is fifteen minutes from Devils Lake, which had a population of about 5000 people in 1910.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, the closest "big" towns to the Ashley Jewish Cemetery are Ashley (population of 680 in 1910, and now a five minute drive by car) and Eureka, SD (population of 960 in 1910, and now a forty five minute drive by car).<sup>18</sup> The location of the McIntosh County Jewish homesteaders' land (and cemetery) and the distance between the McIntosh County homesteads caused them to be more isolated from fellow Jews and Jewish institutions than their fellow Jew living in or close to bigger North Dakota towns. The remoteness of the Ashley homesteaders' land affected their timely access to supplies, markets for their goods, and communication. Their being farther away from fellow Jews also affected their ability to gather together a minyan, or group of ten people required under Jewish law for certain prayers and memorializing the dead. The distance between their homesteads and the distance from their community to the nearest major town raises questions as to why and how these pioneers maintained their Jewish identity.

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Jewish Yearbook, but are unable to be located now, the Dickinson cemetery in Stark County can no longer be located, and the Wing cemetery in Burleigh County is overgrown, and requires a four wheel drive vehicle to travel up a gravel road.

<sup>15</sup> Gordon Iseminger, *The McIntosh County German-Russians: The First Fifty Years, North Dakota*, vol. 51, no.3 (Bismarck State Historical Society of North Dakota 1984) Dr. Iseminger refers to McIntosh County as part of the base of the "German-Russian triangle", a triangle of German-Russian populated counties having its apex in Pierce and McHenry counties.

<sup>16</sup> What is now called the Devil's Lake/Sons of Jacob Cemetery was abandoned in the early 1900s, after the Garske Colony ended. The land was then sold to the Kitsch family by the State of North Dakota. Though in 1903 the five acres including the cemetery were officially sold back to the Jewish community for \$22.50, the Kitsch family, though not Jewish, maintained the property when the Jewish residents left. In 2006, the Devil's Lake land was rededicated, with a clean up and erecting of a monument honoring the memory of the homesteaders in that area. The Regan/Wing Jewish Cemetery has been maintained by the county since the 1980s and is now owned by the State. The Ashley Jewish Cemetery is the only one of the remaining three North Dakota homesteader cemeteries that is located on land still owned by homesteader descendants and maintained using funds raised by the descendants. See Upkeep/Repairs Section herein.

<sup>17</sup> United States Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, North Dakota Population of Incorporated Places (1910)*

<sup>18</sup> US Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, North Dakota (1910)*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

### The Grave Sites

The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery has the most marked graves of any of the three remaining visible/accessible Jewish homesteader cemeteries in North Dakota. There are twenty-two marked graves identified with markers in the Ashley Jewish Cemetery, sixteen in the Regan/Wing cemetery and eleven in the Sons of Jacob Cemetery near Devils Lake.<sup>19</sup> There is anecdotal evidence (from family histories) and documented evidence (from newspapers and other third party sources) of additional unmarked graves in all three remaining North Dakota Jewish homesteader cemeteries.<sup>20</sup> It is possible that the markers for the deceased not seen today were never placed at the cemeteries (as it is the Jewish custom to wait at least eleven months after the burial to place any monuments). It is also possible that in addition to the custom of not saying Kaddish (the Mourner's Prayer) for infants, there was also a custom of not marking their graves. See f.n.4. Finally, it could be that markers were covered by earth and prairie grasses over the last hundred years, or that some markers were made of material which blew away like tumbleweeds.<sup>21</sup>

The cemetery markers are of the type from the late rural, garden and romantic cemetery movements. The monuments at the gravesites all face west, towards the setting sun, and away from the rural road. The feet of the deceased point east toward Jerusalem, the site of the Holy Temple destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E. over 1400 years ago. Jewish people also face east toward Jerusalem during formal prayer.

There are ledgers of stone/concrete, covering each of the graves. Covering the length of the grave with stones or concrete was to prevent grave robbers from disturbing the deceased in this remote location, and to keep animals from desecrating the graves. Sometimes called "wolf stones", these coverings were quite common in Europe in the 1800s. Jewish

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<sup>19</sup> ashleyjewishcemetery.com (Ashley Jewish Cemetery website); Frances M. Wold August 8, 1976 report on Wing/Regan Jewish Cemetery at North Dakota Historical Society; findagrave.com (Regan Jewish Cemetery), sojnorthdakota.org (Garske/Sons of Jacob Cemetery website)

<sup>20</sup> The Ashley Tribune refers to Mrs. Golda Ewart of Aberdeen being buried at the Ashley Jewish Cemetery, though no marker for Mrs. Ewart is visible. (Ashley Tribune 1927) There are also a number of infant graves in the cemetery referred to in family histories and in the local newspapers, though their graves are not marked: a five month old Friedman baby from Leola, South Dakota (Ashley Tribune, October 31, 1918), a Silverleib stillborn baby (*Morris Silverleib Family History* (June 6, 1977) Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project), a five month old Berman baby, Susan Berman, *Easy Street*, (Dial Press 1981), and possibly Rose Bender, infant daughter of homesteaders Joseph and Mary Bender (Bender Family History) .

<sup>21</sup> Cathy Mauk, *Cemetery is Part of Jewish History*, The Forum (December 2, 1990) refers to Myer Shark picking up the tin marker at the Sons of Jacob Cemetery, twenty miles north of Devils Lake, which had left its original locations and had blown against the inside of the fence. The present fence on the Ashley property was erected in the 1950s and replaced a "deteriorated fence." It is not known if a fence existed prior to the fence that was replaced in 1952, and there is no reference to a fence on the Miles, Latimer Plat from 1933.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

immigrants who came to America continued this European tradition, as a core value of Judaism is belief in “kavod-hamet”, i.e., honoring the dead.<sup>22</sup>



*Cement ledgers covering the graves*

### The Monuments

All of the twenty-two monuments are original, from the period of 1913-1932. All of the people buried in the cemetery were either present or past homesteaders or members of their families.

Within the two portions of the cemetery are three pedestal obelisk monuments on foundations (Egyptian revival style, growing out of the romantic movement), three pulpit (slant face) tombstones on foundations, and many upright block markers on foundations. Three of the block markers have curved tops and engraved columns on the sides (perhaps representing the gates of heaven), one of which is in the shape of a heart, and one of which is of Victorian gothic style. All of the twenty-two original individual monuments other than four are made of varying grades of marble. The other four individual (and the only family stone) are made of granite.

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<sup>22</sup> Rabbinic rulings as far back as the late thirteenth century state that it is optimal for a Jewish community to have its own cemetery, but if it could not, the area purchased in a non-Jewish cemetery for Jews to be buried should be set apart by a fence or other barrier. Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning* (1969) The first Jewish burial in the bible is noted in Genesis 23:19, when Abraham buried his wife Sarah in the Cave of Machpelah. The first gravestone mentioned in the bible is found in Genesis 35:20, when Jacob erected a pillar on his wife Rachel's grave on the road to Bethlehem, after she gave birth to Benjamin.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The epitaphs on the monuments are in Hebrew and in English, and most contain the traditional wording found on Jewish gravestones throughout the world for many centuries. For example most stones have the traditional two letters in Hebrew for “here lies” at the top of the stone, and the five letters in Hebrew at the bottom of the stone for “may his/her soul be bound up in the everlasting bonds of life” (a quote from the Book of Samuel, 25:29), or that entire phrase written out in Hebrew. Several monuments for male settlers contains the descriptive epitaph phrase (in Hebrew), “a blameless and upright man”, from the Book of Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3.



*Kiva Bender's Monument refers to him in Hebrew as a “blameless and upright man”*

Almost all of the monuments also follow Jewish tradition, identifying the name of the deceased's father and the Hebrew date of birth and death. The letters of the Hebrew alphabet on the monuments for dates of birth and death represent numerical values for the day and year. Jewish people use the Jewish calendar for purpose of recording life milestone events and religious holidays, rather than the Gregorian or civil calendar.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

A number of the monuments display a Star (or Shield) of David (Magen David)– a six pointed star (hexagram) symbol of the Jewish people, which some have traced back as far as the sixth Century of the Common Era, but which consistently became used as a Jewish symbol in the late 1800s. The six points of the Star of David symbolize God’s rule over the universe in all six directions: north south, east, west up and down.<sup>23</sup>



***Star of David symbol on David Ourach and Isadore Goldstone Monuments***

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<sup>23</sup> American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise, *jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, *The Star of David – Magen David*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Other monuments display a variety of symbols – the broken tree (on Lipman Bloom’s monument) and fallen branch (on Kiva Bender’s monument), both signifying lives cut short too soon,



a lamb (atop Maxine Sally Becker’s monument), indicating the innocence of youth),



Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

an open book (on the monuments of Isadore Grossman and Yehudah Lev Grossman),  
indicating how highly they prized learning and Jewish tradition,



an acorn (on the monument of infant Frieda Raich), indicating the tiny life lost,



Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

and a candelabra (menorah – on the monument of Mrs. Louis Reuben), symbol of the Jewish woman’s role to light the candles to usher in the Sabbath, while the five branches symbolize the five parts of the soul.<sup>24</sup>



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<sup>24</sup> The five parts of the human soul according to Jewish people are the nefesh (soul, engine of physical life), ruach (spirit, emotional self and personality), neshamah (breath, the intellectual self), chayah (life, the supra-rational self and seat of will, desire, commitment and faith), and yechidah (the essence of the soul, a piece of God within). It is customary to see a five branched menorah at the cantor’s stand at a synagogue, so when a mourner is leading services, five candles are lit in memory of the deceased. Aish Hatorah, [aish.com](http://aish.com)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Two of the monuments (those of Kiva Bender and Louis Bloom), also contain black and white cameo photographs of the deceased homesteaders.



One of the homesteaders' monuments refers to Joseph Raich as the son of a Levi. There are three present lines of descendants who can be traced from the ancient tribes of Israel – the descendants of Moses' brother Aaron (the Kohens or high priests), the descendants of the priestly tribe of Levi (Levi'im), and the descendants of one of the other tribes (Yisraelim). From the time that the Levites were loyal to God at Mount Sinai by not worshipping the Golden Calf while Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments and laws, the Levites have been given special duties and privileges. A Jew inherits the same tribal designation as his/her father. In this case, the notation of the tribe on the monument provides a valuable record of the family tribe and links Mr. Raich to the honored priestly tribe from over 5000 years ago.

#### The Aberdeen, South Dakota burials in Ashley, North Dakota

There are three marked former homesteader burials in the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery, of residents of Aberdeen, South Dakota, approximately eighty miles away. The reason for this was the lack of a Jewish cemetery in Aberdeen, a city that in the 1930s had a population of around 16,000 people, and a very active Jewish community.<sup>25</sup> According to an

<sup>25</sup> Aberdeen resident Bea Premack, who with her husband Herschel is a lay leader of B'nai Isaac, the only conservative synagogue in North or South Dakota, studied the Jewish settlement in Aberdeen for a historical paper. Parts of the papers were cited in Lance Nixon, *Promised Land*, Capital City Journal (July 25, 2014).

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

article in the Aberdeen newspaper on January 21, 1929, Congregation B'nai Isaac in Aberdeen wanted to purchase part of the Aberdeen city cemetery to bury members of the Jewish faith in consecrated grounds. Then Mayor Wade refused the request, stating that state law left the city powerless to sell part of the city cemetery to a private group. Though the Aberdeen article also states that the closest Jewish cemetery is in the Twin Cities, persons with Ashley homesteader roots knew of another cemetery, i.e., the Ashley Jewish Cemetery.<sup>26</sup>

### Maintenance/Ownership of Property

Homesteader Joe Bender, whose father Kiva Bender, the original religious leader of the Ashley Jewish community, is buried in the Ashley Cemetery, moved to neighboring McPherson County, South Dakota around 1916 to open a general store. Joe lived in Eureka, South Dakota, about forty-five minutes away, operating Bender's General Store with his wife Mary, and served the community as alderman, school board member and mayor, until his youngest child graduated from high school in 1949. Joe Bender was the person who arranged for the Ashley Cemetery's upkeep after the Jewish homesteaders left Ashley, with the assistance of local Ashley caretakers, prior to any homesteader descendent committees being formed.

In the 1950s and 1960s, the officers of the Ashley Cemetery Committee consisted of Joe Bender, Pauline Greenberg (daughter of Israel and Sarah Auerbach, buried at the cemetery) and Ben Grossman (son of Isadore Grossman, buried at the cemetery). They also headed up the campaigns to raise funds from the descendants of those buried, in order to provide for the perpetual care of the property. During this time period, Joe Bender, living in Minneapolis, would return at least annually to check on the condition of the cemetery and to arrange for necessary upkeep and repairs.

By the 1970s, Kenneth Bender began making arrangements for the maintenance of the cemetery. In 1971, the Cemetery Association was incorporated as a nonprofit North Dakota corporation. In 1979, Kenneth Bender was unanimously elected president of the Cemetery Association, Lionel Greenberg was unanimously elected secretary/treasurer, and Pauline

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According to Premack's research, the first known Jewish family (David and Anna Strauss) arrived in 1887 and started the Golden Eagle One Price Clothing Store. Many other Jewish names show up in the 1887-89 city directories, including a Jewish butcher and another clothier. In 1909-10, Hannah Kraywetz operated Metropolitan Tailors and Isaac Salinsky started The New York (Clothing) Store. By 1913, more Jewish families had arrived – working in hides and furs, men's and women's clothing. The Aberdeen synagogue was chartered in 1917. From 1923-37, Premack calculates that there were around sixty Jewish families in Aberdeen. Despite this history, there has never been a designated Jewish cemetery in Aberdeen.

<sup>26</sup> The newspaper article also states that the congregation will look for other land. However, no other land was ever purchased. In recent years, some Jewish people have been buried at the Aberdeen, SD City Cemetery, though there is no designated area specifically for Jewish burials.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Greenberg transferred the cemetery property she had purchased from the heirs of Louis Rubin to the Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation.<sup>27</sup>

During this time period, Ashley Cemetery Association Board Members Bender, Grossman and Kenneth Tilsen voted against turning the property over to the County to maintain.<sup>28</sup> The issue regarding responsibility for maintenance of the cemetery arose again in 1991, when one member of the Cemetery Board wanted the County to take over ownership of the land, as had been done with the Regan/Wing Jewish Cemetery. He worried that future generations would not find the time to care for the cemetery. A vote took place at a meeting in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The Ashley homesteader descendants who felt a moral obligation to continue caring for the cemetery as their parents had done before them, outnumbered the one who wanted the security of knowing the County was caring for the property.<sup>29</sup>

### Condition/Repairs

After most of the generation of children and grandchildren of the original Ashley homesteaders had aged or passed away, homesteader Isadore Grossman's great-grandson Bob Kaufman took over the reigns as President of the Association. In 1999, Stuart Kaufman accepted these duties from his brother and made arrangements for the continuing care and maintenance of the cemetery, including fundraising and arranging for the filing of annual reports with the State.

In the Spring of 2014, Mr. Kaufman and Joe Bender's granddaughter Rebecca Bender, who had moved to Eureka, South Dakota, met at the cemetery to discuss more significant repairs that were needed to some monuments. Though the caretakers had done their best to repair some of the stones as they became unstable and some of the buckling ledgers, time was having an obvious effect on some of the monuments and ledgers.

Ms. Bender contacted Mark Timbrook, a volunteer trained in cleaning and restoration techniques of old cemetery monuments. Mr. Timbrook worked with Mr. Kaufman and Ms. Bender to first identify the monuments with the most immediate need. Mr. Timbrook and his wife Eunice then agreed to assist in repairing five of the cemetery stones. In August 2014, about one hundred years after the first burial at the Ashley Jewish Cemetery, the Timbrooks, Rebecca Bender, Kiva Bender's great-great-grandson Lincoln Bernhard and volunteer Raymond Schneider-Kuhn cleaned, stabilized and repaired five of the stones.

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<sup>27</sup> Ashley Jewish Corporation Meeting Minutes (June 6, 1979), Deed

<sup>28</sup> Letter from Lionel Greenberg to Pauline Greenberg (August 9, 1980)

<sup>29</sup> Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation Meeting Minutes, September 25, 1991. At this meeting, Bob Kaufman was elected secretary/treasurer, taking over after Lionel Greenberg resigned. In 1990 the Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation was formally registered with the North Dakota State Department of Health and Consolidated Laboratories and issued cemetery registration card # 1509.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

(Mr. Timbrook did the work that required the most training and expertise with his wife's assistance.)

Mr. Timbrook opined that one of the larger monument stones (that of Rebecca Filler) was at risk, due to a large crack along its entire width, which would require a winch to lift the top portion off in order for the repair to be completed. Stabilizing work for this stone can hopefully be accomplished soon. In addition, another large stone is leaning, and requires straightening. Also, in contrast to the good condition of the monuments, many of the concrete ledgers covering the graves are buckling and broken up, requiring pouring of new concrete slabs. The chain fences around the two burial areas also have some breaks, and are in need of repair.



Mark Timbrook repairing Mrs. Parkansky stone, Lincoln Bernhard and Eunice Timbrook cleaning Kiva Bender's stone, Rebecca Bender cleaning Benjamin Reuben stone (August 2014)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***The Rebecca Filler Monument is one at risk, due to a crack near its base. The Hebrew writing on the stone indicates Mrs. Filler's dates of birth and death according to the Jewish calendar, as well as indicating that she was a "respected woman."***

### Historic Integrity

The property has historic integrity as to location, setting, materials, feeling and association. It is a portion of the original homestead land from 1906 of one of the Ashley Jewish homesteaders (at the time, an unmarried Jewish woman immigrant). It is also the only site for burials of Jewish homesteading farmers and their families close to the Ashley/Wishek homesteading community from 1913-1932, and former homesteaders who had moved to Aberdeen, South Dakota. Among the homesteaders buried here are religious and business leaders of the Ashley Jewish community, who were also respected members of the community at large, as well as the granddaughter of the Rabbi who served this community.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

(See *Statement of Significance*) The Cemetery also has historic integrity as all of the original monuments are still standing, in good condition, and provide information to understand more about the way in which the isolated Jewish farmers lived in North Dakota, while holding fast to religious traditions. Integrity of setting and feeling are also present, as the area surrounding the cemetery has never been developed. Visiting this remote location -- quiet except for the sound of the prairie wind, with nothing in view other than farms, grasses and a single road -- provides an experience believed to be very close to that felt during the period of significance.



***Monument of Isadore Smilowitz, son of a homesteader, who died in Aberdeen, SD at age 16***

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Religion

Social History

Agriculture

Exploration/Settlement

**Period of Significance**

1906-1932

**Significant Dates**

1913 -1932

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

**Criterion A - Property reflecting broad patterns of historical events**

The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery is significant under National Register Criterion A, as it is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history at the state level. Specifically, it is the only permanent physical reminder of the McIntosh County Jewish farming community --the largest Jewish agricultural settlement in North Dakota.<sup>30</sup> North Dakota had the fourth largest number of Jewish homesteaders in any state in the United States – 1200 farmers who farmed on two hundred fifty homesteads in at least fifty settlements spread out over at least twenty-three

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<sup>30</sup> J. Sanford Rikoon, *Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1995), p. 132, n.55 and Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, *Annual Report* (New York: JAS 1908), p. 25, both refer to the Ashley Jewish agricultural settlement as the largest group of Jewish farmers in North Dakota. See also, William C. Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies 1983), p. 53, which refers to the Ashley Jewish homestead community as "perhaps the largest in the state."

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

counties.<sup>31</sup> The McIntosh County Jewish homesteader community was made up of Russian and Romanian immigrants escaping persecution, including the Russian prohibition against Jews owning lawn for farming. They came to America after pogroms in their native lands, with a migration of 1.25 million fellow Jews between 1880 and 1920.<sup>32</sup> Unlike the great majority of their Jewish brethren who remained on or near the east coast in bigger cities, they headed to “The Great Northwest” to become farmers. The Ashley settlers came in the second wave of immigration to North Dakota and sought a better life, despite having no farming experience and not being able to speak English upon their arrival. Most were successful enough as farmers to either own their land after the requisite five years under the Homestead Act, or to have purchased it outright prior to that time.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, the McIntosh county homesteaders almost all moved off their farms to small towns and bigger cities within twenty years after arriving, for reasons set forth in Section 8. Despite their distance from the larger population centers in North Dakota, these Jewish farmers maintained their religious identity, as evidenced by the traditional ways in which they buried their own in this separate cemetery. Among those buried here are homesteaders who became leaders in the religious and business community of Ashley. The property has significance from 1906, when a Russian Jewish homesteader first claimed her homestead land on this site, through 1932, the year of the last burial in the cemetery, representing the end of the era of the farming Jewish homesteader in McIntosh County.

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<sup>31</sup> Jewish Agricultural Society, *Annual Report* (New York: JAS 1909), containing summary of first ten years of organization, Janet E Schute, *Proving Up, Moving Up – Jewish Homesteading Activity in North Dakota 1900-1920*, (Waltham: Brandeis University 1910), William Sherman and Playford Thorson, *Plaints Folk: North Dakota’s Ethnic History* (Fargo: North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies 1988)

<sup>32</sup> *Id.*

<sup>33</sup> Schute, *Proving up, Moving Up* (2010)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*Ashley Jewish farmer Joseph Bender on his homestead with single blade plow (circa 1909)*

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the period from 1906 – 1915, only New Jersey, Connecticut and New York had more Jewish farmers than North Dakota. There is documented proof of Jewish farmers in at least forty-four percent of North Dakota’s current counties between the late 1870s and 1915.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Jewish Agricultural Society, *Annual Reports* (New York: JAS 1907-1916), Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic* (1983) and Jewish homesteader family histories, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project. The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society based in New York, hereinafter “JAS”, which existed from 1900 through 1972, and the Jewish Agriculturalists Aid Society, based in Chicago and active from 1888-1908, were the two main

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

By 1910, the peak year for Jewish farming in the state, North Dakota had two hundred fifty Jewish homesteads with 1200 individuals.<sup>35</sup> Somewhere between 70 and 100 homesteads with over 400 Jewish individuals were located near Ashley.<sup>36</sup> This area made up approximately one third of the total numbers of Jewish homesteaders in the state.

Though McIntosh County was opened for homesteading in 1884, the Jewish homesteaders near Ashley did not arrive to stake a claim until 1905. The best land in the County had been claimed by that time. Nevertheless, through hard work and determination, the Jewish homesteaders of Ashley made a success in growing wheat and flax, and raising cattle and chickens, and selling cream from their sod houses on their rocky, stony land.<sup>37</sup>

The fact that the homestead colony disbanded twenty years later, when these farmers moved to neighboring towns in the Dakotas or to other states, does not diminish this important but little known chapter in North Dakota's immigrant history. The Ashley homesteaders experienced tragedy -- enduring inhumane conditions and government endorsed pogroms in Russia, and triumph -- being allowed to own land in this peaceful "land of the free". Their challenges were far from over when they arrived on their North Dakota homesteads, and along with their inexperience, faced drought, insects, early frosts, severe winters, prairie fires, a pandemic, and an economic depression. Nevertheless, almost all of these homesteaders felt lucky that they had been able to come to America. From the moment of their arrival, they exhibited even more pioneer spirit than many of their brave Jewish brethren who took the leap to board ships to America. Over seventy percent of Jewish immigrants stayed in New York or on the eastern seaboard in big cities like those they were accustomed to in Europe, surrounded by those of their same faith.<sup>38</sup> These Ashley Jewish homesteaders boarded trains from New York to the prairie. Then they climbed into horse drawn buggies or walked to Ashley from the train depot at Eureka, South Dakota, "Odessa of the North".<sup>39</sup> Here in North Dakota, they began their lives as

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charitable organizations providing aid to some of these farmers. They published contemporaneous reports concerning the location and numbers of Jewish farmers in the state to whom they were providing aid.

<sup>35</sup> Rikoon, *Jewish Farm Settlements in America's Heartland* (1995), Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society, *Annual Report* (New York: JAS 1911), Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic: An Ethnic Atlas of Rural North Dakota* (1983).

<sup>36</sup> Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic* (1983), JAS *Annual Reports* and records (1906 - 1914), *McIntosh County Homestead Records* Homestead Records, (McIntosh County Courthouse)

<sup>37</sup> Sherman, id. , JAS *Annual Reports* (1906-1914)

<sup>38</sup> Schute, *Proving Up, Moving Up* (2010)

<sup>39</sup> Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic* (1983), *Homesteader Family Histories*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Jewish farmers on their isolated homesteads in a state where they made up roughly two-tenths of one percent of the population of the State.<sup>40</sup>

## I. WHY RUSSIAN JEWS CAME TO THE UNITED STATES TO FARM

When examining what caused Russian Jews to immigrate to the United States to farm between 1881 and 1920, one must examine the four pieces of this puzzle. First, the conditions for Jews in Russia became unbearable; second, the Am Olam and other back to the land movements began in Odessa; third, the Immigration and Homestead Act laws passed by the United States Congress did not discriminate in any way against Jews when providing “free” land; and fourth, Jewish charitable organizations to assist recent immigrants were founded in Europe and the United States during this time period.

### A. Conditions in Russia – “Storms in the Negev”

The Russian Empire had few Jews until the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. From 1791 to 1835, the Russian Empire acquired a number of countries – including portions of Poland, Lithuania and Turkey, and the accompanying Jewish population residing in these areas. Though the borders changed as the size of the Russian Empire expanded, Jews were restricted to living in a designated area of southern czarist Russia from the time of Catherine II in the late 1700s.<sup>41</sup>

This area eventually became known as the “Pale of Settlement” and comprised much of Poland, Lithuania, Byelorussia and the Ukraine. The Pale covered an area of about one million square kilometers (386,000 square miles), from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea. Approximately five million Jews or 94 percent of the total Jewish population of Russia lived in the Pale as of the 1897 census, where Yiddish was the language spoken among the

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<sup>40</sup> There were approximately 577,000 people living in North Dakota in 1910. In addition to the roughly 1200 Jewish farmers, there were additional Jewish people working at other trades or owning stores in the state, though there is no way to determine this number. Eliminating the unknown number of business owners/peddlers, etc., the population of Jewish farmers and their families in the state made up approximately two-tenths of one percent in 1910. By contrast, there were over nine million people living in the state of New York, with over four and one half million in New York City in 1910. With approximately one million Jewish people living in New York City in 1910, the Jewish population in New York City alone made up around eleven percent of New York’s population, and twenty-one percent of New York City’s population, US Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census – New York, North Dakota* (1910)

<sup>40</sup> Pearl W. Bartelt, *American Jewish Agricultural Colonies* in Donald Pitzer, *American Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill 1997), JAS *Annual Report* (JAS 1909), summarizing first ten years of organization, Louis Fields Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota, North Dakota History, vol. 32* (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota 1965), Jyotsna Sreenivasan, *Utopias in American History, Jewish Agricultural Communities* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2008), Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities 1732-2000, Nineteenth Century Jewish Farm Colonies* (Westport: Praeger 2003)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Jews. Jews were about twelve percent of the general population, with Ukrainians, Polish, Belorussian, Russian, Lithuanian, Moldavian and Germans also living in this area. Other than the Germans under Russian rule and the Russian Jews, these separate nations lived in their own regions, where they were each the majority of the population in those regions.<sup>42</sup>

In 1827 Czar Nicholas I ordered twenty-five year conscription in the Russian military for all Jewish boys (age 12-18). The leaders of each town had to produce the required numbers of boys on a periodic basis. By comparison, the rule of Czar Alexander II was relatively uneventful for Russian Jews (1855-1881). However, after Czar Alexander II was assassinated in 1881 and the Jews falsely blamed for this event, his son, Czar Alexander III passed the "May Laws" in the same year. Contained within these laws was a prohibition for Jews to own land or to farm in the Pale. Jews were also not allowed to buy or rent land outside the Pale. Jews were not allowed to travel within Russia, "beyond the Pale" into other areas of Russia without a passport. Jewish artisans could not work outside the Pale. Jews were excluded from participation in the Zemstvos (local administration bodies). Jews were restricted from attending Russian schools. Jews were straddled with harsh taxes. It became a criminal act for a Jew to use a Christian given name. Jewish boys were conscripted into the Russian army for a period of 16 years. Jews had no security for their personal property or homes, which could be taken at any time for any reason.<sup>43</sup>

In 1883, a special legislative committee appointed by the Czar reported to him that 650 anti-Jewish laws were part of the Russian statutes. Though the committee made the recommendation to emancipate the Jews and to allow them to assimilate with the rest of the population, the czarist regime adopted a policy opposing the report, i.e., to continue the discrimination against the Jews.<sup>44</sup> All of these restrictions would have been lifted if the Jews converted to the official religion of the Russian Empire – i.e., Russian Orthodox. The Russian Jews had a strong faith, and would not do this.

Then came the pogroms – large-scale targeted massacres directly supported by the czarist regime and aided by the Czar's secret police (the Okhrana), and local authorities. The Jews called these "Storms in the Negev". These pogroms (most notoriously in 1881-1884 and 1903-1906) resulted in thousands of deaths, rapes and injuries to Jews in the Pale. When the Russian Jews saw their family members being killed and maimed, there was a strong impetus to leave Russia.<sup>45</sup> This was especially so if family members or friends had already made the trip to America.

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<sup>42</sup> Id.

<sup>43</sup> Id.

<sup>44</sup> Id.

<sup>45</sup> Id.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The Ashley Tribune (November 10, 1905) contains the following article in "A Week's News in Condensed Form":

Uprising in Russia - anarchy in Odessa was checked by proclamation of martial law, after 6000 persons had been shot down ... Massacre and pillage prevail in Odessa, Kishineff, Kiev and other cities of southern Russia, the loss of life being enormous ...

One Jewish Ashley homesteader, Lena Bendersky Miller, was a witness during this sad and tense time:

*Hooligans were recruited and instigated by the police to enter homes for unprovoked searches, to find evidence of anti-government revolutionary activity, particularly among students ... The Bender home was subject to sudden searches and life became increasingly threatening. [Two] sons died of injuries received at the hands of hooligans.<sup>46</sup>*

Homesteader Noah Schlasinger remembers one particular night:

*About ten of us – young men --- organized our building and took turns watching. I was living with the Benderskys in a two-story apartment house in Odessa with a big heavy iron gate in front and we kept that locked. I remember we had fog every night and it was hard to see when we were on watch. The pogrom started in the night, away from our section of town, down near the seashore. They were burning warehouses, and we could see the flames. We were scared all right! We didn't have anything to defend ourselves with – just knives we collected and rocks. We moved all the women and children to the second floor of the building and kept boiling water on the stoves to pour down in case we were attacked ...After the October pogrom, emigration no longer was a choice – it was a necessity.<sup>47</sup>*

Israel Auerbach, living in Ashley and married to the sister of Kiva Bender's wife Rebecca, offered to lend the Benderskys and Noah Schlasinger passage money, in stages, for the long journey to the agricultural community in McIntosh County.<sup>48</sup> The family appreciated the

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<sup>46</sup> Deborah Miller, *Bender Miller Family History* (1970s), Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project. "It was none too soon. The family members they left behind - aunts, uncles, cousins – became victims in the murderous riots that swept over Russia. Many were killed. Those who managed to escape with their lives vanished: efforts to trace them subsequently were unsuccessful."

<sup>47</sup> Ethel Schlasinger Overby, *Sarah and Noah Schlasinger Family History* (1970s), Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project. In 1935-38, Ethel Schlasinger directed the Federal Writers Project of the Works Progress Administration in North Dakota. Under the project, writers compiled information for *North Dakota: A Guide to the Northern Prairie State* (1938). She was a granddaughter of Kiva Bender, a leader in the Ashley Jewish community, buried in the cemetery. Her sister, Marcella, was the secretary to North Dakota Governor Langer.

<sup>48</sup> Pauline Auerbach Greenberg, *Auerbach Family History* (1974) in Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project. Kenneth M. Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches – An American Soldier's Story* (2005)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

generous gesture the rest of their lives, though Joseph and Lena Bendersky had to wait in Brussels for a time, as their fare was not sufficient to get them all the way to the United States.



*Jewish New Year's Card (circa 1900 - 1920) showing Jewish Americans welcoming Jews emigrating from Russia<sup>49</sup>*

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<sup>49</sup> Ephemera from the Alfred Bendiner Memorial Collection (Library of Congress), Exhibit: *"From Haven to Home - A Library of Congress Exhibition Marking 350 Years of Jewish Life in America"* (Library of Congress 2004)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*Future Ashley homesteaders pictured around a chessboard near Odessa, Russia (circa 1900) Sarah Bendersky (second row, left, whose homestead land is the site of the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery), Joseph Bendersky (second row, middle), Lena Bendersky (second row, right) and Noah Schlasinger (front row, left). The young man in the first row, right was a brother to Sarah, Lena and Joseph who was killed in one of the 1905 pogroms in Russia.*

**B. Am Olam and Other Back to the Land Movements - "A Plow with the Ten Commandments"**

Concurrent with and as a result of worsening conditions in czarist Russia, the Am Olam movement started in Odessa, Russia, to attempt to help Jews escape from the pogroms. Am Olam means "Eternal People." The movement's emblem was a plow with the Ten Commandments – signifying the right to own and farm land, while still following Jewish laws and traditions. The goal of the movement was to help Jews escape the conditions in Russia by their moving to the United States and becoming farmers. Jews generally worked

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

as peddlers and merchants in Russia, due to laws prohibiting them from farming. Am Olam attempted to avoid the negative stereotype sometimes associated with Jews in Russia, where ninety percent of non-Jews were farmers, by assisting Russian Jewish immigrants to become farmers in the United States.<sup>50</sup>

Jews in other parts of Europe, as well as American Jews who had previously immigrated to the United States, were told that America was “ the only land which has room enough, is free and generous enough (and) which offers an unobstructed field for all occupations and handicrafts. ... America would form the Mecca of these persecuted people, in which they can hope to succeed in founding by their toil and labor, homes worthy of freemen.”<sup>51</sup> Many previously settled American Jews, who had mostly come from Germany, also liked the idea of helping to disperse some of the many incoming Russian immigrants to places other than the already congested cities on the eastern seaboard.



**Sheet Music for Yiddish Song, Am Olam, (Eternal People) published in 1898.** <sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Pearl W. Bartelt, *American Jewish Agricultural Colonies* in Donald Pitzer, *American Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill 1997), JAS *Annual Report* (JAS 1909), Louis Fields Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota, North Dakota History, vol. 32* (1965), Jyotsna Sreenivasan, *Utopias in American History, Jewish Agricultural Communities* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO 2008), Robert Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience: Religious Communities 1732-2000, Nineteenth Century Jewish Farm Colonies* (Westport: Praeger 2003)

<sup>51</sup> Moritz Ellinger a leader in the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society to a gathering of Jewish leaders in Europe, quoted in Sutton, *Communal Utopias and the American Experience* (2003)

<sup>52</sup> A. Bernstein, *Collection of Jewish Songs "Neginot Israel"*, Library of Congress (Vilna, Poland:1898)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Another group in Russia at the time was called BILU, an acronym with the beginning Hebrew letters for the words “House of Jacob, let us go.” It had as its goal to encourage emigration to Palestine. However, as Palestine was under Turkish rule at that time, and in 1882 Turkey banned immigration into Palestine, the American option for agricultural immigration seemed more easily attainable.<sup>53</sup>

There was also a great written campaign by non-Jews to get the Jewish immigrant out of the city and onto the farm. In John Foster Carr’s, *Guide to the United States for the Jewish Immigrant* (2<sup>nd</sup> Yiddish edition 1916), the author explains:

*The cost of food is rising in America, and so the profits of farming and gardening are constantly increasing. For many Jews here is an excellent chance of work and prosperous living ...*

*Work in the city at good wages is often temporary ... but by farming, a poor man in a short time can often become independent if besides some absolutely necessary experience of agriculture, he has persistence, industry and common intelligence. Country life is healthier for yourself and your family. You are protected from diseases common in the city, and more important still, the moral health of your boys and girls will be better protected. And in the country the Jew finds an advantage of peace and happiness that are impossible in the city, because in the city it is difficult for him to observe the Sabbath as his conscience dictates, but in the country he has complete religious freedom, and in peace can worship God according to the custom of his fathers ...*<sup>54</sup>

### **C. US Laws and Policies - “Free Land”**

The first Jewish “community” in the United States is commonly accepted as being in 1654 in New Amsterdam. Despite this early history, there was no significant immigration of Jews to the United States prior to 1882. There were approximately 250,000 persons calling themselves Jews living in the United States in 1880. Beginning in 1882, large numbers of Jews left Russia and Eastern Europe as a result of the living conditions, lack of economic

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<sup>53</sup> Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota* (1965). There was some immigration to Palestine and surrounding areas from the Russian Empire. However, Ottoman law did not allow Jews to own land in Palestine. This restriction resulted in some immigrants selecting the United States. Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen, quoted in Lance Nixon, *Promised Land* (Capital City Journal, July 2014). There was also significant agricultural immigration to South Africa, Argentina and Canada, as a result of the Am Olam movement. A Time Magazine piece in 1938, “Jews and Farming”, referred to a “semireligious inspiration behind the Jewish back to the farm movement”, based on the Jewish civilization of the Old Testament being primarily agricultural. As of that date, Time reported 800,000 Jewish farmers in the world, and 100,000 in the United States.

<sup>54</sup> Mr. Carr promoted the Americanization of Italian, Jewish and Polish immigrants to the United States and wrote guides on the subject.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

opportunity, and the pogroms. From 1880 to 1920, about 1.25 million Jews left the “Pale of Settlement” in czarist Russia for a new life in the United States.<sup>55</sup>

From the 1880s through the first half of 1924, when large numbers of Jewish immigrants entered the United States, there were no quotas on Jewish immigration to the United States from Russia. Then the Johnson-Reed Act (or Immigration Act of 1924) was passed and signed by President Coolidge in May of 1924. It limited the annual number of immigrants from any country to two percent of the number of people from that country living in the United States in 1890. Its main purpose was to restrict the numbers coming from Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Africans, and Indians, though it was sold to Congress as a means to “preserve the ideal of American homogeneity.”<sup>56</sup>

In addition to the favorable immigration laws in the first quarter of the century, the Homestead Act of 1862, signed by President Lincoln had a major effect on immigrant Russian Jews looking to farm land in the United States. The Homestead Act offered 160 acres of “free” land to persons who were twenty-one years old or a head of family, and who were either citizens of the United States or had filed a declaration of intent to become a citizen. He/she paid a filing fee and either 1) lived on the site for five years and cultivated at least twenty acres or b) paid a set price per acre for the land after two years. Two hundred seventy million acres, or ten percent of the area of the United States was claimed and settled under this Act. The only restriction to a citizen or prospective citizen was that the person filing for a homestead claim could not have “borne arms against the United States Government or given aid and comfort to its enemies.”<sup>57</sup>

The federal government was agreeing to transfer title to land from itself to individuals. For persons who had been denied the privilege of owning land in their former countries, this concept was an amazing and exciting one. To quote one of the Ashley homesteaders, “We couldn’t believe that there was a land like this ... America.”<sup>58</sup>

#### **D. Jewish Charitable Organizations – Baron Maurice de Hirsch, Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid**

Baron Maurice de Hirsch was a wealthy Jewish German businessman, who lived primarily in France, and who had made his money in banking, railroads and imports/exports. In 1891, reacting to the persecution of Jews in the Russian Empire, he formed The Jewish

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<sup>55</sup> Pearl W. Bartelt, *American Jewish Agricultural Colonies* in Donald Pitzer, *American Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill 1997), JAS *Annual Report* (JAS 1909), summarizing first ten years of organization, Louis Fields Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota, North Dakota History*, vol. 32 (1965)

<sup>56</sup> US Department of State, Office of the Historian, [history.state.gov](http://history.state.gov), The Historian, North American Immigration, [northamericanimmigration.org](http://northamericanimmigration.org)

<sup>57</sup> United States Homestead Act (1862)

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Bender, *Interview by Ellis Ellison* (taped Arizona, 1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Colonization Society. It had as its goal the movement of Russian Jews from Russia to agricultural colonies in other countries, e.g., the United States, Argentina, Canada and Palestine. The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society was incorporated in 1900, as part of the de Hirsch fund. Eventually, all decisions regarding donations to support Jewish agricultural activity from the Baron de Hirsch fund were transferred to this new society.<sup>59</sup>

The Jewish Agricultural Society, ("JAS" as it later became known), and the Chicago based Jewish Agriculturalists' Aid Society, initially placed Jewish applicants deemed worthy on large tracts of uncleared land, far from cities, in attempts at group settlement and collective ownership. Due to the failure of many of these settlements on the East Coast, in the South and in the Midwest, the focus for these charitable groups eventually changed to settling individual families on abandoned farms close to metropolitan areas. Later still, the JAS provided loans to farmers (including some of those in the Ashley colony) for equipment, seed and supplies -- taking mortgages on their land, and chattel mortgages on equipment.<sup>60</sup>

A separate organization, the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, was formed in 1881 to deal with the needs of the large numbers of Russian Jews immigrating to the United States. The Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society even provided the funds to some of the Ashley, North Dakota farmers to travel by train from New York City to claim homesteads in North Dakota. In addition, too many local charitable organizations, synagogues and previously settled Jewish immigrants to mention, tried to assist the "new" immigrants, including by "adopting" early agricultural colonies and/or sending money and supplies to certain colonies.<sup>61</sup>

Without the consistent charitable financial help (for some early colonies) or the sporadic help after a drought, prairie fire, or crop failure for the later settlements such as in Ashley, many farmers would not have ultimately had the farming success which they did - enabling them to purchase their land outright or to stay on their land for five years to prove up their claims.

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<sup>59</sup> JAS Annual Report (1909), Dr. W. Gunther Plaut,, *Jewish Colonies at Painted Woods and Devils Lake, North Dakota History*, vol. 32 no. 1 (Bismarck: North Dakota State Historical Society January 1965), Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies in North Dakota*, (1965)

<sup>60</sup> JAS Annual Reports. A 1903 Report of the Jewish Agricultural society provides its organization's consensus that six hundred dollars is simply not enough for a farming family in North Dakota to be given, with the expectation that it could then support itself after a year. They believe that the cost is one thousand dollars.

<sup>61</sup> Bartlett, *American Jewish Agricultural Colonies* (1997) and JAS Annual Report (1909)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



(COPYRIGHT, LESLIE JUDGE CO., 1909.)

*This cartoon from The Jewish Farmer magazine (1909), a periodical in Yiddish and English published by the Jewish Agricultural Society, provides a clear choice, “Prosperity Farm” while standing tall, or “peddler and sweatshop” while bent over from the weight of one’s work*

## **II. WHY RUSSIAN JEWISH IMMIGRANTS CAME TO NORTH DAKOTA, “THE GREAT NORTHWEST”, TO HOMESTEAD IN THE EARLY 1900S**

The Russian Jewish immigrants, seeking to farm on their own land, came to McIntosh County in the early 1900s for three primary reasons; first, because there were homesteads still available, second, because they had next to no funds, which made homesteading the only option for these immigrants who were determined to farm on their own land, and third, because there had been a history of Jewish agricultural colonies and individual Jewish families settling in the Dakota territories since the 1880s – sometimes with help from various Jewish charitable organizations.

### **A. The Availability of Homestead Land in North Dakota and McIntosh County in 1905**

The Homestead Act became law throughout the United States in 1862, and the Dakota Territory was opened to white settlers as “public domain” in 1864. The Jewish Agricultural Society referred to it as “The Great Northwest.” However, the land that would later become the State of North Dakota was not homesteaded that quickly. This was due to a number of factors, including the ongoing Civil War, reports of “Indian raids”, blizzards, droughts,

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

prairie fires, grasshoppers, the economic “Panic of 1873”, which caused a decline in wheat prices, the “Great Sioux War of 1876” and a lack of efficient transportation to many parts of the Territory. All of these factors resulted in there still being land to homestead once the Jewish immigrants arrived in the area.<sup>62</sup>

In the late 1800s, the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Great Northern Railway were competing to complete the best railroad route – from Minnesota through the Dakota Territory to the west coast. In 1871, nine years after the Homestead Act, the Northern Pacific began laying track in Dakota Territory. In 1886, the company put down 164 miles of additional main line across the land that three years later would be called North Dakota. By 1885, the Great Northern Railway had track extending to the Devil’s Lake area.<sup>63</sup>

However, the McIntosh County area was still not easily accessible in 1862 for new immigrants looking to homestead. The Soo Line Railroad did not have a stop in Ashley until 1901. Though ox-cart and stagecoach routes existed between North Dakota settlements, they made it less convenient to get from place to place.<sup>64</sup>

McIntosh County was formed due to an act of the legislature of the Dakota Territory in 1883, twenty years after the Homestead Act, dividing Logan County, and naming the southern portion “McIntosh” after a member of the legislature. In 1888, Hoskins, the county seat of McIntosh, was changed to Ashley, about three miles away. Once the land had been surveyed and plats were in the land offices ready for filing (in 1884 in the first county seat, Hoskins, and in 1888 in the second county seat of Ashley), more homesteaders began to arrive. The population also increased once North Dakota became a state in 1889. However, it was the 39<sup>th</sup> state, and other areas of the country had seen increased population years before.<sup>65</sup>

There are considered to have been two “booms” of population into the area now known as North Dakota. Between 1879 and 1886, over 100,000 immigrants entered northern Dakota

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<sup>62</sup> Gordon Iseminger, *The McIntosh County German-Russians: The First Fifty Years, North Dakota*, vol. 51, no 3 (Bismarck: State Historical Society of North Dakota 1984), Bernard Postal and Lionel Kappman, *Jewish Tourists Guide to the US* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America 1954)

<sup>63</sup> Id.

<sup>64</sup> Id. and Ashley Golden Jubilee Committee, *Ashley Golden Jubilee Book* (1938). From 1875 to 1890, wealthy east coast investors purchased large tracts of Red River Valley land in eastern North Dakota, mostly from the Northern Pacific Railway. Farms ranged from 3000 to 65,000 acres, and became known as “bonanza farms.” These bonanza farms, with very fertile land, were a far cry (in both size and quality of land) from the 160-acre homestead properties claimed by the Jewish immigrants near Ashley.

<sup>65</sup> Id.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Territory. The second boom took place between 1898 and 1915, when 250,000 more people moved into the region.<sup>66</sup>

In 1885, there were only 390 people in McIntosh County. By 1910, there were 7251 people in McIntosh County, according to the 1910 Census. From JAS records of farmers who were given aid by the Organization and homestead records from the County, the best estimate of the number of Jewish persons is approximately 80 homesteaders and around 400 people making their livelihood on McIntosh County homesteads. This would mean that the Jewish population was approximately five and one half percent of the population in McIntosh County in 1910.

The best guide to determining the number of Jewish people in McIntosh County would have seemed to be the answer to the question on the 1910 census regarding "Mother Tongue." However, some Jewish immigrants answered "Yiddish", while other answered "Russian" or "German." As a practical matter, there is no readily available summary of the answer to the Mother Tongue question for North Dakota or McIntosh County. For these reasons, the JAS Annual Reports of farmers and the County census records provide the best general guide numbers.

When immigrants came to the United States from Russia around 1905, the trains were available to bring them to get free land in North Dakota, the place advertised by the railroads as a "Garden of Eden." The land had been surveyed and plats were ready to be filed. The history of the area resulted in these immigrants still finding homestead land available at this time, albeit not the best land for farming in either McIntosh County or North Dakota.

***B. The Lack of Funds By the Russian Jewish Immigrants to Buy Farm Land Outright***

Another reason the Russian Jewish immigrants picked North Dakota was that this was their only option to own land. Due to the political situation in Russia, including restrictions on Jews in educational and occupational opportunities and harsh taxes, few Russian Jews living in the Pale of Settlement were able to earn or save much money. Most of the limited possessions they did have were unable to be transported with them in steerage on the ships to the United States.<sup>67</sup>

In addition, Jewish charitable organizations generally preferred to finance selected Jewish farmers with moneys for equipment or seed, rather than land. For example, according to

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<sup>66</sup> State Historical Society of North Dakota: American Settlement, [history.nd.gov/ndhistory/settlement](http://history.nd.gov/ndhistory/settlement)

<sup>67</sup> Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies* (1965)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

the Jewish Agricultural Society Annual Report in 1909, (referring to placed “colonies” of Jewish farmers, rather than the type of individual Jewish homesteaders who moved to the Ashley area):

*... between 1888 and 1908, the Chicago based Jewish Agricultural Aid Society aided Jewish farmers who settled on 426 farms through the “heartland.” Of the states selected for settlement, North Dakota was the most popular destination with 167 families, close to 40 percent of all placements. North Dakota’s status as the leading destination reflects the Chicago Society’s preference for the “homestead solution”...*

These charitable organizations did not want to fund the purchase of land, but rather equipment, supplies, etc., and the Russian Jews generally had little or no money.<sup>68</sup>

### **C. The History of Jewish People Living in North Dakota Since 1869**

The final reason why Russian Jewish immigrants came to the area around Ashley was that many had heard Jewish people had lived and were living in North Dakota.<sup>69</sup> Though some of these earlier settlers had experienced difficult living conditions in their struggles to earn a livelihood, just as their non-Jewish neighbors had, there were limited incidents of prejudice against them. To the contrary, the Jewish members of the various communities were frequently treated warmly, especially in areas where there was a large population of German Russian immigrants. These German Russians came from the same area where many of the Russian Jewish immigrants had lived, (the “Pale of Settlement”), and were accustomed to living peacefully with each other. The fact that Jewish charitable organizations had assisted Jewish farmers periodically in North Dakota prior to the time the Jewish homesteaders came to Ashley, also gave the new immigrants another sense of comfort. Limited help would be available to them in case of emergencies.

There were at least fifty Jewish agricultural “colonies”, or settlements of Jewish farmers in at least twenty-three different counties in North Dakota formed between 1882 and 1908, in forty-four percent of North Dakota’s counties, though none of the colonies were in

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<sup>68</sup> JAS *Annual Report* (1909). Jewish colony formation in the US reached a peak in 1882, when twenty Jewish agricultural colonies were founded in ten different states ranging from North Dakota in the north, Arkansas in the south, New Jersey in the east and Oregon in the west. After attempting this approach, these charitable organizations instead, generally, chose to provide assistance to individual farmers.

<sup>69</sup> Schwartz, *Early Jewish Agricultural Colonies* (1965). The earliest reported Jewish settler in the Dakota Territory was Dan Eisenberg, who operated a trading post on the Missouri River, south of Bismarck beginning in 1869. His first store was opposite Fort Lincoln on what was called “the Point”, but then washed away by the river, so he moved into town. He is also credited with being one of the original settlers in Burleigh County.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

existence for that entire time.<sup>70</sup> There were more Jewish farmers in North Dakota than in another state except New Jersey, Connecticut and New York.<sup>71</sup>

**1. North Dakota Homestead Placements by Jewish Agriculturists' Aid Society of Chicago *Prior* to Ashley Homesteaders' Arrival in 1905<sup>72</sup>**

*Bottineau County*\_ 1. Ely 2. Russel

*Burleigh County* 3. Andrews 4. Bismarck 5. Cromwell 6. Ong 7. Wilton

*LaMoure County* 8. Kulm

*McHenry County*\_ 9. Balfour 10. Velva 11. Wagar

*McIntosh County* 12. Lehr

*McLean County* (includes present day McLean and *Sheridan* counties)  
13. Coalharbor 14. Underwood 15. Washburn

*Morton County* (includes present day Morton and *Grant* counties)  
16. Cannonball 17. Fallon 18. Mandan

*Ramsey County* 19. Benzion 20. Iola

*Towner County* 21. Perth

*Ward County* (includes present day Ward, *Mountrail*, *Burke*, and *Renville* counties)  
22. Banner 23. Palermo

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<sup>70</sup> Records of JAS and JAA, cited in Schute, *Proving Up, Moving Up* (2010)

<sup>71</sup> *JAS Annual Reports* (1905-1916) Some Jewish agricultural settlements were not listed in articles or books describing the time period, as they either consisted of small groups of Jewish farmers, making the "colony" designation strained, or the farming operations were short lived, or they were located far away from larger population centers, and did not seek help from the available Jewish charitable organizations.

<sup>72</sup> *JAS Annual Reports*, Schute, *Proving Up, Moving Up* (2010), citing to JAA and JAS records. Other Jewish settlers not placed by the Chicago Society were a part of some of these settlements as well.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

**2. Jewish Agricultural Settlements (or groups of farmers) Started *Prior* to Ashley Homesteaders' Arrival (*not* placements by Chicago Society)<sup>73</sup>**

- Burleigh County* 24. Painted Woods<sup>74</sup> 25. Wing<sup>75</sup> 26. Regan<sup>76</sup>
- Cass County* 27. Fargo
- Cavalier County* 28. Milton
- Dickinson County* 29. Dickinson 30. Belfield
- Grand Forks County* 31. Grand Forks
- LaMoure County* 32. Russell
- Logan County* 33. Gackle
- McHenry County* 34. Towner
- McIntosh County* 35. Wishek
- McKenzie County* 36. Stroud
- McLean County* 37. Dodgen 38. Denhof
- Morton County* 39. Glen Ullin 40. Leipzig 41. Flasher 42. Hebron
- Mountrail* 43. White Earth
- Nelson County* 44. Lakota<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Not all of these settlements were still in existence or had Jewish farmers at the time the Ashley homesteaders arrived to farm. It should also be noted that the settlements listed above are not listed in order of formation, and that some of the settlements were located in areas that later became the counties listed.

<sup>74</sup> Painted Woods is accepted as the first North Dakota Jewish agricultural community. It was formed in 1882 on the north shore of the Missouri River, thirty miles northwest of Bismarck.

<sup>75</sup> The Wing Jewish farming colony was formed around 1901, fifty miles from Bismarck

<sup>76</sup> The Regan Jewish farming colony was formed about 1901, thirty-five miles from Bismarck

<sup>77</sup> The Thal homesteaders moved here to farm in 1879. Their grandson Alfred conducted many interviews of Jewish homesteaders in the 1970s, at the request of the State Historical Society of North Dakota. These tapes and some transcriptions are now located in Bismarck.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Name of Property

*Ramsey County* 45. Garske Village<sup>78</sup> 20. Iola<sup>79</sup> (listed above) 46. Devils Lake<sup>80</sup>  
47. Webster<sup>81</sup> 48. Starkweather

*Ward County* 49. Minot<sup>82</sup>

*Williams County* 50. Williston

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<sup>78</sup> Garske Village (Colony) was formed in 1883, and was the second North Dakota Jewish agricultural community. It was located six miles from the Village of Garske and fifteen miles north of Devils Lake.

<sup>79</sup> Iola was formed around 1885, twenty miles northwest of Devils Lake. Its residents were mostly persons who had farmed in Painted Woods and Garske. Most of the persons who farmed there were not placed by the Chicago Society.

<sup>80</sup> The Devils Lake Colony was formed around 1889.

<sup>81</sup> Webster was formed between 1888 and 1892.

<sup>82</sup> Minot was formed in the early 1880s.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***The Federation of Jewish Farmers of American, made up of twenty-five associations in the United States including the Sulzberger Colony Association from Ashley, held its first meeting in New York in October 1909, in conjunction with the Jewish harvest holiday of Succoth.<sup>83</sup> This picture shows of some of the produce exhibited in conjunction with the meeting. (George Grantham Bain Collection)***

As of 1909, the Jewish Agricultural Society Annual Report stated that the sixty Ashley Jewish farmers in McIntosh County, whose farmers association was called the “Sulzberger

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<sup>83</sup> JAS *Annual Report* (1910) Sukkot is the last of the three pilgrimage festivals for Jewish people. It has a dual significance, i.e., historical (commemorating the forty year period when the children of Israel wandered in the desert while living in sukkot (temporary shelters) and agricultural (also called the Festival of Ingathering, involving rejoicing before God with specific plants). As New York City was a long way from Ashley, the only known “attendee” from the area at the First Annual Meeting of the Federation of Jewish Farmers of America was a woven wreath of three-inch head millet sent by Sarah Bendersky Schlasinger. It won a certificate of merit and a silver medal. In her family history, Sarah’s daughter Ethel Overby recalls her mother saying that they were contacted by the Jewish Agricultural Society asking Ashley settlers for specimens of their grain for an exhibition in New York. All of their good quality wheat had been sold prior to hearing about the meeting, so Sarah crafted a wreath from their chicken feed millet.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Colony of Jewish Farmers”, formed the youngest and largest settlement, in North Dakota, of eight they were aware of that existed *at that time* in eight different counties. The JAS reported twenty-one Jewish farmers in Dodgen (in McLean County), forty-eight Jewish farmers in Wilton (Burleigh County), twenty Jewish farmers in Devils Lake (Ramsey County), eleven Jewish farmers in Stroud (McKenzie County), fifteen Jewish farmers in Bowman (Bowman County), who had formed the Bowman County Jewish Farmers Association, thirteen Jewish farmers in Leipzig (Morton County), eleven Jewish farmers in Velva (Ward County) and seventeen “scattered” farmers in other areas of North Dakota. The JAS was the first to admit that with their being located in New York, there were other existing Jewish farmers who they may not be aware of in North Dakota. For example, if no farmer from a particular settlement had sought aid from their organization, they may not be aware of that farmer’s (or that settlement’s) existence. Their annual reports also fail to identify how many farmers were needed and in what proximity to each other, to be categorized as a “settlement” or “colony”, versus being referred to as “scattered.”

As is apparent from the lists above, the Jews who homesteaded in Ashley were not the first Jews in the Dakota Territory, nor were they the last. Shortly after the formation of the settlement in Ashley, the Marmath Colony (Slope County) and the Bowman farming settlements (Bowman County) began. The presence of other Jews in the state, whether they lived on farms or had moved to neighboring towns for work, added to the Jewish immigrants’ comfort in choosing North Dakota as their home – to work and raise their families.<sup>84</sup>

### III. THE HOMESTEADING EXPERIENCE FOR ASHLEY JEWISH FARMERS

#### A. *Farming Conditions in North Dakota and the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders – “Promising Young Men with a Pioneering Spirit and Not Afraid of Hard Work” (1906)*

The Jewish homesteaders near Ashley arrived “a little late to the party”, i.e., over twenty years after McIntosh County was opened for homesteading. This meant that the best land had already been claimed. As most of the Jewish homesteaders ended up with land in the hilly sections of the County, the German residents in the County referred to the Jewish homestead lands as “Judenberg” or “the Jewish Hills.”<sup>85</sup>

In addition to the hills, there was also the problem of land quality. Many of the Ashley Jewish homesteaders arrived in the winter months to North Dakota. Once the spring thaw arrived, the many rocks and stones on their land became visible to them for the first time. The process of clearing the land foot by foot and eventually acre by acre, was the highest priority. Crops would not grow in and around the stones and rocks. This tedious, back

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<sup>84</sup> JAS Annual Reports (1900 – 1916)

<sup>85</sup> Dr. Leo Cohen and Max Wishek interview by Father William Sherman (Ashley 1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

breaking, time consuming work was, of course, done without the benefit of any modern machinery.<sup>86</sup>



***Piles of rocks and boulders (“homesteader pyramids”) cleared by hand by the pioneers still remain on this Jewish homesteaded land near Ashley, over one hundred years later.***

Upon arriving to the area, there had to be a sharp learning curve for the new Jewish farmers:

*Joe [Bender] had never ridden a horse before and he knew nothing about farming. When he first arrived in Ashley, he hired himself out as a farm hand at the home of a German farmer so he could learn. He learned how to rotate crops on the farm, how to handle a single blade plow with a team of horses, how to tame bronco horses. Soon Joe was even a consultant for other farmers new to the area.<sup>87</sup>*

In addition to the issues involved with attempting to farm rocky land on hilly terrain with little experience, the Ashley Jewish homesteaders, like their neighbors, dealt with the harsh

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<sup>86</sup> Schlasinger, *Bender/Miller and Sachs Family Histories*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project, Joe Bender interview with Alfred Thal (1974), State Historical Society of North Dakota

<sup>87</sup> Kenneth Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches – An American Soldier’s Story* (2005)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

climatic conditions. The 1903 Jewish Agricultural Society Annual Report referred to the “intense climatic risks of Dakota”, concluding:

*There is no advantage in seeking such remote places for our people. We have therefore notified the Chicago Society [the other agricultural aid charity in the area, which ceased operation in 1908] that we shall in no case assist any farmers whom they may send out to the Northwest at any date after May 1903, unless conditions alter materially.*

The 1903 JAS Report continued:

*While the land is practically free, everything connected with its tilling is expensive, and the chances of crop failure are very great – since the season is a very short one and droughts and frosts are both very likely to occur. The cost of all supplies being great, the new farmer must run deeply into debt to the local storekeepers before he can harvest his crop and a debt so incurred runs at the legal interest of 12 percent ... so without a large supply of ready money during the first year of his residence, the farmer is certain to become hopelessly involved in permanent indebtedness. We are fully in accord with the opinion of our manager that much might be gained if we could [provide support to farmers on] farms whose fertility had already been tested, together with [providing] information as to the best crops to be raised and methods of the same, that he (farmer) would be spared the many disappointments which are encountered at the present time.*

Briefly, the JAS had discovered that Jewish settlers on “plains homesteads” were having significantly lower success rates than Jewish settlers on farms closer to urban Jewish centers. For this reason, they did not want to use their funds to help the “plains homestead farmers” anymore. But then along came the homesteaders near Ashley who changed their minds. The JAS Report in 1907<sup>88</sup>, provides, in part:

*Every now and then we receive loan applications from farmers who have settled quite independently. Thus we have discovered a small settlement in the southern part of North Dakota, which has progressed so favorably through its own efforts that we felt quite justified in aiding considerably ...*

The 1907 Report also sets forth additional praise for the Jewish colony in McIntosh County, though still recognizing the risks involved in farming in North Dakota, stating:

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<sup>88</sup> The JAS analyzed its annual data regarding Jewish farmers, climate, successes and failures, etc., and reported on this data in the subsequent year’s Annual Report. For example, the Annual Report in 1907 covers occurrences in 1906. The JAS reports disclose that during this period, it generally gave loans at four percent, while it was customary for local business loans to require payment of twelve percent interest.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

*Though hit hard by this year's extremely unseasonable weather, [the Jewish farmer] has not suffered from its effects any more than his gentile neighbor. The industrial depression has not affected the farmer to any great extent ...*

*This year has brought us in touch with 164 farmers in North Dakota. During the last two years there has been a large influx of Jewish settlers in this state. Many of them were obliged to file on poor land, owing to the fact that most of the desirable homesteads had already been preempted. The settlers, however, are **promising young men, filled with a pioneering spirit and not afraid of hard work. This is especially true of those in McIntosh County. Most of these homesteaders have started with little or no money, but by working out for other farmers, on the section roads, or with threshing crews, have managed to make ends meet.**<sup>89</sup>To enable them, however, to work their homesteads, they require horses and farm machinery. These they generally buy on credit at exorbitant prices, giving in payment notes bearing 12 percent interest and becoming deeply involved in debt, they apply to us for assistance. This accounts for the 59 loans we were obliged to make this year in North Dakota. (Emphasis added)*

*As to our future work in the state, it must be said that aside from the fact that few good homesteads remain, the success of the homestead settlers depends too much upon circumstances beyond his control. Early frost, hail, inability to get his grain threshed and to make his shipments in time, are elements to be reckoned with. Our experience in North Dakota confirms to us ... that the same amount of money and energy, if diverted to the east or south, where not so much is dependent on chance, would yield much more satisfactory results.<sup>90</sup>*

The 1908 JAS report continues with compliments for the Ashley homesteaders:

*There are 205 known farmers in North Dakota, the fourth largest number in the United States. ... The oldest as well as the most important Jewish settlements in the Northwest are in North Dakota. In this state we have come in touch with 204 farmers, comprising an approximate population of over 1000. These farmers have settled on free government land. The line of farming pursued is principally the raising*

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<sup>89</sup> Homesteader Joe Bender noted that when working as a spike pitcher off of his family's homestead land, "The other fellows got \$2.50. I got fifty cents more. The reason why? I loved it and wanted to prove we could do it - that Jews could be farmers." Joe Bender manuscript, *This is Your Life - Joe Bender* (1970s)

<sup>90</sup> A change took place within the Jewish Agricultural Society prior to the 1907 annual report being issued. Cyrus Sulzberger, who had been the president of the JAS, and such a staunch supporter of the Ashley homesteaders that they named their farmers association after him (the Sulzberger Colony), had turned over the leadership reins of the organization, after becoming involved in another Jewish charity. Though the Ashley homesteaders are still praised, there are an increasing number of statements in the annual reports regarding the perceived greater risk of farming in North Dakota than in other areas where the JAS was providing occasional loans to farmers.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

*of wheat, flax, barley, oats and spelts, while some are also engaged in sheep raising and a few of the more prosperous are cattle raisers. ... The oldest settlement is in the Devil's Lake Section in Ramsey County, **while the largest and at the same time the youngest, is around Ashley in McIntosh County.** (Emphasis added)*

*Two representatives of Jewish farmers in McIntosh County, North Dakota, came to New York in December 1906 and had a conference with the JAS executive committee. The community they represent consists of thirty families living within a radius of six miles. Twelve of these have been assisted by us - the others have gone there either unassisted or with the aid of previous settlers. Owing to the difficulty of supervision so far from New York, we had almost concluded not to assist any more settlers on homestead claims. The representations of these two men, however, have convinced us of the wisdom of in some measure changing our decision.<sup>91</sup>*

The JAS North Dakota Report of 1909 includes reference to 216 Jewish farmers, with the "most important Jewish settlements" being in the "Ashley section in McIntosh County and the Wilton section in Burleigh County." Leonard Robinson, the General Manager of the JAS writes in his report, contained within the JAS 1909 Annual Report, that he was "much impressed" with the "spirit with which the homesteaders set about to work out their destinies in a new country. " "When we remember that these settlements are still in their infancy, the strides made by our farmers are certainly inspiring ... There was a pervading spirit of hopefulness which was contagious."

The JAS 1910 Report reports that in North Dakota, the state "experienced an almost general crop failure" that year. Regarding the "McIntosh County settlers" in the same year, the JAS reports:

*This year's crop was almost a total failure - few if any farmers will have grain to sell. All that they will realize is enough for seed and feed. However, in spite of the crop conditions, our settlers have held their own in the past year, ... contracting few new debts ...<sup>92</sup>*

The JAS Report of 1911 provides another rare look into the farming conditions that year in the Dakotas:

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<sup>91</sup> According to an article in the Grand Forks Herald (December 1906), Isadore Auerbach and Louis Wolfson were the two Ashley Jewish homesteader representatives who traveled to New York to plead the case of the Ashley homesteaders to the JAS. They returned with \$27,000 dollars in aide to assist the local Jewish farmers.

<sup>92</sup> Around this time, the JAS indicated that Jewish agriculturists (they were aware of) in North Dakota owned 86,000 acres.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

*In the Dakotas, where the average farmer depends largely upon his wheat crop, this year's failure, following immediately upon the heels of that of last year, was most disastrous in its effects. To the new settler who has not yet had time to gain a foothold and whose cultivable area is as yet small the two successive crop failures proved a severe setback. In some sections the drought was so severe that the farmer did not even harvest enough to pay him for his seed. Many of them ... were obliged to abandon their homesteads, at least temporarily, in order to find work for the winter. This is true of both Jewish and non-Jewish settlers.*

The 1915 Annual Report of the JAS starts referring to conditions in the Dakotas as conditions in the "middle west", rather than "the Northwest", stating:

*The crop situation in the middlewest has not been altogether favorable. Poor marketing conditions have contributed to make the farming season far from uniformly profitable. [Farmers saw the effects] of the "European War" (World War I) – when friends and relatives always to be depended upon in cases of need were out of work and could render little or no assistance ... [and] mortgagees who had been lenient needed their money...*

On the positive side, the report notes that farmers have learned the advantages of diversification, and came to understand that they cannot gamble their livelihoods depending solely upon wheat. Many of the Russian Jewish immigrants were able to learn from their German neighbors, as well, because they also spoke German. For example, when Joe Bender would pitch hay to Leah, his sister, she arranged it in stacks, shaped to drain off water in case of rain, the way she had seen the German farmers do.<sup>93</sup>

Soon, Jewish farmers generally and in McIntosh County specifically began to be the subject of newspaper articles and editorials. In 1907, the Grand Forks Herald, in an article entitled "Jews Take to the Farm – Colony in Ashley, ND Prospering at Beginning of Third Year" provided:

*The Jewish colony which was started near Ashley, ND in September 1905 is prospering wonderfully. At that time twelve families moved to the colony and since then it has grown rapidly. There are now thirty-two Minneapolis families there who have taken homesteads. They are proving daily that the Jews make as good farmers as students, vindicating that they are willing workers, and many of them would have long been "tillers of the soil" had they but had the opportunity.<sup>94</sup>*

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<sup>93</sup> *Miller/Bender Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project One day the brother-sister team worked in such "full momentum", they didn't realize that the stack on which Leah was standing had become so high there was no way for her to come down. Joe ran from farmer to farmer until he found a ladder long enough to rescue her from her perch.

<sup>94</sup> Grand Forks Herald (March 27, 1907)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The Bismarck Weekly Tribune reported on September 29, 1911, that Gabriel Davidson of New York City, representative of the Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society and Joseph Blaustein, the North Dakota representative, had been in the city a couple of days. In a conversation at the Grand Pacific Hotel, Mr. Davidson said that the organization was formed for the purpose of leading the mind of the American Jew away from merchandizing and into other pursuits. "We have our people scattered all over North Dakota and they are in a fairly prosperous condition --probably the greatest number are in McIntosh and Burleigh counties, but there are some in Bowman, McKenzie and other counties."

Dr. Morris Loeb, Scientist, chemistry professor at Columbia University, philanthropist and member of the Board of Directors of the JAS, in an editorial in "the Survey" dated December 23, 1911 stated:

*The Jewish farmer is not only a fact, but is gradually becoming a factor. Failures, it is true have been numerous, but it is no longer popular to dismiss them with the off hand statement that the Jew cannot be a farmer. Every failure, it was shown, can be traced to specific causes that are inexorable and that operate without regard to **creed, race, color or previous condition of servitude.***<sup>95</sup> (Emphasis added)



***An early model of the Cyclone broadcast seed sower used by McIntosh County farmers in the early 1900's. (McIntosh County Heritage Museum)***

Oscar Silverleib, whose sister-in-law Fayga is buried in the Ashley cemetery, had a homestead about eight miles north of Ashley, close to Danzig. After working the land for two years, he accumulated enough money to send for his "sweetheart" who lived near Odessa. She took a section of land adjoining his. They grew crops and raised cattle and

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<sup>95</sup> The emphasis added reflects Dr. Loeb's quoting from the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1870), giving the right to vote to former slaves. Dr. Loeb's speech was cited in the JAS Annual Report of 1913.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

purchased additional land. Though they eventually moved to a farm in Connecticut to be closer to more Jewish people and Jewish institutions, they considered their farming near Ashley to be a success.<sup>96</sup>

Other homesteaders found success off the farm, despite previous hardships. Isadore Dorfman escaped the pogrom of 1903 and got in touch with the Jewish Immigration Aid Society which furnished transportation to the Dakotas.

*He had no idea where he was going – found himself with others at Eureka, the end of the railroad at that time, and used self-propelled foot power for 35 miles to Ashley, following the trail of the freight ox cars.*<sup>97</sup>

Isadore's wife Freda Dorfman, buried at the Ashley cemetery, died in childbirth, leaving him with three young children and a farm. After proving up his claim, Mr. Dorfman sold his 160 acres at ten dollars per acre and used the money to buy a meat market in Ashley. He never remarried.

In a change from the typical scenario of parents bringing their children to the prairie, the two oldest Jampolsky boys encouraged their father, Isadore, to file for a section of the "wild land" in McIntosh County once they had arrived in North Dakota. As there were no trees, they did not build a house, because they believed the windstorms would blow the home away. They dug a large basement and covered the walls with horse manure to prevent freezing. (They called them adobe houses). In the winter, their father tied a thick strong rope around his waist and on the door to the barn, to lead him to safety if a blizzard suddenly came up. He feared he would lose direction, would perish and would not be discovered until the snow and ice cleared in the spring.<sup>98</sup> The Jampolskys eventually owned a general store in Linton. Isadore "Izzy" Jampolsky is buried in the Ashley Jewish cemetery.

When discussing the conditions of farming the land, Noah Schlasinger described the day he and his wife Sarah, "found gold" on her land, part of which is the site of the Ashley Cemetery. After his digging by hand for over a month, with Sarah pulling up the dirt in a bucket on a rope, and after too many dry trials, they eventually found their water supply. This was a significant turning point in their farming experience.<sup>99</sup>

For all the successes on the land there were also economic failures. While most Jewish homesteaders heard of the opportunity to own North Dakota land to farm while still in Russia, the Minenberg homesteaders learned of the opportunity another way. As told by their daughter, Rachel Minenberg Baker:

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<sup>96</sup> Morris Silverleib, *Silverleib Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

<sup>97</sup> Maurice Dorfman, *Dorfman Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

<sup>98</sup> Sol Jampolsky, *Jampolsky Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

<sup>99</sup> Overby, *Schlasinger Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

*Father (Nathan Minenberg) had a head full of enthusiasms. When he heard a speaker of the Jewish Agricultural Society speaking on a street corner on Dumont Avenue in Brooklyn, he decided to join a group of sixty families being sent to make a settlement in North Dakota, where land was still available under the Homestead Act.<sup>100</sup>*

The Minenbergs' story did not start or end well. They arrived in March 1907, late at night to a dark town (Ashley) with deep snow untouched by footprints. They found their way to a way station for immigrants until spring. Other than a table, lamp and cooking stove, the shack had no furnishings – no bed and no chair. People sat on the floor on boxes and the room was packed. Rachel and her parents slept near the door, and by morning the snow had drifted in and they were covered. Rachel wrote of one very vivid and powerful memory of this time:

*By Passover time, most of the settlers had left to move into their shacks on their claims. We were left alone. I remember looking down from the top of a tall box where I slept, while my father and mother celebrated the Passover together, and my father sang Hallel, praising God and thanking Him for His blessings.*

Rachel Minenberg and her mother were eventually moved into a room behind an empty store adjoining a pool hall, where they stayed all summer until her baby brother was born. Her father was gone the whole summer building a shack and getting the homestead ready for them. A mohel came down from Minneapolis for the bris (ritual circumcision) ceremony for her baby brother, and all the homesteaders came to town. White sheets were spread out on the counters in the store, which served as tables, and they were spread with mounds of sponge cake and bottles of wine. The moneylender in town was happy to lend the money for the lavish event in return for a second mortgage. The family, finally reunited, rode happily out to their homestead.

Nathan Minenberg soon had to leave his wife, daughter and baby to find work in town to make payments on the mortgages. During this time when her mother was alone on the homestead with Rachel and her baby brother, there was a prairie fire, a tornado that took off the roof of their house, and then a blizzard. Nathan founds odd jobs and painted murals in nearby churches, often without fee. By the time they had stayed on the land long enough to prove it up, the land was no longer theirs.

The Minenbergs were not the only ones who lost their land. Homesteader Yehudah Lev Reuben's wife Miriam died in a horse and buggy accident, and his son died during the Spanish flu epidemic. Both Miriam Reuben and her son Benjamin are buried in the Ashley Jewish Cemetery. Yehudah Lev began homesteading around 1909. By 1919, he was required to deed his land to the moneylender, who held mortgages on the homestead.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Rachel Baker, *Minenberg Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project

<sup>101</sup> Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen, quoted in Lance Nixon, *Promised Land* (Capital City Journal July 2014)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Though temperatures exceeded one hundred degrees on some summer days, and dropped to forty below with heavy snow in the winter, most of the Jewish farmers near Ashley found ways to make ends meet, just like their non-Jewish neighbors. Some hired themselves out to work as farm hands on neighboring German farms. Some worked shoveling coal or having other jobs on the railroad during the winter, or got part-time jobs working in stores in or near Ashley, or on road building or threshing crews.<sup>102</sup> Some found work painting the McIntosh County Courthouse.<sup>103</sup>

There was no lack of ingenuity by these farmers – men or women. Ashley homesteader Sarah Schlasinger and her cousin and fellow homesteader Becky Pochapin, took their cook stove, a cow, dishes and pots and set up a kitchen in an empty house near the road building job, where they fed the crew of men. They baked fresh bread everyday, and earned money for their families.<sup>104</sup>

Even on the harsh prairie, sometimes luck entered into one's destiny. William and Ida Kreitzman were married in Russia and moved to North Dakota in 1907. (Mr. Kreitzman's step-mother was Mrs. Parkansky who is buried in the Ashley Cemetery). In 1908, the Kreitzmans had boy triplets - the first surviving male triplets born in North Dakota. As a reward for the birth of the triplets, the United States Government gave William a free homestead eight to ten miles from Wishek. The family grew vegetables and raised poultry for themselves. Ida canned food and poultry and hung it in the rafters of the house in the winter to preserve it, without the need to prove up anything, as with the typical homestead. William eventually owned and operated a successful hide and fur business.<sup>105</sup>

The typical North Dakota farmer, whether Jewish or non-Jewish, did not receive anything for nothing. Ashley homesteader Joe Bender summed up his homesteading experience:

*It was a hard road to go – no experience in farming – never handled any livestock, live horses, cows, farm machinery... breaking in wild broncos, horses which never worked, milking cows ... thank God who gave me strength,*

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<sup>102</sup> Homesteader Noah Schlasinger recalled that Meyer Mackoff, a homesteader who spoke English, recruited Jewish immigrants for a crew to build a road crossing on the Milwaukee railroad near Monango. The pay was good –\$1.50 per day. Noah returned to his wife Sarah's homestead and they used the money to furnish their first home, described on the land patent in 1907 as a frame house "shingled, plastered and papered, 12 by 24 feet with an adjoining barn of the same size" with a "bored well and pump", *Schlasinger Family History*

<sup>103</sup> Ashley Tribune (July 12, 1907), "The Jewish painters are repainting the Courthouse."

<sup>104</sup> The women's jobs on the homestead were by no means limited to child-rearing, cooking, sewing, and tending the family garden. Women participated in the heavy labor chores including well-digging, raking hay under the hot sun, and the never-ending job of loading rocks their husbands dug up onto the "stone boat" that the horses would haul to a ravine. *Schlasinger Family History*

<sup>105</sup> William Kreitzman, *Kreitzman Family History*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

*patience and lots of nerve to go through. We tried to break up new land – seeded in wheat, also flax, in the second year, we seeded more flax, and we had a nice flax crop. I undertook my obligation to get married - sold some flax, bought a suit for eighteen dollars and had nerve to go to Minneapolis to get married. Father and Mother couldn't have the pleasure to be at our wedding – reason – not having the money – we didn't have a honeymoon ... As a farmer had pride, and work for yourself and be independent ... Our home sweet home [sodhouse] - we had a little stove heated with coal, but the stove was very small -- could not hold too much coal so we added coal every hour or two ... We were happy and satisfied.*

...

*Kiva Bender [Joe's father] used to say, "we can prove to the world that the Jew can be a farmer", and we did.<sup>106</sup>*

Many of the Jewish homesteaders' memories regarding prairie farming are similar to the lives they led – a mixture of bitter and sweet. Jewish homesteader siblings Charles Sachs and Alice Sachs Hamburg recall the way they, as children, would get big rocks out of the soil, when the rocks were too big to be dug out:

*We built a fire on the [one] rock, then would pour water over the hot rock to crack it. Then we could dig out the pieces.*

After recalling that they practically lived on potatoes (because you could dig a hole, cover them with straw and live on them all winter), Charles Sachs fondly recalls:

*Ma had some way of making jelly out of roses.<sup>107</sup>*

Similarly, homesteader Ann Rosen (related to the Raich (Rachbuch) family in Ashley) writes:

*Wolves would come up to the house and we would put a light in the window to chase them away.*

In the next paragraph she writes:

*There were deer, wild geese, ducks, prairie chickens ... my brothers hunted to their hearts' delight ...*

*When flax was ready to be cut, the entire crop had blue blossoms, like a field of purple violets ... a beautiful sight.<sup>108</sup>*

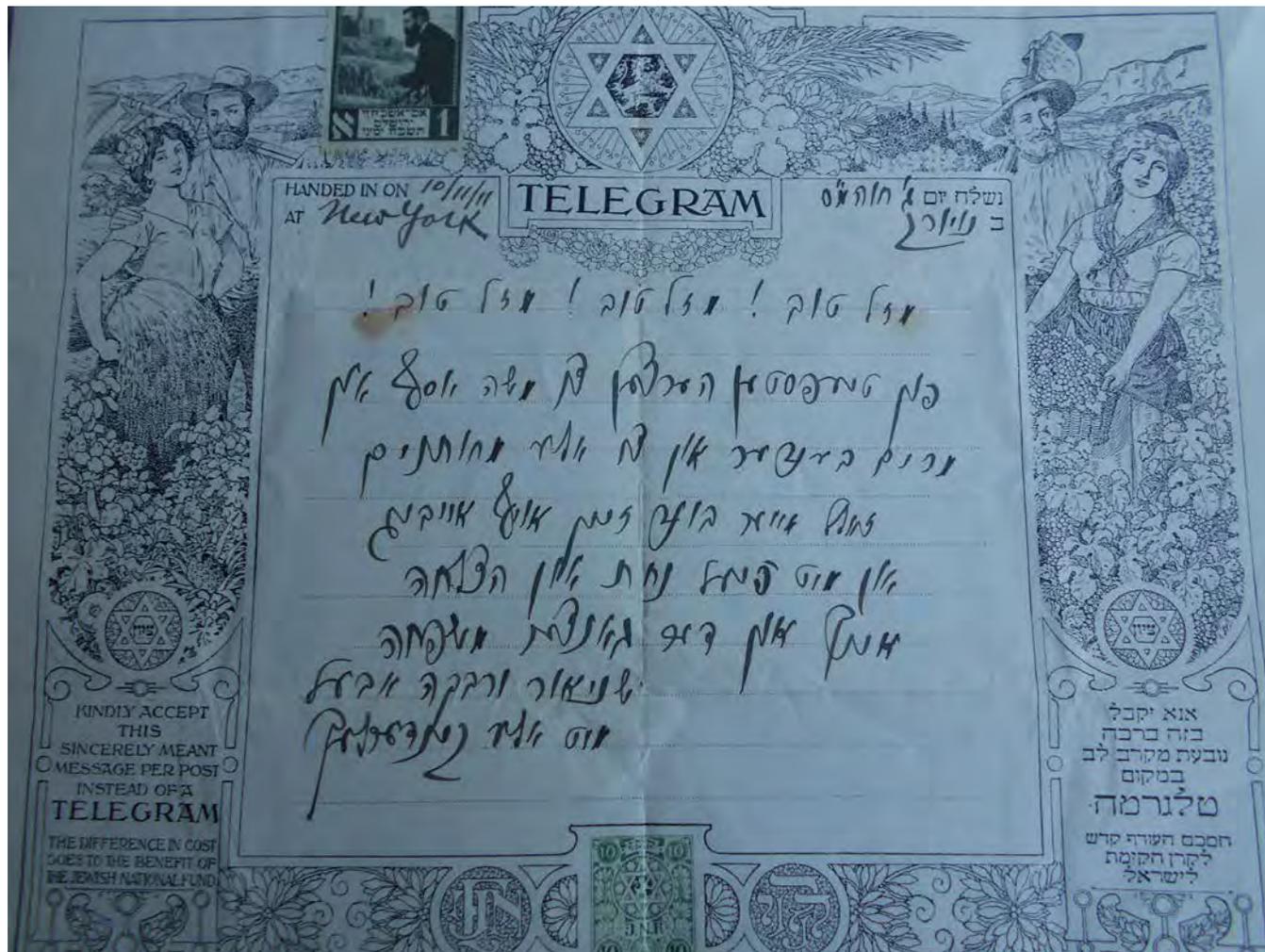
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<sup>106</sup> Joseph Bender, *This is Your Life* manuscript

<sup>107</sup> *Homesteaders Charles and Alice Sachs Interview*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



Telegram sent to Ashley homesteaders Joseph and Mary Bender on their wedding day from relatives in New York begins with "Mazel Tov" (congratulations and good luck) written three times. . Note idyllic pictures of couples farming with shovels and hoes, holding abundant harvests of wheat and grapes, and stamp showing Theodore Herzl, founder of the movement for a Jewish homeland. (October 11, 1911)

### **B. Religious/Social Conditions for Ashley Homesteaders**

Even when they were persecuted for their beliefs in Russia and Eastern Europe, these Jews continued their religious traditions, oftentimes at great personal risk. Once coming to the United States, where practicing their religion and being allowed to live were not mutually exclusive concepts, these same Jews were not prepared to ignore their religious history.

<sup>108</sup>Ann Rosen *Memoir*, Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project (1970s) Father William Sherman concluded that Painted Woods (the first colony) was a failure, Garske was a mixed blessing – some families suffered but others prospered moderately, and that the Jews who came to the colonies after the turn of the century (including the Ashley-Wishek community of farmers) did well. Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic* (1983)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

They felt they could be good citizens of their adopted country, while observing their Jewish customs and rituals.

Despite all the challenges the Jewish homesteader dealt with when he/she first arrived, in McIntosh County, observance of religion was a close second for many to having food, clothing and shelter. In 1908, less than two years after Kiva Bender arrived from Odessa, with no knowledge of English, he made sure to register the new Ashley Jewish Congregation in the annual American Jewish Year Book.<sup>109</sup> The community had no official rabbi for three years, and no synagogue building for nine years, but they were a congregation.

58 AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK [Ohio

ST. GEORGE, S. I.  
EDUC. Agudas Achim Talmud Toran.  
STAPLETON, S. I.  
CG. Tifereth Israel. Pres., J. Wetepski.  
SYRACUSE  
EDUC. Hebrew Progressive Library.  
The Settlement House. Org. 1908.  
UNION HILL  
CG. Temple Emanuel (1907).  
UTICA  
CG. Shomre Shabbas. Inc. Nov. 5, 1907. Morris Stairman.  
Cl. Young Men's Hebrew Association.  
M. B. Agudas Achim Ostrov. Org. 1908. Louis Freedman, 96 Whitesboro.

#### NORTH CAROLINA

ASHEVILLE  
CHR. Jewish Ladies' Society. Pres., Mrs. L. Blomberg.

#### NORTH DAKOTA

ASHLEY  
CG. Congregation Kiva Bender, P. O. Box 172.

#### OHIO

AKRON  
CEM. Orthodox Jewish Cemetery.  
Cl. Temple Literary Society, S. High. Sec., Stella Reder.

#### CINCINNATI

CG. Congregation. Org. Oct. 20, 1907. Pres., Moses Isaacs.  
Roumanian Congregation, Ninth and Cutter. Org. Sept., 1907. Sec., Samuel Josephs.  
CHR. United Jewish Settlement. Pres., Moses Fraley, 731 W. 6th.  
Cl. Cincinnati Club. Sec., Lawrence Lowenberg.  
Dramatic Art Society.

#### CLEVELAND

CG. Etz Chaim, E. 27th and Woodland Av. Org. 1907.  
CHR. Camp Wise Association. Org. 1907. Sec., Mollie Stern. Camp at Noble, Ohio.  
Cleveland Independent Aid Society. Sec., Ben Feniger.  
Hebrew Free Loan Association.  
Independent Aid Society. Sec., C. C. Rich.  
Linen Circle. Mrs. B. Salberg.  
Society for Promoting the Interest of the Blind in Cleveland, Goodrich House.  
Young Women's Jewish Relief Corps. Org. 1908. Sec., Sophia Messing.

# The American Jewish Year Book

5669

September 26, 1908, to September 15, 1909

Edited by  
HERBERT FRIEDENWALD  
for the  
*American Jewish Committee*



PHILADELPHIA  
THE JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY OF AMERICA  
1908

One year later, Kiva Bender registered one of the first two Jewish farmers associations in the United States, which they named The Sulzberger Colony. Mr. Bender realized that there was strength in working together to purchase seed and supplies and to obtain credit. He

<sup>109</sup> American Jewish Committee, *The American Jewish Year Book* (Philadelphia 1909)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

was one of the original founders of the Federation of Jewish Farmers of America, which in 1909 boasted twenty-five farmer associations throughout the United States.<sup>110</sup> By identifying mutual needs and goals with farmers in other communities within and outside of North Dakota, the group of Ashley Jewish farmers made connections with those beyond their county's boundaries.

181 AMERICAN JEWISH YEAR BOOK [Oregon

**WHITE PLAINS**

Cg. Sons of Israel. Sec., Harry Gordon. Sisterhood. Sec., Mrs. A. E. Gottlieb.

**YONKERS**

Cl. Young Hebrew Circle, 65 Buena Vista Av. Sec., Sadie Klein, 65 Buena Vista Av.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**ASHEVILLE**

Cg. \*Orthodox Congregation.

**NORTH DAKOTA**

**ASHLEY**

Cl. Sulzberger Colony. Sec., K. Bender, Ashley, N. D.

**OHIO**

**AKRON**

CHR. \*Hebrew Aid Society.

**CINCINNATI**

M. B. \*B'nai Israel Mutual Aid Society.

**CLEVELAND**

CHR. Hungarian Ladies' Aid Society. Sec., F. Stern, 2305 E. 57th. Ladies' Benevolent Society. Sec., M. Rickman, 2016 E. 48th Pl. Literary Social and Philanthropic Society, E. 37th, S. E. Sec., A. M. Bleich.

CL. \*Hebrew Professional Society. Temp. Chairman, Dr. J. L. Rogoss. Young Men's Hebrew Association, 2246 E. 49th. Sec., H. Lefkowitz, 615 Williamson Bldg.

CHR. AND EDUC. Cleveland Council of Jewish Women, Woodland Av. and Putnam. Sec., Edna Goldsmith, 5701 Longfellow.

M. B. Sons of Isaac Association, 828 Broadway, care of Brudno Stogle Co.

**COLUMBUS**

Cg. \*Beth Jacob. Rabbi, E. Marcus.

CHR. Willing Workers. Sec., Mrs. Frank Bash, 6017 E. Rich.

M. B. Hebrew Tailors' Benevolent Association, 111½ S. High. Sec., A. Cohen, 528 Donaldson.

**DAYTON**

CHR. Hebrew Free Loan Society. Re-org. 1909. Sec., I. M. Schulman, 147 La Belle.

CL. \*Young Men's Hebrew Association.

**TOLEDO**

Cg. \*Sharei Zedeck.

**OREGON**

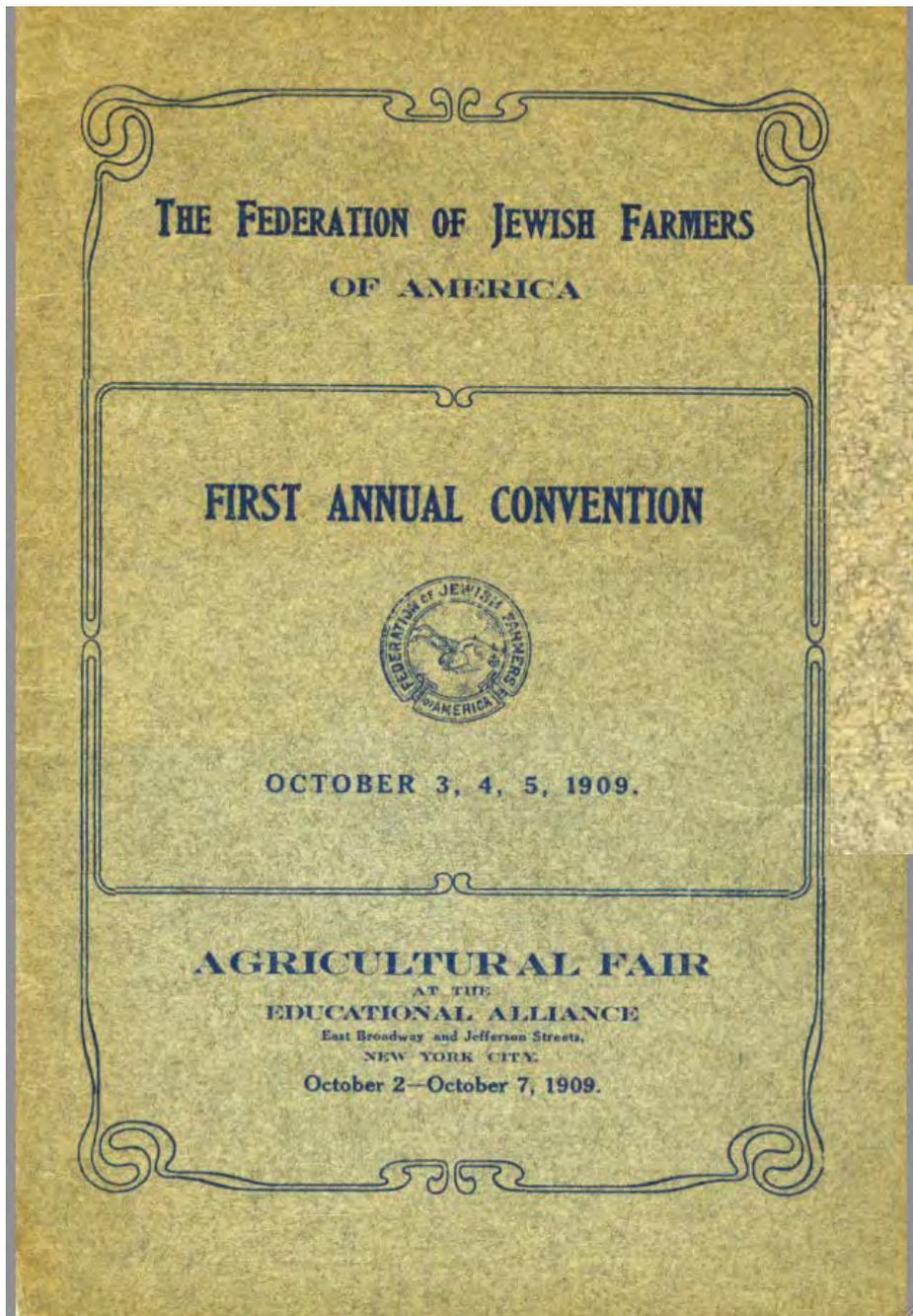
**PORTLAND**

EDUC. \*Hebrew Educational League.

<sup>110</sup> JAS Annual Report (1910)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Program from First Convention of The Federation of Jewish Farmers of America (1909) The Ashley association, called The Sulzberger Colony, was one of the first to join the Federation. The Fair offered farmers an opportunity to exhibit their produce, and the organization gave Jewish farmers more purchasing power, started a bureau to give liberal credit to farmers who needed more help and offered good prices on seeds and farming implements. At the time of the first convention, there were twenty-five Jewish farmer associations in the United States.***

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Prior to Ashley having its own synagogue in 1917 and/or when the resident Rabbi had obligations to other Jewish communities in the area, the Ashley Jewish homesteaders gathered at different neighbors' farms to recite the important prayers that were thousands of years old. The older and/or learned men in the community would lead the service. Kiva Bender would oftentimes perform this function. He would also serve as a rabbi to officiate at Jewish weddings. After his death, his son-in-law Joseph Miller assisted in this role.<sup>111</sup> Pauline Auerbach Greenberg recalled the fun of getting together at each other's homes for the major holidays. Oftentimes, friends and family would stay overnight and there would be seven to eight children in one bed. There were oftentimes so many people that the men would sleep in the hayloft and the women and children in the house.<sup>112</sup>

Part of the Jewish religious observance requires a minimum of ten men (a minyan) for certain religious services and prayers, with the belief that God will then be present. This is a unique principle in the Jewish religion. For example, once a family member dies, relatives honor the memory of the deceased by reciting a prayer (the Mourners Kaddish) for eleven months and then on the annual anniversary of the person's death (according to the Jewish calendar).<sup>113</sup>

Jewish people believe that when the Mourners Kaddish is said, the soul of the deceased rises higher in heaven and closer to God. The requirement of ten to say the Mourners Kaddish makes those saying the prayer thankful to the others who make this possible. On the North Dakota prairie, this feeling of appreciation was amplified due to the distances fellow Jews had to travel. By praying together, and socializing before and after the organized prayer service, the Jewish homesteaders formed a strong bond between each other.

Izzy Jampolsky's youngest son recalls the way the Ashley Jewish community strictly followed the Jewish law regarding not having a burial on the Sabbath:

*In the winter of 1918, people were getting sick [and dying from the Spanish Flu]. Leo, my brother caught pneumonia. I hired a man to drive my sick brother to the nearest doctor or hospital. My father, watching from inside the house as Leo was*

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<sup>111</sup> Joseph Bender, Interview by Alred Thal, Miller/Bender Family History, Schlasinger Family History, Abraham Auerbach Family History, "Uncle Kiva Bender was the Rabbi when I married Sara Rievman at Wishek in 1910", Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project.

<sup>112</sup> Pauline Greenberg, Auerbach Family History. The Ashley Jewish community would also sometimes travel to Bismarck to observe some significant holidays, prior to the purchase of the building for a synagogue in Ashley.

<sup>113</sup> There are also prayers within the Sabbath service and the services of other Jewish holidays that require the presence of ten men. Homesteader Sol Jampolsky commented that he was always pleased when eleven people assembled for Jewish prayers in Ashley, rather than the required ten. "Then", he said, "it was not necessary for us all to stop praying when one person had to go outside to the bathroom." Sol Jampolsky, Jampolsky Family History

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND

County and State

*being laid on the sled, fell to the floor and died. We hired a car to take us to the Ashley cemetery for burial. The car stalled in a snowstorm. We walked the rest of the way to Ashley. Being Sabbath Eve, the body was placed in the barn until Sunday when the funeral was held. On the train home, we heard bells ringing and people laughing and dancing because World War I had ended.*

In addition to reciting the mourners' prayers and observing the Sabbath, the residents of the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders settlement celebrated the major Jewish holidays with their entire families – Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement), Succoth (Feast of Booths or Feast of Ingathering), Shavuot (Feast of Weeks, celebrating the giving of the law to Moses and the Jewish people at Mount Sinai), Simchat Torah (celebrating completion of reading the Five Books of Moses, Old Testament, and the beginning of the same again) and Pesach (Passover, celebrating the Jews' freedom from slavery in Egypt).<sup>114</sup> Once the Ashley synagogue was purchased, important holidays were observed there. Even after some of the homesteaders had moved off their claims to nearby towns, they returned to the Ashley synagogue to celebrate the Jewish New Year holidays with their former neighbors.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Once Israel Auerbach, a homesteader near Ashley, purchased a store in town, he would post signs in the window, "Closed for Jewish Holiday." The Ashley Tribune also carried notices of the days that "Auerbach's" or "The Israel Store" and other Jewish owned stores were closed for Jewish holidays. (Ashley Tribune, August 30, 1912) The Ashley Tribune notes in 1920, "The Felix Rapaport Fruit Stores, Nate Auerbach Mercantile Store and the Farmer Store were closed throughout Monday and Tuesday. No business of any kind was done by the merchants as the Hebrewish [sic] New Year was honored that day. Services were held at the local synagogue and a crowd of people assembled in the city Sunday evening and early Monday morning so as to be present when the services commenced." Once Ashley homesteaders Joseph and Mary Bender moved to Eureka, South Dakota and purchased a general store in town, they, too, would post similar signs, e.g., "Closed for Jewish New Year." Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches* (2005)

<sup>115</sup> Around 1918, when Joseph Bender was already living in Eureka, SD, he and his wife and two children went to the shul (synagogue) in Ashley for the High Holidays (Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur). There was a big rainstorm and it took the Bender family two days to get home (about forty miles) with their team of horses. *Joe Bender interview with Alfred Thal* (1974)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Former Jewish homesteader Israel Auerbach's General Store in Ashley was closed for the Jewish holidays. This metal sign is posted in the McIntosh County Historical Museum.***<sup>116</sup>

The 1912 Bulletin of the National Conference of Jewish Charities, reports that in the Ashley, North Dakota settlement, services were held on Rosh Hashanah, with seventy-eight adults and thirty-one children attending. This was prior to there being a synagogue building owned by the congregation. It also reports that the first part of Succoth was spent in McIntosh County, and that Rabbi Hess, who officiates at all necessary functions as shochet (trained to kill animals for consumption with respect and compassion), mohel (trained in covenant of circumcision) and marriages and funerals, killed three hundred fifty fowl for the month of September, and killed two "beeves" a week in the Ashley settlement.<sup>117</sup>

The difficulties in getting together a minyan were not the only religious obstacles faced by the early McIntosh County Jews. Though there are traditionally only certain animals that may be eaten by Jewish people according to the Bible, and though only animals killed by a shochet were traditionally eaten, on the North Dakota prairie, the strict rules of "kashrut" or "keeping kosher" were not always able to be followed. Prior to having a person trained in the proper way to slaughter animals being available in the Ashley settlement, some of the farmers would try to order kosher meat to be delivered from bigger cities. However,

<sup>116</sup> Until after the beginning of World War II, large sections of the Ashley Tribune and the Wishek News were printed in German. "When Auerbach's closed their store in Ashley in 1936 after being in business for over thirty years, they announced the closing and thanked their customers in both German and English." Iseminger, *McIntosh County German-Russians: The First Fifty Years North Dakota History*, vol. 51, no. 3 (1984)

<sup>117</sup> National Conference of Jewish Charities, *Bulletin* (Baltimore 1912). There is also reference to Rabbi Hess visiting Fort Lincoln, and obtaining a three day furlough for the Jewish soldiers in the fort, for them to observe the Jewish High Holidays.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

without proper refrigeration, when the meat arrived (by horse and buggy or train), it was already spoiled.<sup>118</sup>

This led to some members in the community learning on their own to slaughter their own meat. Izzy Jampolsky took the additional step of traveling to Brooklyn to get a degree in “hecksher” to slaughter chickens in the kosher way. According to his son Sol, in addition to the Jampolsky family being well supplied with kosher chickens, their father would travel by train at his own expense and spend entire days butchering chickens for the Jewish people in neighboring towns.<sup>119</sup>

Of course, sometimes the food eaten was a result of the family’s financial condition. If squirrel, rabbit and pheasant were readily available on the prairie, and the previous year’s crop had not been as successful as they had hoped, some farmers in the Ashley settlement would hunt for their own food, whether or not it was kosher or slaughtered in the traditional way.

In addition to praying together during religious festivals, the Ashley Jewish community socialized together:

*On the prairie friends and relatives gathered frequently to talk, play chess, sing Russian songs, and consume endless glasses of hot tea sweetened with lump sugar or varenya (jam). In good weather, the women walked across the prairie to visit each other, the small children clinging to the mothers’ long skirts. In early summer they would gather rose petals from the brilliant, luxuriant wild roses that transformed the prairie in a glory of color. The rose petals made an exquisite rose-amber jelly. Later in the summer there would be excursions to pick chokecherries for jelly.<sup>120</sup>*

Years later, Maurice Dorfman recalled hearing “a very plaintive folk song” played on the violin at someone’s house after the High Holiday services. “It moved most of those assembled to tears of joy.”<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Mrs. Jake Marcovitz and Mrs. Julie Lewis, interview with Alfred Thal, State Historical Society of North Dakota (October 13, 1975), regarding their parents, the Ourachs. Mrs. Ourach, whose son is buried in the Ashley cemetery, did not eat meat for two years, as she could not get kosher meat. When she had trouble with her eyes, the doctor said if she did not eat meat she would go blind. They tried having meat sent from Minneapolis, but it was tainted. Later their father learned how to slaughter according to the laws of “kashruth.” Joseph Bender interview with Alfred Thal (1974).

<sup>119</sup> Jampolsky Family History (1970s)

<sup>120</sup> Schlasinger Family History. (1970s)

<sup>121</sup> Dorfman Family History (1970s)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

In a family history regarding her parents Sam and Pearl Rapaport, Rose Schwartz writes of two types of entertainment she enjoyed as a young girl on the farm, one planned, the other unexpected:

*Sam Rapaport had a job in a factory in Pittsburgh, hated it, heard from his Uncle Kiva [Bender], packed up the family and went. He took up a homestead near his uncle ... they all helped each other. I don't know if my father made money or not, but I was never hungry. My parents loved good music and later they purchased a phonograph, so we heard operas, great violinists, Jewish cantorial and other music. ...*

Next Rose writes:

*Our house burned down. It was not a bad thing. We moved to the Silvers' farm between Ashley and Lehr. I loved that farm, as it had a huge cherry grove with wonderful climbing trees and when cherries were ripe, all friends of my mother's would come, prick them with hairpins and make jams and jellies. They would sit and gossip and I would listen. I learned to make cheeses, how to winterize vegetables and store eggs from the gentile neighbors [during the cherry gathering].<sup>122</sup>*

The settlers made their own fun and developed their own distractions. Leah Bender had become a proficient horsewoman, who would ride to Ashley for mail and other errands. She soon started racing horseback with the German girls in the area.<sup>123</sup>

When Joe Bender was a bachelor, on Saturday nights he would sometimes take a big wagon (a "hayrack") filled with hay. He would pull it from one Jewish homestead to the next, and the single men and women would climb in. Heated rocks rapped in gunny sacks under quilts kept everyone warm. They would sing and sometimes hold dances in barns. The single ladies would prepare cakes and sandwiches for the trip. "Our social entertainment was our own", said Joe Bender.<sup>124</sup>

In addition to socializing within the Jewish farming community, there was also communication and friendship between the Jewish farmers and their German farming neighbors, and those living in town. There was a sense that they were "all in this together."

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<sup>122</sup> *Rapaport Family History* (1970s) When she was eight, Rose's father had enough of farming and took on an agency for selling patent medicines for "Shores". He bought a little wagon and went to all the farmers selling extracts and medicines for humans and animals. Rose Schwartz later learned that the "medicine" contained a great deal of alcohol. When "the last Rabbi" left, they moved to Bismarck to find a husband for Rose.

<sup>123</sup> *Bender/Miller Family History* (1970s)

<sup>124</sup> *Joe Bender, Thal interview, Schlasinger Family History, Kamins Family History* (1970's), Geller North Dakota Jewish History Project

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

When the harsh climate resulted in crop failures, they all suffered. When the rains and temperatures were favorable, they all triumphed.

Homesteader Joe Bender's son describes one instance evidencing the close feeling between the fellow homesteaders – be they Jewish or non-Jewish, as told to him by his father:

*In the Spring of 1912, Joe Bender was riding his horse from his land nine miles northwest of Ashley, into town. Mattias Kopp, a German farmer owned 80 acres near Ashley. Joe noticed that Mr. Kopp had not seeded his land yet and it was getting late to plant wheat. Joe stopped at the Kopp's house and asked Mr. Kopp if anything was wrong. Mr. Kopp, with tears in his eyes, said his horses were sick, and this would be the first year that he wasn't able to plant. My Dad went home and said to my Grandfather, "We've got to help him." My Grandfather Kiva told Joe, "you know all the homesteaders. See if you can all help the Kopp's together."*

*Joe went from farm to farm that evening on horseback, explaining the situation to the neighbors. He told them of his plan – that they would all meet at the Kopp farm at dawn, the next day. When Joseph arrived at the Kopp farm before dawn, with his team of horses, plow and seed, he was the only one there. Then he heard horses' hooves, and more horses' hooves, as the sun started to rise. Thirty Jewish homesteaders with thirty teams of horses and thirty plows had come to help their neighbor.*

*In one day they plowed and seeded the Kopp's 80 acres. Mr. Kopp came out and looked with disbelief. Joe told him, "What we did for you, you would have done for any of us."<sup>125</sup>*

Many of the homesteaders also became friendly with members of what was then called the "Sioux Tribe", who lived near their homesteads. One of the tribe members sold Joe Bender a wild pinto horse. The horse was so fast, that Joe won the Ashley Fourth of July races three years straight. Some people in town used to say, "Oh no, here comes Bender with that horse, again!"<sup>126</sup>

The Jewish homesteading families also celebrated life's milestones together. The early weddings among members of the community were special, despite their simplicity.

*They would take place outside so everyone could attend - Joe (Bender's) brother-in-law – Uncle Miller, would oftentimes play the violin for dancing, and Joe's sister Sarah, who had a beautiful voice, would sing.<sup>127</sup>*

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<sup>125</sup> Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches* (2005)

<sup>126</sup> Id.

<sup>127</sup> Id.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

*We didn't have any money to spend, but the social life among the people was wonderful.*<sup>128</sup>

Though many of the settlers who arrived were married in Russia or shortly after they arrived, there were also single members of the community who were looking forward to getting married and to starting a family. Homesteader Pearl Rapaport, urged to come to Ashley with her husband by her Uncle Kiva Bender, convinced her brother Joseph Miller to come to Ashley. Joe Miller was living in Pittsburgh, where he was a cigar maker. Once arriving in Ashley, he offered to teach English to single homesteader Leah Bender. A romance developed and Mr. Miller proposed marriage.<sup>129</sup>

An August 6, 1909 article in the Ashley Tribune stated:

A Jewish wedding in which Joseph Miller and Miss Lena Bender were the consenting parties was solemnized at the Bender home, a few miles north of Ashley, Sunday, August 1.

This brief notice did not begin to describe the event:

*The wedding took place in the Bender barn. Fresh green grass was strewn inside and boards were propped up for tables and covered with fresh tablecloths. Cookies and cakes were baked in great quantity by relatives and friends. Kiva (Bender) had bought grapes and made several huge barrels of wine, far more than he expected to need. Nathan Minenberg made a Star of David. All Jewish families in the colony were invited. Everyone came to join in the festivities, infants and children as well. ...*

*The day was calm and beautiful. No wind was stirring. The wedding canopy was set up outside. Their German neighbors, who had never seen a Jewish wedding before, came to watch. Kiva invited them to have a drink, and in less than an hour all wine and pastries were gone. The guests danced on the prairie, reveling in the joy of the occasion. The men vied for a dance with the bride, so Jake Raich stepped in to organize*

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<sup>128</sup> Joe Bender, *This Is Your Life*

<sup>129</sup> *Bender/Miller Family History* It was not unusual for single persons in the homesteader families to marry someone who happened to arrive in town. Isadore Grossman, a homesteader who is buried in the Ashley cemetery, "found" a wife for his younger brother Louis (also buried in the cemetery), when Isadore's wife's sister came to Ashley. (Louis moved to Dickinson after farming, and became a salesman for the Shore Miller Company – Drugs and Yard Goods. He also bought scrap iron from farmers and his wife sold it in Dickinson. Louis died in the flu epidemic). Isadore had a daughter, Lena, who married the traveling peddler who used to stay at their home. He sold kitchen wares from a wagon drawn by a horse. Stuart Kaufman quoted regarding his grandparents and great-grandfather in Lance Nixon, *Promised Land*, Capital City Journal (2014) Yehuda Leib Rabyn, another homesteader near Ashley, had a daughter Esther, who also married a salesman who was on his route. Edward Tilsen sold medical supplies. They were married in 1915 by Rabbi Hess. Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen quoted in *Promised Land*, id.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

*the dancing. He asked the musicians to shorten their numbers, charged 25 cents for a dance with the bride, and cleared twelve dollars to present to the new couple.*

### Marriage License.

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, }  
McINTOSH COUNTY. } ss Ashley, North Dakota, July 24 1909

To any Person Authorized by Law to Perform the Marriage Ceremony, Greeting:

You are hereby authorized to join in Marriage  
Joseph Miller of Ashley, N.D. aged 22 years,  
and Miss Lena Bender of " " " " aged 26 years,  
and of this License and your Certificate you will make due return to my office  
WITHIN THIRTY DAYS.

*Gottlieb Becker*  
Judge of County Court.

### Certificate of Marriage.

I hereby certify that the persons named in the  
foregoing License were by me joined in marriage at  
Ashley N. Dak.  
County of McIntosh, State of North Dakota, on the  
24<sup>th</sup> day of July 1909

In Presence of

*Ed Heinrich*  
*Amelia Becker*

*Gott. Becker*  
County Judge

*The musicians had been engaged to play until midnight. When midnight arrived and the guests clamored for more dancing, the musicians were offered more money and urged to continue, but they refused. So the groom accommodated the guests by taking his fiddle, and to the accompaniment of a washtub drum, played waltzes and polkas far into the night.<sup>130</sup>*

<sup>130</sup> Bender/Miller Family History

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The wedding of Rabbi Hess' daughter Helen and Israel and Sarah Auerbach's son Nathaniel seven years later was at the other end of the spectrum. As noted in the Ashley Tribune (March 1916):

*One of the most beautiful weddings of the season took place at the Ashley Opera House last Sunday evening ... The ceremony was performed by the father of the bride in a very impressive manner assisted by the choir composed of the immediate family of the bride and groom and Mr. Benj. Greenberg. The old Jewish rituals were carried out and impressed all present with its solemnity. ... the ceremony was witnessed by an immense throng that filled the hall to its capacity. After the ceremony, an elaborate supper was served at the Hotel. ... for 250 guests. At 10:30 P.M. the guests repaired to the Opera House where the "Raggy Reuben" orchestra of Aberdeen were entertaining until 2:30 in the morning.*

*After the dance many guests repaired to the residence of Rabbi and Mrs. Hess, where the festivities were continued until the wee hours of morning. During these festivities the poor war sufferers were not forgotten and following an old Jewish custom a collection was taken up which amounted to \$55 to alleviate the wants of those unfortunates ...*

The hard work on the farm did not diminish the creative spirit of some of the Jewish homesteaders, including Sarah and Noah Schlasinger. Sarah was determined to make her prairie house a home. She "bought cretonne and made fringe-trimmed curtains and a sofa cover. She painstakingly painted the wooden floor to look like the parquet floors of Odessa".<sup>131</sup> During the second winter in North Dakota, a group of homesteaders, including the Schlasingers, were reminiscing about the theatre in Odessa. They decided if they could not go to plays they could produce their own. They decided it would amuse them and perhaps entertain others, since Russian was widely spoken in the Ashley area.<sup>132</sup>

Among the books they brought from Russia was a volume of plays, including two one-act comedies which they produced: *The Bashful Bridegroom* and *The Devil and the Belle*, by Chekhov. The group rented the Ashley Town Hall, and it was a full house. Noah wrote a synopsis of the plays and enlisted a local bank official to translate it into German and English for the playbill.<sup>133</sup>

A February 7, 1908 article in the Ashley Tribune provides:

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<sup>131</sup> *Schlasinger Family History*

<sup>132</sup> *Id.*

<sup>133</sup> *Id.*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

*The Jews who gave the Russian entertainment in Ashley a few weeks ago are advertising the same plays to be given in Lehr, Friday evening February 14<sup>th</sup>. We have been told the entertainment will probably be given in Kulm and Eureka in the near future.*

Another article in the Ashley Tribune from June 31, 1907 refers to another creative outlet for some of the homesteaders: "Jewish band playing a number of selections on main street on Saturday."

Jewish homesteaders in McIntosh County experienced little or no anti-Semitism.<sup>134</sup> Ashley homesteader Joe Miller noted that there was never any vandalism in the shule (synagogue). They had two Sefer Torahs (Five Books of Moses on scrolls) kept there, and no one ever interfered for all the years they were there.<sup>135</sup>

An article in the Ashley Tribune on April 4, 1913 expressed the common view of the citizens of the town toward their Jewish neighbors:

Since history began, the Jew has been the middleman and the lender of money - reason for this is found in the law of other countries forbidding him ownership of real estate. In the US today, this is changing and the Jew is going to the land in ever increasing numbers. Statistics on file with the North Dakota Development League at Grand Forks show that there are now 7500 Jewish families on farms in the US, with 37,000 Jews engaged in agricultural. ... On the land the Jew is proving competent and making for himself a place of importance in the agricultural life of the country.

There was a mutual respect between Jewish and non-Jewish neighbors. At the Auerbach Store, Israel Auerbach used to sell many items at cost, such as sugar and flour. He would also extend credit to farmers who were down on their luck. Israel's customers paid him back when he was forced into bankruptcy by the moneylender in town, who had taken over his business as a "trustee." Israel Auerbach's non-Jewish customers cosigned notes for him at the bank, so he was able to start in business again.<sup>136</sup> The sisters of David Ourach, who is buried in the Ashley Cemetery, remembered years later the kindness shown to their family when they sold their farm. They realized how highly their parents were thought of when they were given a lovely party with food and drinks.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> *Jewish Homesteader Family Histories*, Geller Jewish North Dakota Project, *Alfred Thal taped interviews with Jewish homesteaders*, North Dakota Historical Society

<sup>135</sup> Alfred Thal interview with Joe Miller

<sup>136</sup> Greenberg, *Auerbach Family History*

<sup>137</sup> Marcowitz and Lewis, *Ourach Family History*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Ashley Tribune October 8, 1914 Ad for "The Israel Store" (owned by Israel Auerbach) "Reduced Prices – The Israel Store has the prices of clothes, overcoats, shoes, fabric and underwear, etc. reduced! It pays to visit the Israel Store and check the articles and ask about the prices before you shop elsewhere." (Translated from German by Ashley historian Leona Neu)***

As many people in Ashley could not speak English, Israel's wife Sarah served as a go between for the doctor when the women were ready to give birth. Farmers would come to the back door of the Auerbach's house and knock at all hours. Sarah would go with the farmers to get the doctor and would stay to translate until the baby was born.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>138</sup> *Auerbach Family History*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

As Father William Sherman noted in his researching of North Dakota's ethnic groups, examining the "social pages" of the local newspaper can provide insight into the ways in which a group is assimilating into the community. As is oftentimes the case, it is the rich and/or powerful who are accepted first. For example, Ashley Tribune notes regarding the land purchases and business interests of Louis Rubin (or L. Rubin) are very common in the paper in 1905, without any mention of his religion. In 1906, less well known person are mentioned on these pages, with references to their being Jewish:

Naetan Gulden, one of the members of the Jewish colony living a few miles northwest of Venturia, transacted business in Ashley Saturday - January 5, 1906

Several of the Jews who came out from Minneapolis late last fall and filed on lands a short distance north of Ashley arrived this week ... they brought several carloads of goods and stock. The men are now busily engaged in preparing homes for the reception of their families who, in most cases, have not yet arrived. - March 30, 1906

"A Serious Affair" - The old Bafly ranch, now owned by L. Silver was the scene of a desperate encounter ... between two of the ranch employees - as a result, one of the men ... a Russian lies in Lehr with injuries ... and another fellow, David Berman, a Jew, is confined in the county jail, awaiting trial at the October term of the district court. - May 25, 1906

More Jews arrived Thursday morning - a large number of them have settled between Ashley and Lehr during the past year or two ... - August 25, 1906

When these lesser-known persons are identified as Jewish, it never is in a pejorative way, but rather for identification. In this time period, not many people in Ashley knew Jewish people personally. The following notation in the Wishek Golden Jubilee book in 1948 is very telling regarding how the relationship developed between the Jews and non-Jews of McIntosh County:

*About 24 years ago, Wishek [also in McIntosh County] had about a dozen Jewish families among its residents. A Jewish synagogue was built ... it was dedicated by Rabbi Hess of Ashley and served as a temple of worship for a number of years. Later with the exodus of our Jewish families to other places of residence, the synagogue was discontinued, the building sold and moved away. However, while these Jewish people lived among us they contributed their part to the city's development ...<sup>139</sup>*

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<sup>139</sup> Wishek Golden Jubilee Committee, *Wishek Golden Jubilee Book 1898-1948* (1948).

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Nine years earlier, North Dakota Governor William Langer wrote a proclamation entitled "The American Hebrew", which echoed the same sentiments:

*I can testify that the Jewish citizens of my state have always played a particularly conspicuous part in building up its very prosperity – they preserve and maintain the loftiest conception of human relations and traditions, for which our nation was conceived ... the Jews in this state have not shrunk from the tremendous work and the heavy sacrifices required of them – by their tenacity and industry, they have become successful farmers ... These farming communities ... at Gackle, Williston, Devils Lake, Lehr, Ashley and other places ... (1939)*

Interestingly, one Ashley-Wishek homesteader's daughter explained her parents' reaction to the opposite problem, i.e., accepting kindnesses from non-Jews:

*I remember vaguely incidents have to do with gentiles and how hard it was for our parents to accept a kindness from them, because it was so unusual to them. My mother once got her hand caught in a pump and a goy (non-Jew) helped her out, and she never got over it."<sup>140</sup>*

With the many kindnesses shown to the Russian Jews in North Dakota, the few anti-Semitic instances that did take place were truly a footnote. Homesteader Joe Bender told of working to make ends meet on the Soo Line Railroad out of Ashley, shoveling coal in the engine room. A fellow railroad employee asked him "what kind of name is Bender?" Mr. Bender responded, "I'm a Russian Jew." The other employee said, "I've never seen a Jew shovel coal before." Joe Bender replied, "Well now you have." When the train reached Minneapolis, the other employee lunged at Joe, while yelling a slur. Having grown up in Odessa, Joe knew how to fight when he had to. He did a head butt to the midsection, so the much larger man was down on the ground, and Joe was not at a disadvantage. When Joe said to him, "have you had enough?", the other man agreed, saying "I've never seen a Jew fight like that." Joe Bender responded matter-of-factly, "Well now you have."<sup>141</sup>

In 1911, with the help of funding from the Jewish Chautauqua Society, Rabbi Julius Hess came to live in the Ashley area. Several of the members of the Ashley Jewish community had advertised for a Rabbi to come to the area, and paid a small part of his salary.<sup>142</sup> Rabbi Hess was also a cantor, or person trained to sing the liturgical notes that accompanied the

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<sup>140</sup> *Rapaport Family History*

<sup>141</sup> Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches* According to North Dakota Jewish researcher Alfred Thal and Dr. Leo Cohen, a resident of Ashley for over seventy years and a stepson of a homesteader, with the exception of an off-hand remark, they never experienced prejudice because they were Jewish

<sup>142</sup> Even with a Rabbi serving the community, most settlers felt, "It was up to the parents to teach." *Joseph Bender Interview with Alfred Thal*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

sacred texts and prayers. The Chautauqua Society felt that no child of a Jewish farmer, no matter how remotely located, should be without at least some religious instruction.



***Rabbi Julius Hess (nee Hesselson) served the Ashley, Wishek, Wilton, Regan, Minot and Williston Jewish communities from 1911 through 1922, first living in Ashley with his family, and then in Wishek.***

Rabbi Hess, born in Lithuania, part of the Pale of Settlement in the Russian Empire, married Francesca Feist while living in Germany. As a Jew born in “Russia”, he was told he could never become a German citizen, and that he had to apply for a permit each year to continue living in the country, despite his being educated at the University in Marburg, Germany. In 1901, after their first child was born, when Rabbi Hess attempted to apply for his permit, he was told his permit was denied and that he had to leave Germany in twenty-four hours. He immigrated to the United States, and his wife and eldest child followed soon after. After living in Chicago for several years, the Rabbi and his wife moved to McIntosh County, where they lived from 1911 – 1922, with their 8 children, (including one named “Abraham Lincoln Hess.”)

While living in McIntosh County, Rabbi Hess also traveled to Wilton, Regan, Minot and Williston to assist with education of Jewish children and officiating at weddings, funerals and brides.<sup>143</sup> Once Rabbi Hess took up residence in Ashley, it made sense for the Congregation to have one place where its members would meet, rather than going to different homesteaders’ homes. The Ashley Jewish Synagogue building was purchased in 1917 from the Ashley Baptist Church. The building had been built by and owned by the Baptist congregation for fifteen years, prior to the Ashley Jewish Congregation of Beth

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<sup>143</sup> ashleyjewiscemetery.org contains information regarding Rabbi Hess.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Itzchock (House of Isaac) purchasing the structure. The synagogue building was locating outside the city limits of Ashley between 1917 and 1924.<sup>144</sup>



*Picture of "Jewish Church" from Ashley's Golden Jubilee Book, It was a former Baptist Church.*

The Hess family then relocated for Rabbi Hess to take over the position of Rabbi at the Sons of Israel Jewish Congregation in Sioux Falls.<sup>145</sup> Rabbi Ostrowsky arrived around 1919, and served the Ashley community for several years, as well. During the period from 1919 through 1922, McIntosh County boasted the presence of two rabbis.

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<sup>144</sup> A certificate of the North Dakota Secretary of State shows the Ashley Jewish Congregation of Beth Itzchook filed Articles of Incorporation with the State in 1923, listing the officers at L. Rubin, L. Straus and I.A. Mackoff. The Congregation had been in existence for fifteen years prior to that time. The Jewish Year Book of 1908 contains a reference to the new congregation in Ashley, submitted by Kiva Bender.

<sup>145</sup> Around 1915, Rabbi Hess was seen in Bismarck, and asked what he was doing there. He said that he was there to see a performance by his brother's son at the Chautauqua. Rabbi Hess' nephew was Al Jolson, who starred in the first talking movie, "The Jazz Singer" in 1927.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Ashley Baptist Church, then Ashley Synagogue and now a private home in Ashley. The structure remains on the site where it was moved in 1924.***

In 1924, the Jewish Congregation bought the lots for the synagogue's Ashley site from John Wishek for 125 dollars. The synagogue remained on this site until 1935, at which time private persons not associated with the Congregation purchased it. The Congregation had an agreement that the property would revert back to Mr. Wishek when it was no longer used as a synagogue.<sup>146</sup> In 1946, the John Gerhring family purchased the building as a home, removed the steeple, and remodeled the shell for a residence. Later purchasers continued the remodeling and updating.

The former synagogue building is still privately owned, and sits in a quiet neighborhood about two blocks from downtown Ashley, at 411 Center Ave. North. It is indistinguishable from other homes on the block, save for its original tin sculptured church ceiling, only visible from inside the home.

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<sup>146</sup> Joe Miller Interview with Alred Thal

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*In 1916, one year prior to the Ashley Jewish community purchasing the Baptist church building for their synagogue, the neighboring Wishek Jewish community, also in McIntosh County, built its synagogue (seen above). The Ashley Tribune referred to it as "the third synagogue in North Dakota, the other two are located at Fargo and Grand Forks. The program for the dedication service lists one rabbi (Julius Hess) and three Protestant ministers." (Wishek News, August 18, 1916) From all records available, it appears that having these two synagogues in one North Dakota county was simply to make praying more convenient, rather than evidence of any riff between the Jewish homesteaders.*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***Photograph of Torah scrolls at synagogue in Aberdeen, South Dakota, held by Herschel Premack, lay leader of Aberdeen Jewish congregation and nephew of young Isador Smilowitz, buried at the Ashley cemetery.***

In addition to participating in America's holidays, customs and hobbies (including horseshoes and baseball), there is reference in a historic text from 1912 of there being a club in Ashley of twenty enthusiastic young Jewish men and women, called "The Young Judean Club."<sup>147</sup> Also, in 1908, the Jewish Agricultural Society started publishing "The Jewish Farmer" a Yiddish agricultural monthly newspaper to help educate farmers regarding techniques of farming and to solve the problems of farm life. The magazine had specific sections for Jewish farmwomen and children, as well.

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<sup>147</sup> National Conference of Jewish Charities, *Bulletin* (Baltimore: 1912)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***The Jewish Farmer Magazine was published by the Jewish Agricultural Society beginning in May 1908. An article about the Ashley Jewish homesteaders for the periodical was written by visiting JAS officers around 1909. They interviewed and took pictures of Joe and Lena Bender for the article.***<sup>148</sup>

The life of a farmer was not the life that most Jewish immigrants chose. “My Dad used to write in the Jewish paper and ask for volunteers to come to our colony and a few of them came down. They came from New York, but they didn’t stay very long.”<sup>149</sup>

By 1926, only one Jewish farmer could be located by the Jewish Agricultural Society, near Lehr, in McIntosh County. Though many former Jewish homesteaders still resided in and near Ashley and in neighboring towns, the last burial in the Ashley Jewish cemetery took place in 1932.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Bender/Miller Family History

<sup>149</sup> Joseph Bender interview with Alfred Thal

<sup>150</sup> Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*Remaining portions of two-story poured concrete, field stone and sandstone farmhouse built into a hill by Jewish homesteader Jake Greenberg around 1906 . Jake "Yankel" Greenberg is listed in the records of the Jewish Agricultural Society. Mr. Greenberg moved to California in the 1920s. Father William C. Sherman Photograph Collection (1974), North Dakota State University Libraries, Germans from Russia Heritage Collection*

#### **IV. LEADERS OF THE COMMUNITY AND THEIR FAMILIES BURIED IN CEMETERY**

Researcher Alfred Thal, summing up what he learned from his interviews with North Dakota Jewish homesteaders, wrote:

The Jewish settlers as a whole became good citizens. They took their part in politics, held political office, were on the school boards, aldermen in the various cities, mayors in the various towns, villages and cities and were members of the legislature. So they lived not as a Jew of North Dakota but as a public-spirited citizen of the State of North Dakota.<sup>151</sup>

It is no surprise then, that when a member of the Jewish community died, it was a loss to the whole community. On June 27, 1913, a front-page headline in the Ashley Tribune read, "Kiva Bender Dead." Mr. Bender was referred to as a "well known Jew."

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<sup>151</sup> Alfred Thal papers, State Historical Society of North Dakota, Summary Report (August 20, 1974)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*Photograph of Kiva Bender (1846 - 1913) and Rebecca Bender (1853 - 1932), husband and wife*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery contains the graves of a number of prominent people in the community. Those whose accomplishments are mentioned in interviews, family histories and newspaper articles include:

Israel Auerbach - Owner of Auerbach's General Store (or "The Israel Store") in Ashley after he homesteaded land, advanced funds for wife's family from Odessa to come to North Dakota;

Sarah Auerbach - English translator for doctors in the area ;

Kiva Bender - Formed the first Ashley Jewish religious congregation and the Sulzberger Colony Farmers Association, served as rabbi to the community prior to Rabbi Hess' arrival and when Rabbi Hess was out of town;

Isadore Jampolsky - Owner of general store in Linton, traveled to Brooklyn to be trained in the Jewish way to butcher animals;

David Ourach - son of Hebrew teacher in the area, who also blew the shofar (ram's horn) for major Jewish holidays;

Freda Dorfman - wife of owner of Dorfman's Meat Market in Ashley;

Mrs. Parkansky - grandmother of first three male triplets in North Dakota;

Maxine Sally Becker - granddaughter of Rabbi Hess; and

Joseph Raich - storeowner with his brothers.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



*The Ashley Jewish Cemetery is listed among sites for Jewish tourists to visit in this 1954 book of the Jewish Publication Society in New York. It is referred to as "an abandoned cemetery."*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

## V. THE ASHLEY JEWISH HOMESTEADERS CEMETERY

*Jewish farmers came to the prairies in surprisingly large numbers, but today, Jews are almost totally absent from the countryside. Three small cemeteries with tombstones in Hebraic characters remain in North Dakota to mark their rural presence ... Unfortunately, the whole matter of Jewish agricultural life in North Dakota has been almost completely overlooked by scholars....*<sup>152</sup>

The uniqueness of the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery has caught the eye of journalists and travelers over the years.<sup>153</sup> The passersby who happened to stop noticed something different about this cemetery -- gravestones in a different language and Stars of David on the stones. Though the journalists performed worthy research, there has never been a full explanation of who these homesteaders were, what the writing on the stones in the cemetery means, why the homesteaders came to farm here from Russia and Eastern Europe, what their lives were like, how they kept their faith and traditions alive, why they eventually left their land, and what contributions they made to their dear, adopted Country.

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<sup>152</sup> Father William Sherman, North Dakota State University, Fargo, ND, *Jewish Homestead Communities in North Dakota, 1990-1920*, presented at the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Northern Great Plains History Conference (Bemidji, Minnesota, 1982) Father Sherman also notes "The distance from major Jewish scholarship centers has certainly made the study of Jewish farmers a rather remote research problem."

<sup>153</sup> Nixon, *Promised Land* (Capital Journal July 2014), Ted Quanrud, *Keeping Faith with the Past* (Bismarck Tribune, December 1987), Ron Vossler, *The Lost Jews of McIntosh County*, REC Magazine ( July 1986). The Ashley Cemetery site is ranked number one of five things to do in Ashley, ND on Trip Advisor, with comments including, "great historic site", (2014), "the only one in the area – the monuments are a work of art" (2013), "great cultural site – The cemetery is situated in the heart of German-Russian County, which raises all sorts of historical questions about cultural relationships. ... This site raises more questions than it answers, which is what makes it fascinating."(2012), "interesting landmark on a lonely landscape (2011).

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



### Promised Land

Story Comments

Print Font Size

Recommend 5 Tweet 2 +1 0 Pin It 0 Share 1

Posted: Friday, July 25, 2014 12:55 am

By Lance Nixon lance.nixon@capjournal.com | 0 comments



Courtesy of Rebecca Bender

#### Bender

1918 picture of Joseph Bender with his two eldest children, Frances, and Keva (named after his father, Kiva), once they were living in Eureka, showing them the area where he homesteaded near Ashley

All his life he'd heard or read from the books of Moses that the children of Israel had a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night to lead them out of Egypt into the Promised Land, but that was the Torah and this was America, there was none of that going on for Samuel Smilowitz when he brought his family out of New York City - not unless you count the tall white towers of cloud they saw from the train when they entered the Plains. Those clouds filled the sky but they didn't lead anyone anywhere and

they weren't exactly pillars - more like anvils for God to pound out sparks, some nights.

But he and his family were riding the train and the train knew where it was going: Ashley, North Dakota, the Promised Land - home.

#### Land

"They came to establish land grants," says Hershel Premack, the grandson of Samuel Smilowitz. "I don't know if it was 160 acres or 640 acres or whatever. It must have been someplace around 1905, 1907, that my grandfather packed up his family in New York City and took them to Ashley, North Dakota."

The family knows a few of the details. They know that the Jewish Agricultural Aid Society of New York helped arrange for Jewish homesteaders to come to the Dakotas as part of a back-to-the-land



### Keeping faith with the past

Descendants of pioneers preserve Jewish cemetery

McIntosh County's Jewish cemetery is a quiet reminder of a faith that has thrived in the region for over a century. The cemetery, located near Ashley, is a testament to the resilience and faith of the Jewish pioneers who first settled in the area.

Most headstones and monuments in the rural McIntosh County cemetery bear the Star of David and Hebrew lettering.

"I don't know how many people are buried here, but I know there are a lot of them," said one of the descendants. "It's a beautiful place, and it's a reminder of the faith that brought our ancestors here."

The cemetery is a well-kept and well-maintained. The headstones are made of granite and are in good condition. The Hebrew lettering on the stones is clear and legible.

The cemetery is a place of peace and tranquility. It is a place where the past is preserved and the future is bright.



## The lost Jews of McIntosh County

by Ron Vossler

A well-kept cemetery is the only reminder that 60 Jewish families once lived near Ashley.

those initial years—despite their numbers, established social institutions and a relatively intact way of life tested in Rumania, which led to the inextinguishable prairie. And like similar ill-fated Jewish colonies at Painted Woods Creek in Burleigh County, and at Wing, these McIntosh County Jews eventually departed during the 1920s. Some may even have immigrated to Palestine, which after 1918 had come under British protection.

Before 1911 they met in their farm homes to worship. And for various holidays, weddings and bar mitzvahs—a boy's initiation into religious duty—the services of a rabbi from metropolitan areas to the east were engaged. In the spring of 1911 some 60 Jewish families were living in McIntosh County. It was then the Jewish Chautauque Society sent Rabbi Hess from Chicago to serve from two headquarters in the state—at Ashley and Wing. By 1913 a synagogue, a simple frame building, was bought and maintained at Ashley. But in later years dwindling membership caused the remaining members of the Jewish community to travel to Aberdeen or Bismarck.

So for a generation they remained, long enough to bury 21 members of their community, some of whom have their photographs under recessed ovals of glass set in the tombstones. There is a photograph of an old man with a patriarchal beard. And there is a Mr. Bloom, a man who looks in the nearest thing to a portrait of the first person buried there. Just above his name there is a

All gravestones in the tiny cemetery north of Ashley face west (above); all graves are covered in concrete. Another even smaller one contains two graves, including one of a young girl who died in 1918, year of the flu epidemic.

1918-19, a time the German-Russians called "Die Sintflut" or "The Deluge," these Jews buried their dead. It was a deluge for them, too; seven of their graves date from that time.

There are none of the original Jewish families living in the county anymore; the dialect in the streets of Ashley, as is the case with the German-Russians, the synagogue has been moved away, and not many people remember them. A farmer living near the cemetery said he knew nothing about "those peoples."

County cemeteries, after the old church has been moved away, are often overgrown and abandoned. But members of that first congregation have made provision; this one is well-tended by caretaker Johnnie Salzer of Ashley.

On leaving that place, one remembers the mixed relief of the broken tree. It



Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The first and second-generation descendants of the homesteaders stayed in contact with each other throughout the United States, and over the years, have raised funds to ensure the continuing maintenance of the property. They would visit the cemetery to pay their respects, and bring their children and grandchildren with them. Eventually, an Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association was formally established in 1979, with the goal of preserving the only remaining memorial to this group of homesteaders. When Joseph Bender was interviewed by Alfred Thal in the 1970s, he expressed concern about the future of the cemetery, as he was aging. When Kenneth Bender was interviewed for a newspaper article after his Father's death, he expressed that he and his generation of homesteader descendants felt the responsibility to continue the historic preservation of the cemetery.<sup>154</sup>

Now a new two generations of those buried at the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery have accepted this responsibility. Unlike many other Jewish cemeteries from the early days of North Dakota, which have been covered in whole or part by grass and earth (Wilton cemetery, Mandan cemetery, Fallon cemetery, Dickinson cemetery, Edmore cemetery, Wing cemetery...), this cemetery has survived.



Courtesy of ashleyjewishcemetery.com

<sup>154</sup> Quanrud, *Keeping Faith With the Past* (1987)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

## VI. THE ASHLEY JEWISH HOMESTEADERS' LEGACY

The Religious Denominations Collection at the State Historical Society recognizes that “the personal religious beliefs of people have played an important role in this region’s history.”<sup>155</sup> The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery honors the memories of twenty-two members of the Ashley, North Dakota Jewish homesteading community, as well as honoring the entire community of North Dakota Jewish homesteaders who were a part of this region’s history. The stories of these homesteaders serve as an inspiration to their descendants and to others who learn of their struggles and triumphs. Their desire to hold onto their religious identity despite their isolation was just natural to them. It was part of who they were. They were a registered Jewish congregation, before they had a building or a formally trained Rabbi. They were competent farmers and raisers of cattle and chickens, without any experience. They were Americans – free to practice their religion and free to choose their livelihood.

Despite the Ashley Jewish homestead farmers either being successful enough to purchase their land prior to the five-year proving up period or to prove up their land at the conclusion of the five-year period, and the wonderful sense of being free to own land, by the late 1920s few Jewish homesteaders were left in McIntosh County. There were many reasons for this, as found in the homesteaders’ interviews and family histories. For some families, the move away was the result of tragedy; e.g., mothers dying in childbirth or from the Spanish flu and fathers not being able to care for the farm and the children alone. Other parents believed that the climate in the area was too risky to continue providing for their families. Another common theme found in family histories was that Jewish farmers left because they wanted their children to have easier access to a Jewish education (or a future Jewish spouse). Several Jewish homesteaders told of losing their farms to an unscrupulous moneylender living among them, while others spoke of being offered other opportunities in bigger cities or towns. Then there were the catastrophic events like prairie fire, tornados and blizzards, and the lack of store credit as the farmers’ chattels were already mortgaged, all of which served to push the farmers away. Still for others, the poor living accommodations (caused by the high cost of lumber, water wells, stock, implements and necessities of life), loneliness – owing to the distance between homesteads and settlements, the Great Depression, or even a fear for their wives’ safety on the isolated prairie were reasons to leave. With the money they had saved and the money received from selling their land, most of these homesteaders had enough money to settle in villages and towns and maintain their independence as business owners.

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<sup>155</sup> *Religious Denominations Collections at the State Historical Society of North Dakota in Bismarck*

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State



***The Raich family started as homesteaders, but then went into business with general merchandise stores. Joseph Raich and his infant daughter Frieda are buried in the Ashley Cemetery. Fifteen towns within forty miles of the Ashley-Wishek settlement had Jewish owned stores at one time or another during the first two decades of the twentieth century. During these same years in Ashley and Wishek, Jewish merchants operated several clothing and general merchandise stores, ran a bank, a meat market, a sewing machine franchise and a hide, fur and metal company. They were also dealing in cattle and farm machinery.<sup>156</sup>***

Even after they left the prairie, these pioneers continued to appreciate the freedoms and opportunities afforded them in America, and passed this feeling onto their children. It was possible to be a good American and still maintain one's religious identity, even on the harsh prairie. This stony ground was able to bear fruit.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Sherman, *Prairie Mosaic*

<sup>157</sup> Descendants of those buried here include World War II decorated heroes -- Larry Schlesinger (KIA, US Army Infantry Intelligence Normandy), Kenneth Bender (US Army Infantry Rifle Company Commander, D-Day invasion, 2<sup>nd</sup> Division), Kenneth Schlesinger (US Air Force , bombardier European theater and Africa), Lionel Greenberg (US Army Air Corps, Germany, POW) , a Pulitzer Prize winner, an American Bible Contest Champion, a New York Times Bestselling Author, a medaling World Synchronized Skater, a Rabbi, a dentist, a playwright, composers, civil rights activists, businessmen and businesswomen, an airshow pilot, a broadcaster, a maker of stained glass windows, general store owners, a mayor, alderman and school board member, and acclaimed lawyers, doctors, judges, authors, journalists, accountants, psychologists, teachers, homebuilders, social workers, advertising executives, actors, and musicians.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

The names of those buried in the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery with marked graves are:

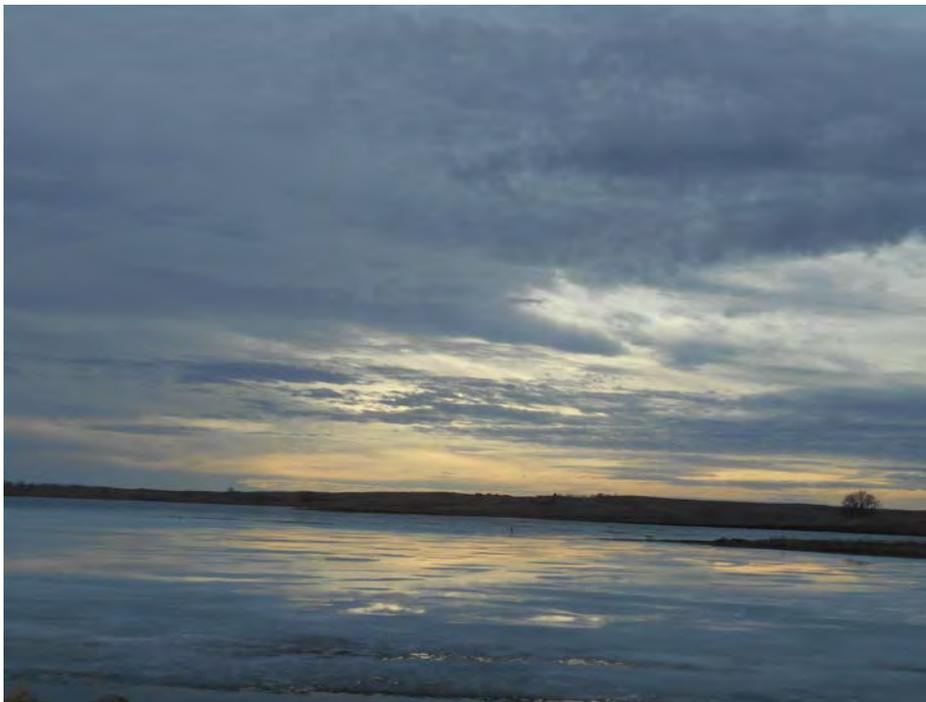
1. Israel Auerbach
2. Sarah Auerbach
3. Maxine Sally Becker
4. Kiva Bender
5. Lipman Bloom
6. Freda Dorfman
7. Rebecca Filler
8. Isadore Goldstone
9. Chaim Yosef (Joseph) Grossman
10. Yehudah Leib Grossman
11. Yitzchak (Isadore) Grossman
12. Yehiel Hayyim Jampolsky
13. David Ourach
14. Mrs. Parkansky
15. Frieda Raich
16. Joseph Raich
17. Benjamin Reuben
18. Mirel Chaplik Reuben
19. Fayga Silverleib
20. Nochem Silverleib
21. Isador Smilowitz
22. Jacob Weil

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

## VII. CONCLUSION

The Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery is National Register eligible under Criterion A due to three primary patterns of historical events. First, the Cemetery is associated with Russian Jewish immigrants with no farming experience, settling near a rural community on the North Dakota prairie for the purpose of becoming farmers on homesteaded land. Second, it is evidence of the ways in which the Jewish homesteaders maintained their Jewish identify in this remote location, far from major cities, which resulted in more challenges and obstacles to their practicing their religion. Third, the cemetery stands as a symbol of the acceptance the Jewish homesteaders felt to remain true to who they were among their Russian-German neighbors, despite their religious and cultural differences.



**Ashley Winter Sky (Lincoln Bernhard 2015)**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

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Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

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Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

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### **Legal Documents**

McIntosh County, North Dakota deeds for Ashley Jewish Cemetery property

Articles of Incorporation of Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation (1971)

McIntosh County Township Land Atlas (1910)

Land Plat, Ashley Jewish Cemetery (1933)

North Dakota Secretary of State Annual Reports for Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation (1999-2014)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

### **Interviews and Manuscripts**

*Alfred Thal Interviews:* Joseph Bender, Mrs. Marcowitz and Mrs. Lewis (Ourach Family), Joseph Miller, Lena Miller, Abraham Auerbach, State Historical Society of North Dakota

*Family Histories,* North Dakota Jewish History Project (collected by Toba Geller): Miller/Bender, Schlasinger, Silverleib, Sachs, Dorfman, Minenberg, Rosen, Rappaport, Jampolsky, Kamins, Auerbach, Kreitzman, Upper Midwest Jewish Historical Society, University of Minnesota Archives

### **United States Laws and Records**

*The Homestead Act of 1862 - (37<sup>th</sup> Congress, Session II, Chapter 75 of 1862 - May 20, 1862), "An Act to Secure Homesteads to Actual Settlers on the Public Domain"*

*13<sup>th</sup> Census of United States - McIntosh County, ND (1910)*

*Records of Patents,* McIntosh County, US Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

*Manifest of Passengers for US Immigration Officer at Port of Arrival, S.S. Zeeland, from Antwerp, Belgium (July 10, 1906)*

*Record of Patent for Sarah Bendersky Schlasinger,* filed at Bismarck, ND land office for McIntosh County homesteaded land, 1908,

*Record of Patent for Joseph Bender,* filed at Bismarck, ND land office for McIntosh County homesteaded land 1910

*Record of Patent for Kiva Bender,* filed at Bismarck, ND land office for McIntosh County homesteaded land 1909

*Record of Patent for Lena Miller, formerly Lena Bender,* filed at Bismarck, ND land office for McIntosh County homesteaded land, 1910

*US Certificate of Naturalization for Kiva Bender* April 2, 1912

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### **Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND \_\_\_\_\_

County and State

\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

\_\_\_ Other State agency

\_\_\_ Federal agency (Land Patent, Immigration and Census Records)

\_\_\_ Local government (McIntosh County, North Dakota Courthouse)

\_\_\_ University (See below)

Other (See below)

Name of repository:

Records of Kiva, Joseph and Kenneth (Keva) Bender,  
home of Rebecca Bender (Eureka, SD)

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.7 acres (275 x 275)

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: 14

Easting: 470689

Northing: 5102837

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The legal description for the cemetery property is: commencing at a point thirty three feet west of the southeast corner of the Northeast Quarter of Section Thirteen in Township One Hundred Thirty, Range Seventy; thence running north a distance of two hundred seventy-five feet, parallel with the east line of said quarter section; thence running west a distance of two hundred seventy-five feet, parallel with the north line of said quarter section; thence running south a distance of two hundred seventy-five feet, parallel with the east line of said quarter section; thence running east a distance of two hundred seventy-five feet to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries selected represent the full deeded land owned by the Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association, which has the same boundaries since the time of the first burial in 1913, and as reflected on the plat map for the cemetery from 1933.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

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## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Rebecca Bender (Ashley Jewish Homesteader Cemetery Researcher) and Lincoln Bernhard (Computer/CD Technical Advisor)  
organization: Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association (Corporation)  
street & number: 1207 J Avenue  
city or town: Eureka state: SD zip code: 57437  
e-mail: [foundit36@valleytel.net](mailto:foundit36@valleytel.net)  
telephone: 612-801-8617 date: June 17, 2015

### Additional Documentation

1. Site map showing graves at Ashley Jewish Cemetery, by Stuart Kaufman, President of Cemetery Association and Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen, Website Manager  
ashleyjewishcemetery.org
2. May 6, 1906 McIntosh County Marriage License and Certificate of Marriage for Noah Schlasinger and Sara Bendersky (married in Ashley, ND)
3. List of settlers near Ashley in 1907 (from ledgers of the Jewish Agricultural Society)
4. List of additional names of people who lived in the same area in 1907 (from ledgers of Jewish Agricultural Society)
5. Jewish Agricultural Society Ledger showing loans to Ashley area homesteaders after 1907
6. April 16, 1909 Record of Land Patent for Kiva Bender
7. September 8, 1910 Record of Land Patent for Lena Bender Miller
8. October 17, 1910 Record of Land Patent for Joseph Bender
9. Portion of 1911 Land Map, Township 131, range 69 West, McIntosh County 1911 (County Recorder was not able to locate original) shows homesteaders J Bender, K. Bender, Lena Miller and M. Kapp, among others
10. April 2, 1912 Certificate of Naturalization for Kiva Bender
11. June 25, 1913 Death Certificate of Kiva Bender, Ashley, ND, shows place of burial, "Jewish Cemetery, Ashley N.D." and occupation "Retired Farmer."

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

12. Picture of brother-in-laws Joseph Bender and Noah Schlasinger in Ashley, ND circa 1915
13. Picture of sister-in-laws Sarah Schlasinger and Mary Bender, taken by W.C. Miller in Ashley, North Dakota circa 1915
14. Picture of Joseph Bender showing his children Keva (Kenneth) and Frances the land he used to farm in Ashley, ND, circa 1919
15. August 2, 1971 Articles of Incorporation for Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, purpose "to own, manager, maintain and operate a cemetery in the Village of Ashley, county of McIntosh, State of North Dakota and for other purposes related thereto", with original Board of Directors, Saralee Sloven (Bismarck, ND), Lionel Greenberg (St. Paul, MN), Erwin Grossman (Minneapolis, MN), Keva Bender (Kenneth M.), St. Louis Park, MN and Robert Tilsen (St. Paul, MN) with Lionel Greenberg and Kenneth Tilsen incorporators.
16. August 5, 1971 Certificate of Incorporation of Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, a North Dakota nonprofit corporation.
17. February 6, 2014 Nonprofit Corporation Annual Report for Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, Stuart Kaufman president (Seattle, WA), Erwin Grossman vic president (St. Louis Park, MN), Bob Kaufman secretary/treasurer (Minneapolis, MN), Burt Sterman director (Encino, CA) and Ro Goldman director (Scottsdale, AZ). Steve Paper's address in Fargo, ND is the principal executive office and Rita Paper filed the report.
18. Picture of Kenneth (Keva) showing his daughters Nancy and Rebecca the monument of his grandfather and their great-grandfather Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1964 (Photo by Frima Bender)
19. Picture of Joseph Bender at grave of his father, Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1975
20. Picture of Kenneth Bender at grave of his grandfather, Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1978
21. Picture of Frances Bender Bernbaum, Melvin Bernbaum, Barry Kelner, Frima Bender, Rebecca Bender, Kenneth Bender and Joel Bernbaum, lower right, in front of their grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather's monument, Ashley Jewish Cemetery 1988 (Photo by Nancy Bender-Kelner)
22. Picture of Frima Bender, Nancy Bender-Kelner, Kenneth Bender and Rebecca Bender at Kiva Bender's monument, Ashley, ND, circa 1990 (Photo by Barry Kelner)

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

23. Picture of Kenneth Bender, showing grandchildren Lincoln Bernhard and Sage Kelner their great-great grandfather's grave and monument, 2005. Rebecca Bender is holding son, Lincoln Bernhard. (Photo by Nancy Bender-Kelner)

24. Jewish School and Family Bible ( Chief Rabbi Dr. A. Benisch, James Darling Publishers, London 1851), from books and papers of Joseph Bender, with stamp of "Rev. Hess", Rabbi at Ashley/Wishek Jewish agricultural settlements from 1911 – 1922

25. *Odessa Mama*, Russian Jewish Orchestra (Columbia Graphophone Company 1909), from books and papers of Joseph Bender. The Yiddish song is an ode to Odessa's sidewalks, electric lights, hotels, and other modern amenities. Columbia Records imported the recordings from Europe prior to World War I. When people would ask Joe Bender, "do you miss your motherland Russia?" He would respond, "How could someone love a country that would treat its citizens so badly? America is my home." Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches* (2005)

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Property Owner

name/title: Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association  
organization: Ashley Jewish Cemetery Association c/o Stuart Kaufman, President  
street & number: 6343 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South, #104  
city or town: Seattle state: Washington zip code: 98118  
e-mail: coach@stuartkaufman.com  
telephone: 206-725-1584

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

### Photo Log

Name of Property: Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
City or Vicinity: 3 miles north of Ashley, ND  
County: McIntosh County  
State: North Dakota  
Name of photographer: Rebecca E. Bender  
Date of Photographs: July 2014  
Location of Original Digital Files: 1207 J Avenue, Eureka, SD 57437  
Bender/Bernhard home

Photo #1 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0001)  
View of cemetery through prairie grass near 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast,  
camera facing southwest

Photo #2 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0002)  
View of cemetery from 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast, outside fence,  
camera facing southwest

Photo #3 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0003)  
View of cemetery from opposite side of 48<sup>th</sup> Avenue Southeast,  
camera facing mostly west

Photo #4 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0004)  
View of cemetery from outside fence,  
camera facing northwest

Photo #5 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0005)  
View of cemetery from outside fence,  
camera facing north

Photo #6 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0006)  
View of cemetery ,  
camera facing northeast

Photo #7 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0007)  
View of cemetery,  
camera facing northeast

Photo #8 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0008)  
View of one obelisk, marble monument at gravesite (Kiva Bender),  
camera facing east

### **MONUMENT NO. 8 ON SITE MAP**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Photo #9 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0009)

View of Kiva Bender cameo picture on marble monument,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 8 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #10 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0010)

View of upside down cut vine on Kiva Bender monument,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 8 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #11 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0011)

View of lamb on top of Sally Maxine Becker monument,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 21 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #12 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0012)

View of David Ourach Monument, with Jewish star,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 14 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #13 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_00013)

View of top of Yitzchak Grossman monument at gravesite, with open book,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 7 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #14 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_00014)

View of Yehudah Lev Grossman monument at gravesite, with open book,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 5 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #15 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_00015)

View of Mrs. Ruebin monument at gravesite,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 12 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #16 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_00016)

Closer up view of 5 branch candelabra on Mrs. Ruebin's grave monument,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 12 ON SITE MAP**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Photo #17 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0017)  
View of Benjeman B. Reuben's grave marker, (son of Mrs. Reubin), note discrepancy in spelling last name, as English was not the first language of these homesteaders,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 15 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #18 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0018)  
Close up View of Tof, Nun, Tsadik, Vet, Heh – letters seen on many of these gravestones, meaning, "May his/her soul be bound up in the bonds of life,"  
camera facing east

Photo #19 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0019)  
View of Freda Dorfman monument, with pillars topped with crowns,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 11 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #20 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0020)  
Close up view of pillar with crown, from Freda Dorfman monument,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 11 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #21 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0021)  
Close up view of bottom of Freda Dorfman monument,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 11 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #22 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0022)  
View of Mr. Bloom's monument,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 4 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #23 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0023)  
Close Up View of Mr. Bloom's monument, tree cut in half,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 4 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #24 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0024)  
View of Rebecca Filler's monument,  
camera facing east  
**MONUMENT NO. 9 ON SITE MAP**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

Photo #25 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0025)

View of Isador Smilowitz monument, "Here lies" in Star of David,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 1 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #26 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0026)

View of letters "peh nun" ("here lies") in Star of David from cemetery monument,  
camera facing east

Photo #27 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0027)

View of letters "peh nun" ("here lies") in Star of David from cemetery monument,  
camera facing east

Photo #28 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0028)

View of Joseph Raich monument,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 19 ON SITE MAP**

Photo #29 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0030)

View of separate infants' section of cemetery with two headstones,  
camera facing southwest

Photo #30 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0031)

View of separate infants' section of cemetery with two headstones,  
camera facing southwest

Photo #31 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0032)

View of part of Isadore Goldstone headstone from infants' section,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 1 ON INFANTS' SECTION INSERT ON SITE MAP**

Photo #32 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0033)

View of monument of Frieda Raich from infants' section,  
camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 2 ON INFANTS' SECTION INSERT ON SITE MAP**

Photo #33 (ND\_McIntosh County\_Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery\_0034)

Close up view of acorn, adorning monument of baby Frieda Raich from  
infants' section,

camera facing east

**MONUMENT NO. 2 ON INFANTS' SECTION INSERT ON SITE MAP**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property

McIntosh County, ND  
County and State

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

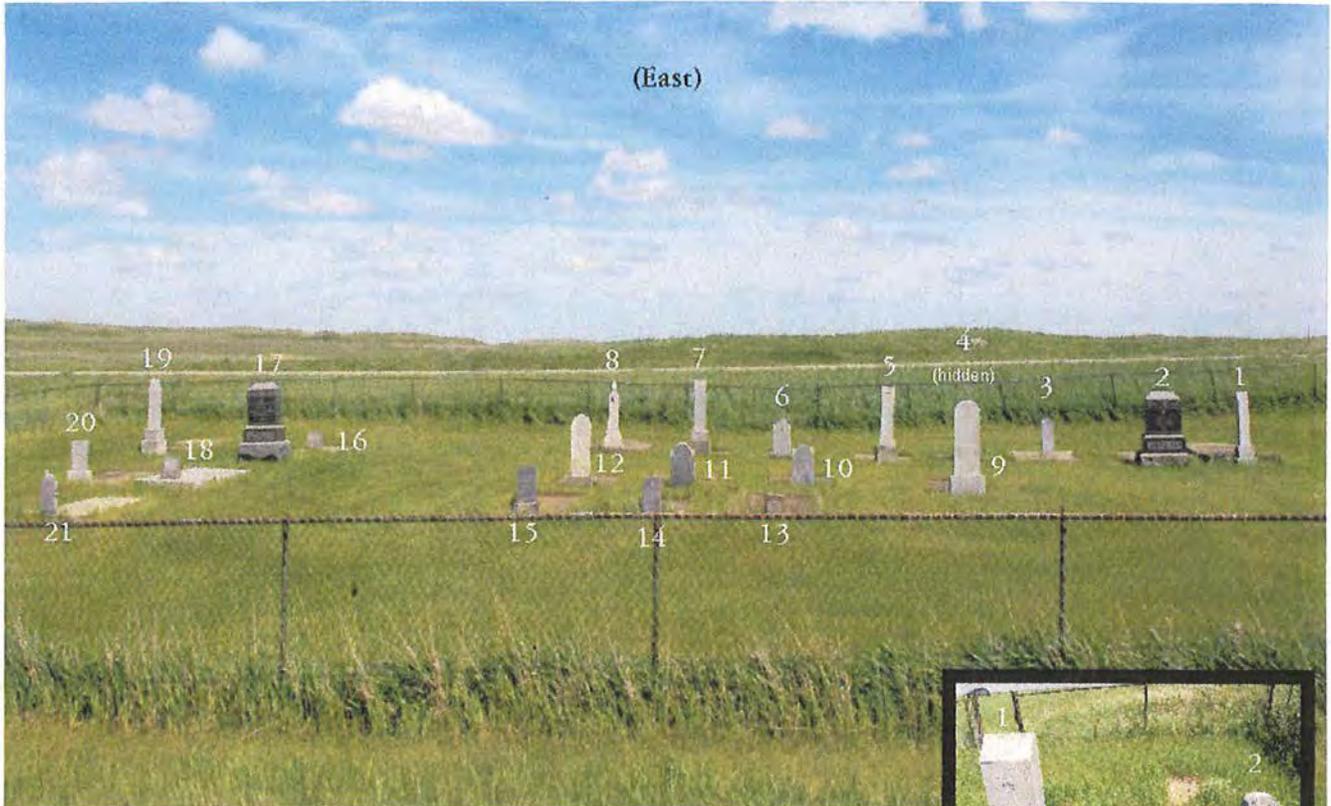
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 105

1. Site map showing graves at Ashley Jewish Cemetery, by Stuart Kaufman, President of Cemetery Association and Rabbi Jon-Jay Tilsen, Website Manager ashleyjewishcemetery.org



- |                                  |                      |                             |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Isador Smilowitz              | 8. Kiva Bender       | 15. Benjeman B. Reuben      |
| 2. Jampolsky                     | 9. Rebecca Filler    | 16. Auerbach - father       |
| 3. Yitzchak (Isadore) Grossman   | 10. Fayga Silverlaib | 17. Auerbach - family stone |
| 4. Mr. Bloom                     | 11. Freda Dorfman    | 18. Auerbach - mother       |
| 5. Yehudah Leib Grossman         | 12. Mrs. Ruebin      | 19. Joseph G Raich          |
| 6. Nochem Silverleib             | 13. Jacob Weil       | 20. Mrs. Parkansky          |
| 7. Chaim Yosef (Joseph) Grossman | 14. Ourach           | 21. Maxine Sally Becker     |



This small 2 stone cemetery is located south and west about 20 yards in a separate fence.

- |                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Isadore Goldstone | 2. Frieda Raich |
|----------------------|-----------------|

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 106

2. May 6, 1906 McIntosh County Marriage License and Certificate of Marriage for Noah Schlasinger and Sara Bendersky (married in Ashley, ND)

MARRIAGE LICENSE.

ASHLEY TRIBUNE PRINT.

MARRIAGE LICENSE.

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA, }  
McINTOSH COUNTY. } ss

*May 5th* 190*6*

To any Person Authorized by Law to Perform the Marriage Ceremony, Greeting:

You are hereby authorized to join in Marriage

*Noah Schlasinger* of *Ashley* aged *25* years,  
and *Sara Bendersky* of *Ashley* aged *26* years,  
and of this License and your Certificate you will make due return to my office WITHIN THIRTY DAYS.

*Jacob Breitung*  
Judge of County Court.

CERTIFICATE OF MARRIAGE.

I hereby certify that the persons named in the foregoing License were by me joined in  
marriage at *Ashley*, County of *McIntosh*  
State of North Dakota, on the *6* day of *May* 190*6*.

IN PRESENCE OF

*Israel A. ...*  
*Henry ...*

WITNESSES.

*D. ...*

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 107

3. List of settlers near Ashley in 1907 (from ledgers of the Jewish Agricultural Society)

LIST OF SETTLERS NEAR ASHLEY IN 1907  
(from the ledgers of the Jewish Agricultural Society)

Israael Auerbach	Morris Weissman (or Weismann)
Isadore Auerbach	Ike Winkor
- Kiva/Bender	Jacob Winogradow (or Vinogradov)
David Berman	Chaim and Bessie Wodlinger
Don Bischoff	Morris Zemsky
Louis Bloom	
Louis Boemel	
Itzic and Strul Brown	
Rebecca Cohen	
Christian and Barbara Dockter	
Isadore Dorfman	
Joseph Feller	
Wolf Fenick (or Ferrick) (Venturia, N.D.)	
Nathan Finkle	
Haim Leib Getzman	
Goldstein and Kulberg	
Ezia Grosman	
Yankel and Bella Greenberg	
Abraham and Rosa Grossman	
Gus and Louis Grossman	
C.D. Grosz	
Abe and Essy (or Fanny) Jampolsky (Venturia)	
Haman Kaoshansky	
Max Kelber	
Malka, Mayer, Michael Kelber	
Bernard and Minnie Kofman	
Ida and Wm. Kreitzman	
Meyer Mackoff (Formerly Machefsky)	
- Joseph and Lena Miller	
Nathan Mininberg	
Gatzel and Sittle Aurich	
Henry Pochapin	
Samuel J. Rabinowitz	
Felix Kapaport	
Sam and Pearl Kapaport	
Lemel Rezneke	
Mendel Kossnos	
Louis Rubin (Farmer)	
Louis Rubin (merchant in Ashley)	
- Noah Schlasinger	
Sam Schwartzman	
Schmiel Silberleib (or Silverlieb)	
Nochyn and Celis Silverlieb	
Morris Silver	
Nathan Silver	
Samuel Smelowitz	
Baruch Solomon	
Louis Straus (Lehr, N.D.)	
Osher and Rebecca Silverlieb	
Louis and Bertha Volfso	
Ber Waksler	
Max Walder (later became a physician in Chicago)	
Joseph Weisburd	
Harry and Sadie Weissman (or Weismann)	

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 108

4. List of additional names of people who lived in the same area in 1907 (from ledgers of Jewish Agricultural Society)

List of Additional names of people who lived in the same area:

Harry (or Hyman) Mitzman - Napoleon  
 Medelowitz - Danzig  
 Ben Braufman - Brownstad  
 Joe Braufman - Lehr  
 Gottlieb - Berlin  
 Noah Dorfman  
 Bremel  
 Losen - Steel  
 Fogelman - Minneawuken  
 Losk - Watford City  
 Butnitsky - New England  
 Krementsky - Tuttle  
 Dr. Leo Cohen - Ashley  
 Frank Higler - Wishek  
 Harry and Meyer Mackoff - Wishek  
 Isadore Mackoff  
 Mankoff  
 Swerdlo  
 Kenis  
 Hess  
 Chiet - Hague  
 Gandel  
 Dolf - Ashley  
 Gittelsohn - Mott  
 Philip Hork - Ashley  
 Lichtenstein - Mott  
 Margolis - Wing  
 Brody - Wing  
 Kamins - Wing  
 Pollock - Wing  
 Lande - Lehr  
 Reich - Lehr  
 Carl Silver - Lehr  
 Haskovitz  
 Turnoy - Wing  
 Goldstone  
 Becker  
 Parkansky  
 Weil  
 Levinson

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 109

5. Jewish Agricultural Society Ledger showing loans to Ashley area homesteaders after 1907

*Jewish Agricultural Society Ledger*

loans made after 1907  
int. 6%

/ Bender 1912 (chat mort. crop)	\$161
/ Spurl Itzip Brown 1913 (crop)	153.75
/ Mrs. Rebecca Cohen 1911	\$1000 (mortgage)
/ Joseph Feller 1912 crop	176.50
/ Wolf Ferrick mortgage 1911-16	2000
/ Nathan Finkle 1912	40 crop
/ Ezia Grossman seed loan crop 1912	192.50
/ Yankel Bella Greenberg	1770.45 mortgage 1911-15
<del>Abraham Grossman 1912</del>	<del>2000</del>
/ Abraham & Rosa Grossman	1700
annual installments of \$170 each	begining
Nov. 1912	<del>\$1250.00</del>
/ Louis Grossman 1912	\$125
seed loan, chatmort.crop	
/ Abs & Fanny Jampolaky	\$1000
\$150 annually 1911-1915	
/ Max Kelber 1912 crop April (seed)	182.50
/ Mayer Kelber April 1912 crop (seed)	
/ Bernard & Minnie Kofman	676 mortgage
337.50 annually 1911-15	
/ Joseph & Lena Miller Apr. 1911	100
1912	
/ Aurich & Gittle Gatzel 1914-18	1000 mortgage
/ Felix Rapaport 1912 crop	125
/ Sam & Pearl Rapaport 1912	1225 mortgage
/ Louis Rubin 1913 mortgage)	2048.60
\$245 annually to Nov. 1912, there-	
after 1912	
seed loan 1912	200.
/ Oscher Silberleib Apr. 1912; crop	181
/ Nochym & Galia Silberleib 1915	983.25 mortgage
/ Morrie Silver 1912-16	2000.00 Int 7%
" " 1911-16	600.00 mortgage
/ Nathan Silver 1912 crop	301
/ Schmiel Silverleib 1912-15 crop loans	140.
/ Oscher & Rebecca Sulberleib 1912-16	\$3562.80 mortgage
/ Harry Weigmann (Sadie) 1914-18	1726.15 mortgage
crop loan 50 to \$1.0	
/ Jacob Winogradow crop 1912	56.00
/ Chaim Wodlinger 1912 to Dec. 1915	1958.78 mortgage
Bessie seed loan 1912 \$90	

*copied by Rachel Baker 1969*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery  
Name of Property  
McIntosh County, North Dakota  
County and State  
N/A  
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 110

6. April 16, 1909 Record of Land Patent for Kiva Bender

84

DOCUMENT NO. 12299

4-407

The United States of America

*Bismarck 0706*  
CERTIFICATE

No. \_\_\_\_\_

To All to Whom these Presents Shall Come, Greeting:

Whereas, Kiva Bender has deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at Bismarck, North Dakota, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said Kiva Bender according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th of April, 1820, entitled "An Act making further provisions for the sale of the Public Lands," and the acts supplemental thereto, for the east half of the northwest quarter and the north half of the southeast quarter of Section twenty-nine in Township one hundred thirty-one north of Range Sixty-nine west of the Fifth Principal Meridian, North Dakota, containing one hundred sixty acres,

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of Said Lands, returned to the General Land office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said Kiva Bender

Know Know Ye, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said Kiva Bender and to his heirs, the said tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities and appurtenances of whatsoever nature thereunto belonging, unto the said Kiva Bender and to his heirs and assigns forever, subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of Courts, and also subject to the right of the proprietor of a vein or lode to extract and remove his ore therefrom, should the same be found to penetrate or intersect the premises hereby granted, as provided by law.

In Testimony Whereof, I, William H. Taft President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the sixteenth day of April in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and nine, and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and thirty-third

By the President Wm H. Taft  
By M. H. Young Secretary.  
H. H. Sanford Recorder of the General Land Office.

Recorded. 56588 Vol. Page  
Filed for record this 2nd day of July 1909, at 9 o'clock A.M., and duly recorded in Book 21 of Deeds on page 84.  
Ed. Herwich Register of Deeds.

Deputy.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 111

7. September 8, 1910 Record of Land Patent for Lena Bender Miller

OHM  
BISMARCK 011753.

4-1029-R.

The United States of America,

Do all to whom these presents shall come, Greeting:

WHEREAS, a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office at BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA, has been deposited in the General Land Office, whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the claimant **LENA MILLER FORMERLY LENA BENDER**, according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of April 24, 1820, entitled "An Act making further provision for the sale of the Public Lands," and the acts supplemental thereto, for the **SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION TWENTY-ONE AND THE WEST HALF OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER AND THE SOUTHWEST QUARTER OF THE NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT IN TOWNSHIP ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE NORTH OF RANGE SIXTY-NINE WEST OF THE FIFTH PRINCIPAL MERIDIAN, NORTH DAKOTA, CONTAINING ONE HUNDRED SIXTY ACRES,**

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the GENERAL LAND OFFICE by the Surveyor-General:

NOW KNOW YE, That the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress in such cases made and provided, HAS GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DOES GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said claimant and to the heirs of the said claimant the Tract above described; TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities, and appurtenances, of whatsoever nature, thereto belonging, unto the said claimant and to the heirs and assigns of the said claimant forever; subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing, or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of courts.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I, **WILLIAM H. TAFT**

President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

GIVEN under my hand, at the City of Washington, the **EIGHTH** day of **SEPTEMBER** in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and **TEN** and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and **THIRTY-FIFTH**.

By the President:

By

*Wm. H. Taft*  
*M. D. LeRoy*  
*H. W. Raymond*

Secretary.

Recorder of the General Land Office.

RECORD OF PATENTS: Patent Number **150943**

8-277

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 112

8. October 17, 1910 Record of Land Patent for Joseph Bender

*J.A.B. Bismarck 011153* *4-107*  
*11-10-22*

The United States of America

*4* Bismarck North Dakota

WHEREAS }  
date \_\_\_\_\_ } To All to Whom these Presents Shall Come, Greeting:

Whereas, a Certificate of the Register of Land Officers has been deposited in the General Land Office of the United States a Certificate of the Register of the Land Office whereby it appears that full payment has been made by the said claimant *Joseph Bender* according to the provisions of the Act of Congress of the 24th April 1820, entitled "An Act making further provisions for the sale of the Public Lands," and the acts supplemental thereto, for the *South half of the Southwest quarter and the South half of the Southeast quarter of section Twenty in Township One Hundred Forty-one North of Range Sixty-nine West of the fifth Principal Meridian North Dakota containing One hundred Sixty acres*

according to the Official Plat of the Survey of the said Land, returned to the General Land Office by the Surveyor General, which said tract has been purchased by the said—

Know Know Ye, That the United States of America, in consideration of the premises, and in conformity with the several Acts of Congress, in such case made and provided, <sup>has</sup> HAVE GIVEN AND GRANTED, and by these presents DO GIVE AND GRANT, unto the said *claimant* and to the *heirs, the said claimant* heirs, the said tract above described: TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the same, together with all the rights, privileges, immunities and appurtenances of whatsoever nature thereunto belonging, unto the said *claimant* and to *the heirs of the said claimant* heirs, subject however, subject to any vested and accrued water rights for mining, agricultural, manufacturing or other purposes, and rights to ditches and reservoirs used in connection with such water rights, as may be recognized and acknowledged by the local customs, laws, and decisions of Courts, and the subject to the right of the proprietor of a vein or lode to extract and remove his ore therefrom, should the same be found to penetrate or intersect the premises herebefore granted, as provided by law. And there is observed that the Law hereby granted a right of way across the ditches or canals constructed by the authority of the United States.

In Testimony Whereof, I, *William H Taft* President of the United States of America, have caused these letters to be made Patent, and the Seal of the General Land Office to be hereunto affixed.

Given under my hand, at the City of Washington, the *seventeenth* day of *October*, in the year of our Lord one thousand nine hundred and *ten*, and of the Independence of the United States the one hundred and *thirty-fifth*

By the President *William H Taft*  
By *M. P. Le Roy* Secretary.  
By *H. W. Sanford* Recorder of the General Land Office

Recorded Patent number *158149*  
Filed for record this *25th* day of *May* 1916, at *835* o'clock *A.* M., and duly recorded in Book 21 of Deeds on page *472*

*J. A. Layer* Deputy.  
*H. Adolf Moench* Register of Deeds.

Taxes and Special Assessments or Installments of Special Assessments paid and transfer entered  
*May 25 1916*  
*John Hildembrand*

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 113

9. Portion of 1911 Land Map, Township 131, range 69 West, McIntosh County 1911 (County Recorder was not able to locate original) shows homesteaders J Bender, K Bender, Lena Miller and M. Kapp, among other



HISTORIC MAPWORKS  
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HOME > BROWSE > UNITED STATES > NORTH DAKOTA > MCINTOSH COUNTY 1911 > TOWNSHIP 131 NORTH RANGE 69 WEST, ...

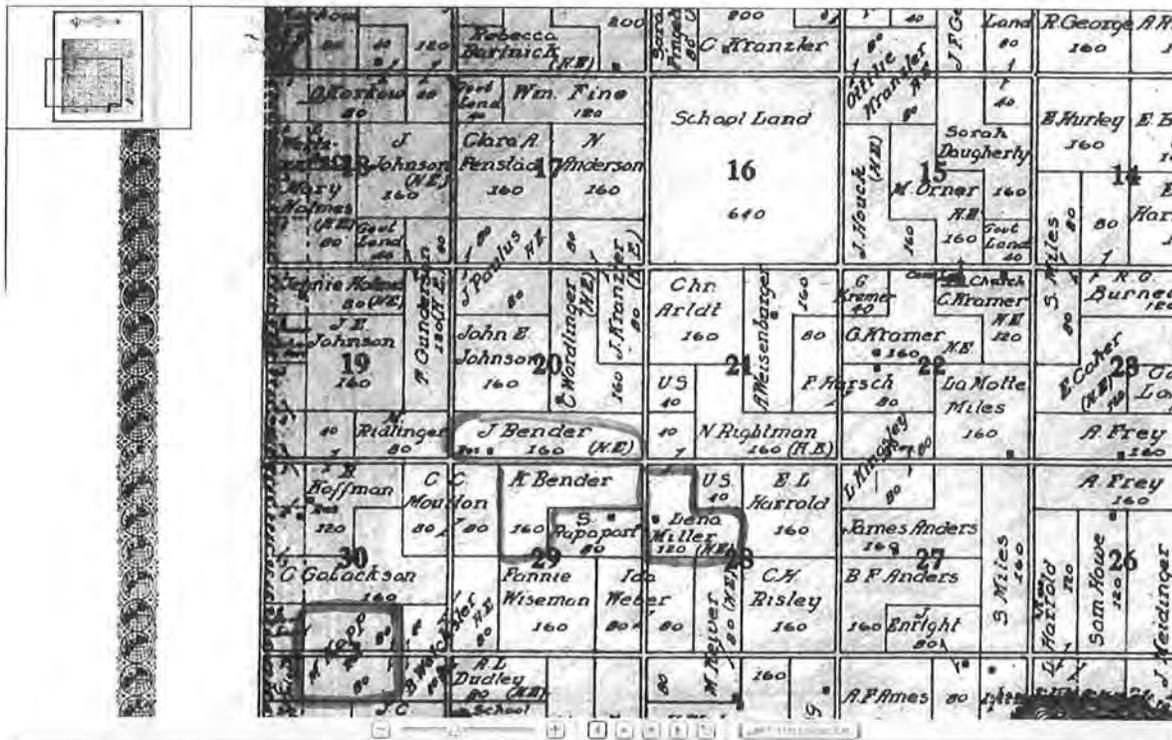


Township 131 North Range 69 West, Page 045  
Atlas: McIntosh County 1911  
State: North Dakota  
Geo. A. Ogle & Co. 1911  
Item # US501454

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Maps in this atlas contain names of the property owners. For the names of residents living in the dwellings in many counties, consult atlases published by either the Directory Service Company or Farm and Home Publishers when available in the database. For a full list of all published atlases of this area, browse the collection by state.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 114

10. April 2, 1912 Certificate of Naturalization for Kiva Bender

No. **205357** To be given to the person Naturalized.

**THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**  
**CERTIFICATE OF NATURALIZATION**

Position, Volume 3, page 42 Sub, Volume 8436, page 7  
 Description of holder: Age, 34 years; height, 5 feet, 9 inches; color, white; complexion, dark; color of eyes, brown; color of hair, black; visible distinguishing marks, None  
 Name, age, and place of residence of wife, Rebecca, P.O. Ashley N.D.  
 Names, ages, and places of residence of minor children, None

**ORIGINAL**

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
COUNTY OF McINTOSH, S.S. Kiva Bender (Signature of holder.)

Be it remembered, that at a general term of the Dist court of McIntosh held at Ashley on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day of April, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twelve, Kiva Bender, who previous to his naturalization was a subject of Russia, at present residing at number \_\_\_\_\_ Street of Ashley State Territory of North Dakota having applied to be admitted a citizen of the United States of America, pursuant to law, and the court having found that the petitioner had resided continuously within the United States for at least five years and in this Territory for one year immediately preceding the date of the filing of his petition, and that said petitioner intends to reside permanently in the United States, had in all respects complied with the law in relation thereto, and that he was entitled to be so admitted, it was thereupon ordered by the court that he be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America.

In testimony whereof the seal of said court is hereunto affixed on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of April in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and twelve and of our Independence the one hundred and thirty six

 E. M. Harrison  
Clerk of the District Court, Fourth Judicial District, McIntosh County, State of North Dakota (Official character of attester.)

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND LABOR

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 115

11. June 25, 1913 Death Certificate of Kiva Bender, Ashley, ND, shows place of burial, "Jewish Cemetery, Ashley N.D." and occupation "Retired Farmer."

PLACE OF DEATH  
County of McIntosh  
Township of \_\_\_\_\_  
or Village of Ashley  
or City of \_\_\_\_\_ (No. \_\_\_\_\_, St.; \_\_\_\_\_ Ward)

STATE OF NORTH DAKOTA  
BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH 1739  
Registered No. 194

Full Name: Kiva Bender

PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS

Sex Male Color White

Date of Birth (Month) (Day) (Year)  
April \_\_\_\_\_ 1876

Age 37 years, 2 months, \_\_\_\_\_ days

Single, Married, Widowed or Divorced Married

Age at Marriage \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Children \_\_\_\_\_  
If married, age at (first) marriage 18 years.  
Parent of 2 children, of whom 3 are living.

Birthplace (State or country) Russia

Name of Father Schneid Bender

Birthplace of Father (State or country) Russia

Maiden Name of Mother Anna

Birthplace of Mother (State or country) Russia

Occupation Retired Farmer

The above stated personal particulars are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

(Informant) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Address) \_\_\_\_\_

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE OF DEATH

Date of Death (Month) (Day) (Year)  
6 25 1913

I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from \_\_\_\_\_, 1913, to 6-25-1913, that I last saw him alive on 6-25-1913, and that death occurred, on the date stated above, at 9:30 A.M. The CAUSE OF DEATH was as follows:  
Carcinoma of Uterus and Stomach  
Transition due to Abortion of Stomach and Carcinoma of Uterus  
Contributory Distention of Stomach  
(Duration) 1 yr. day  
(Signed) W. H. Trautman, M. D.  
6-2-1913 (Address) Ashley, N.D.

Special Information only for Hospitals, Institutions, Transients or Recent Residents:

Former or Usual Residence \_\_\_\_\_ How Long at Place of Death \_\_\_\_\_ day

Where Was Disease Contracted, If Not at Place of Death? \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Burial or Removal Jewish Cemetery Ashley, N.D. Date of Burial 6-25-1913

Undertaker W. H. Trautman Address Ashley, N.D.

Filed 6/25 1913  
W. H. Trautman Registrar

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 116

12. Picture of brother-in-laws Joseph Bender and Noah Schlasinger in Ashley, ND circa 1915



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 117

13. Picture of sister-in-laws Sarah Schlasinger and Mary Bender, taken by W.C. Miller in Ashley, North Dakota circa 1915



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 118

14. Picture of Joseph Bender showing his children Keva (Kenneth) and Frances the land he used to farm in Ashley, ND, circa 1919



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 119

15. August 2, 1971 Articles of Incorporation for Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, purpose "to own, manager, maintain and operate a cemetery in the Village of Ashley, county of McIntosh, State of North Dakota and for other purposes related thereto", with original Board of Directors, Saralee Sloven (Bismarck, ND), Lionel Greenberg (St. Paul, MN), Erwin Grossman (Minneapolis, MN), Keva Bender (Kenneth M.), St. Louis Park, MN and Robert Tilsen (St. Paul, MN) with Lionel Greenberg and Kenneth Tilsen incorporators.

3,545,800  
4187

NON-PROFIT CORPORATION  
SUBMIT DUPLICATE ORIGINALS

Articles of Incorporation

OF

ASHLEY JEWISH CEMETERY CORPORATION

We, the undersigned natural persons of the age of twenty-one years or more, acting as incorporators of a corporation organized under Chapter 10-24, North Dakota Century Code, adopt the following Articles of Incorporation for such Corporation.

ARTICLE 1. The name of said Corporation shall be: Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation

ARTICLE 2. The period of its duration is: Perpetual  
(Perpetual Unless Limited)

ARTICLE 3. The purposes for which the Corporation is organized are:  
**to own, manage, maintain and operate a cemetery in the Village of Ashley, County of McIntosh, State of North Dakota and for other purposes related thereto.**



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 121

ARTICLE 8. The name and address of each incorporator is:  
(One or More Incorporators)

NAME

ADDRESS

Lionel Greenberg

756 Pontiac Pl. St. Paul, Minn.

Kenneth E. Tilsen

Minnesota Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

We, the above named incorporators, being first duly sworn, say that we each have read the foregoing application and know the contents thereof, and verily believe the statements made thereon to be true.

*Lionel Greenberg*

*Kenneth E. Tilsen*

Dated August 2, 1971

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2 day of August, 1971

*Stuart W. Wells*

Notary Public

NOTARIAL SEAL

STUART WILDER WELLS III  
State of Minnesota, Notary Public, Washington Co., Minn.  
My Commission Expires Oct. 26, 1973  
My Commission expires \_\_\_\_\_ 19\_\_\_\_

Fee: \$16.00

Certificate No. 22826

Filing Date August 5, 1971

*Ben Meyer*  
(Secretary of State)

(City Deputy)

"Buy North Dakota Products"



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

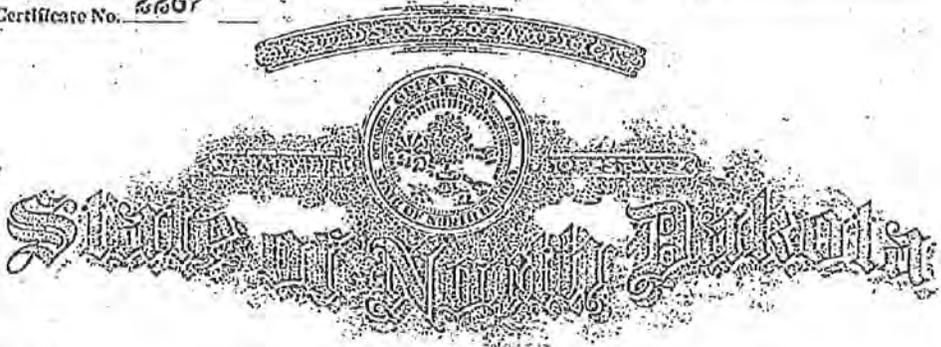
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 122

16. August 5, 1971 Certificate of Incorporation of Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, a North Dakota nonprofit corporation.

Certificate No. 2289



**CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION  
OF**

~~ASHLEY JEWISH CEMETERY CORPORATION~~

The undersigned, as Secretary of State of the State of North Dakota, hereby certifies that duplicate originals of Articles of Incorporation for the incorporation of

~~ASHLEY JEWISH CEMETERY CORPORATION~~

duly signed and verified pursuant to the provisions of the North Dakota ~~NONPROFIT~~ Corporation Act, have been received in this office and are found to conform to law.

ACCORDINGLY the undersigned, as such Secretary of State, and by virtue of the authority vested in him by law, hereby issues this Certificate of Incorporation to

~~ASHLEY JEWISH CEMETERY CORPORATION~~

and attaches hereto a duplicate original of the Articles of Incorporation.

Great Seal

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State at the Capitol in the City of Bismarck, this 5th day of August, A. D., 1971.

/s/ BEN MEIER  
Secretary of State.

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 123

17. February 6, 2014 Nonprofit Corporation Annual Report for Ashley Jewish Cemetery Corporation, Stuart Kaufman president (Seattle, WA), Erwin Grossman vic president (St. Louis Park, MN), Bob Kaufman secretary/treasurer (Minneapolis, MN), Burt Serman director (Encino, CA) and Ro Goldman director (Scottsdale, AZ). Steve Paper's address in Fargo, ND is the principal executive office and Rita Paper filed the report.



**DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN NONPROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT** 2014  
SECRETARY OF STATE  
SFN 50679 (12-2013)



1. (Corporate Name, Commercial or Noncommercial Registered Agent Name and Address)

ASHLEY JEWISH CEMETERY CORPORATION  
STEVE PAPER  
1750 S 23RD STREET  
FARGO ND 58103

RECEIVED  
JAN 15 2014  
SEC. OF STATE

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY	
ID Number	3,545,800
WO Number	1097838
Filed	2-6-14
By	[Signature]

2. FILING FEES:  
\$10.00 if postmarked on or before February 3, 2014  
\$15.00 if postmarked after February 3, 2014

3. State or Country of Origin:	ND
--------------------------------	----

**TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY - SEE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FEES, FILING AND MAILING INFORMATION**

A nonprofit corporation is a legal entity created under North Dakota state law. This annual report is required by law and verifies the continued existence of the corporation. If the nonprofit corporation no longer exists, the corporation may voluntarily dissolve or be involuntarily dissolved under the provisions of state law if the annual report is not filed (see instructions). Annual report provisions are found in the North Dakota Century Code Section 10-33-139.

4. The name and address of the noncommercial registered agent or commercial registered agent appear below the corporate name above. Is the name of the noncommercial registered agent or commercial registered agent and address correct? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No - Complete page 2 of this form.																																									
5. Purpose of the Corporation (be specific): MAINTANENCE OF JEWISH CEMETRY	6. Federal Tax Code by which Tax Exemption is Recognized, if any:																																								
7. Address of Principal Executive Office as Previously Reported (Street/RR, PO Box, City, State, ZIP+4) If incorrect, cross out and correct as necessary. Address cannot only be a post office box. C/O STEVE PAPER 1750 S 23RD ST FARGO ND 58103-4726	8. Federal ID Number 9. Telephone Number (701) 232-1859																																								
10. OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS OF THE CORPORATION																																									
<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>OFFICE</th> <th>NAME</th> <th>Check box if Officer also serves as Director</th> <th>COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS</th> </tr> <tr> <th></th> <th></th> <th></th> <th>Street/RR PO Box City State ZIP+4</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>PRESIDENT</td> <td>STUART KAUFMAN</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>6343 J2<sup>ND</sup> AVE S SEATTLE WA 98118</td> </tr> <tr> <td>VICE PRESIDENT</td> <td>ERWIN GROSSMAN</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>1640 VIRGINIA AVE S ST LOUIS PARK MN 55426</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SECRETARY/TREASURER</td> <td>BOB KAUFMAN</td> <td><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></td> <td>1939 S HUMBOLDT AVE MAPLE MN 55403</td> </tr> <tr> <td>SECRETARY</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>TREASURER</td> <td></td> <td><input type="checkbox"/></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIRECTOR</td> <td>BURT SERMAN</td> <td></td> <td>4152 FALLING LEAF DR ENCINO CA 91316</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIRECTOR</td> <td>RON GOLDMAN</td> <td></td> <td>7223 E TRAILFEATHER DR, SCOTTSDALE AZ 85258</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DIRECTOR</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		OFFICE	NAME	Check box if Officer also serves as Director	COMPLETE MAILING ADDRESS				Street/RR PO Box City State ZIP+4	PRESIDENT	STUART KAUFMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	6343 J2 <sup>ND</sup> AVE S SEATTLE WA 98118	VICE PRESIDENT	ERWIN GROSSMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1640 VIRGINIA AVE S ST LOUIS PARK MN 55426	SECRETARY/TREASURER	BOB KAUFMAN	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1939 S HUMBOLDT AVE MAPLE MN 55403	SECRETARY		<input type="checkbox"/>		TREASURER		<input type="checkbox"/>		DIRECTOR	BURT SERMAN		4152 FALLING LEAF DR ENCINO CA 91316	DIRECTOR	RON GOLDMAN		7223 E TRAILFEATHER DR, SCOTTSDALE AZ 85258	DIRECTOR			
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DIRECTOR																																									
11. "The undersigned has read the foregoing annual report, knows the contents, and believes the information provided is correct. I understand that if I make a false statement in this document, I may be subject to criminal penalties."																																									

Signatures Rita Paper	Date 1-7-14
12. Name of Person to Contact about this Report RITA PAPER	Email Address Daytime Telephone Number and Extension, if any

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

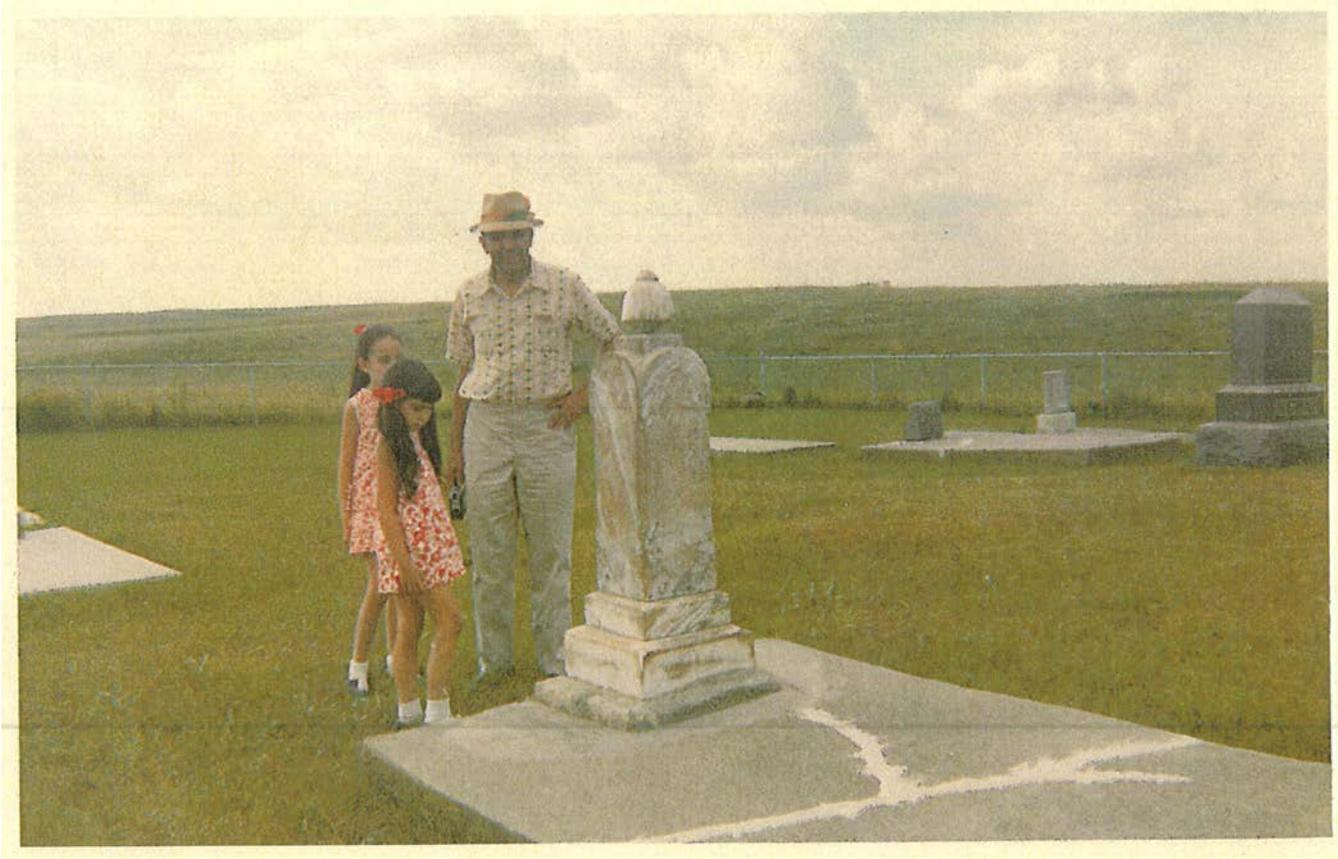
N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 124

18. Picture of Kenneth (Keva) showing his daughters Nancy and Rebecca the monument of his grandfather and their great-grandfather Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1964 (Photo by Frima Bender)



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 125

19. Picture of Joseph Bender at grave of his father, Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1975



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 126

20. Picture of Kenneth Bender at grave of his grandfather, Kiva Bender, Ashley Jewish Cemetery, circa 1978



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 127

21. Picture of Frances Bender Bernbaum, Melvin Bernbaum, Barry Kelner, Frima Bender, Rebecca Bender, Kenneth Bender and Joel Bernbaum, lower right, in front of their grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather's monument, Ashley Jewish Cemetery 1988 (Photo by Nancy Bender-Kelner)



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 128

22. Picture of Frima Bender, Nancy Bender-Kelner, Kenneth Bender and Rebecca Bender at Kiva Bender's monument, Ashley, ND, circa 1990 (Photo by Barry Kelner)



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 129

23. Picture of Kenneth Bender, showing grandchildren Lincoln Bernhard and Sage Kelner their great-great grandfather's grave and monument, 2005. Rebecca Bender is holding son, Lincoln Bernhard. (Photo by Nancy Bender-Kelner)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

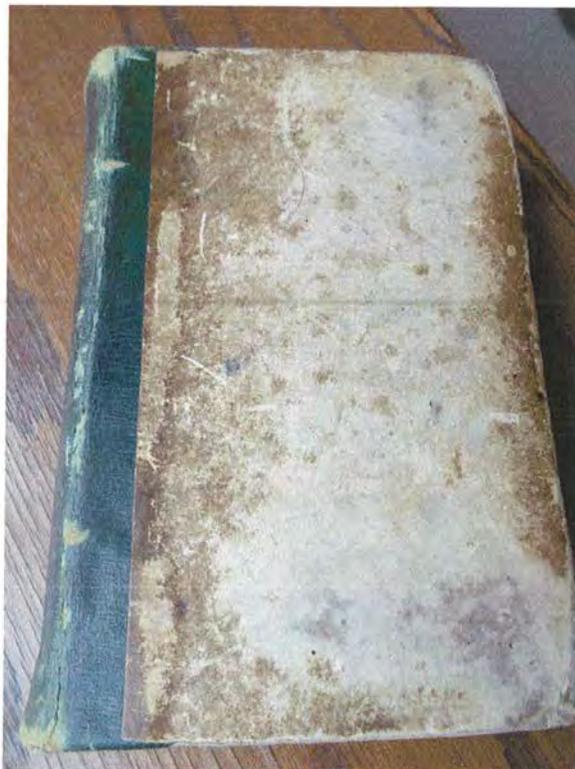
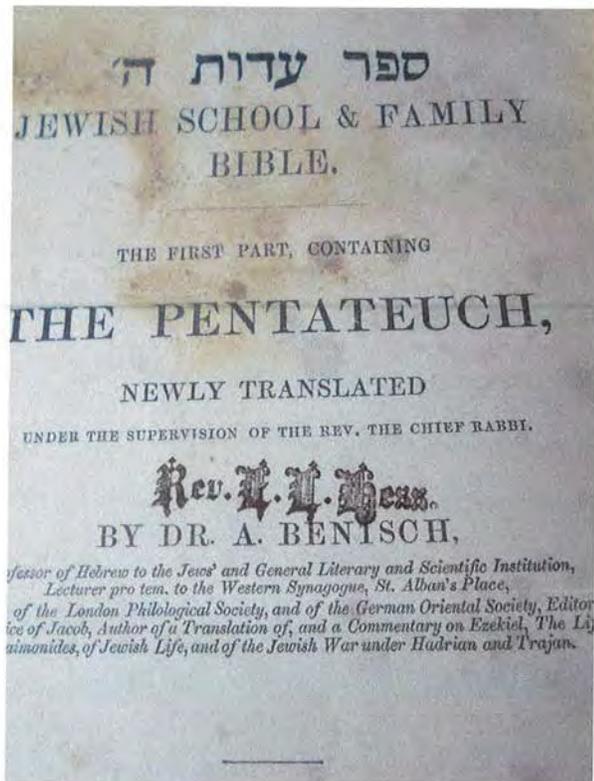
National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 130

24. Jewish School and Family Bible ( Chief Rabbi Dr. A. Benisch, James Darling Publishers, London 1851), from books and papers of Joseph Bender, with stamp of "Rev. Hess", Rabbi at Ashley/Wishek Jewish agricultural settlements from 1911 - 1922



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery
Name of Property
McIntosh County, North Dakota
County and State
N/A
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 131

25. *Odessa Mama*, Russian Jewish Orchestra (Columbia Graphophone Company 1909), from books and papers of Joseph Bender. The Yiddish song is an ode to Odessa's sidewalks, electric lights, hotels, and other modern amenities. Columbia Records imported the recordings from Europe prior to World War I. When people would ask Joe Bender, "do you miss your motherland Russia?" He would respond, "How could someone love a country that would treat its citizens so badly? America is my home." Bender, *From the Prairies to the Beaches* (2005)



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

Name of Property

McIntosh County, North Dakota

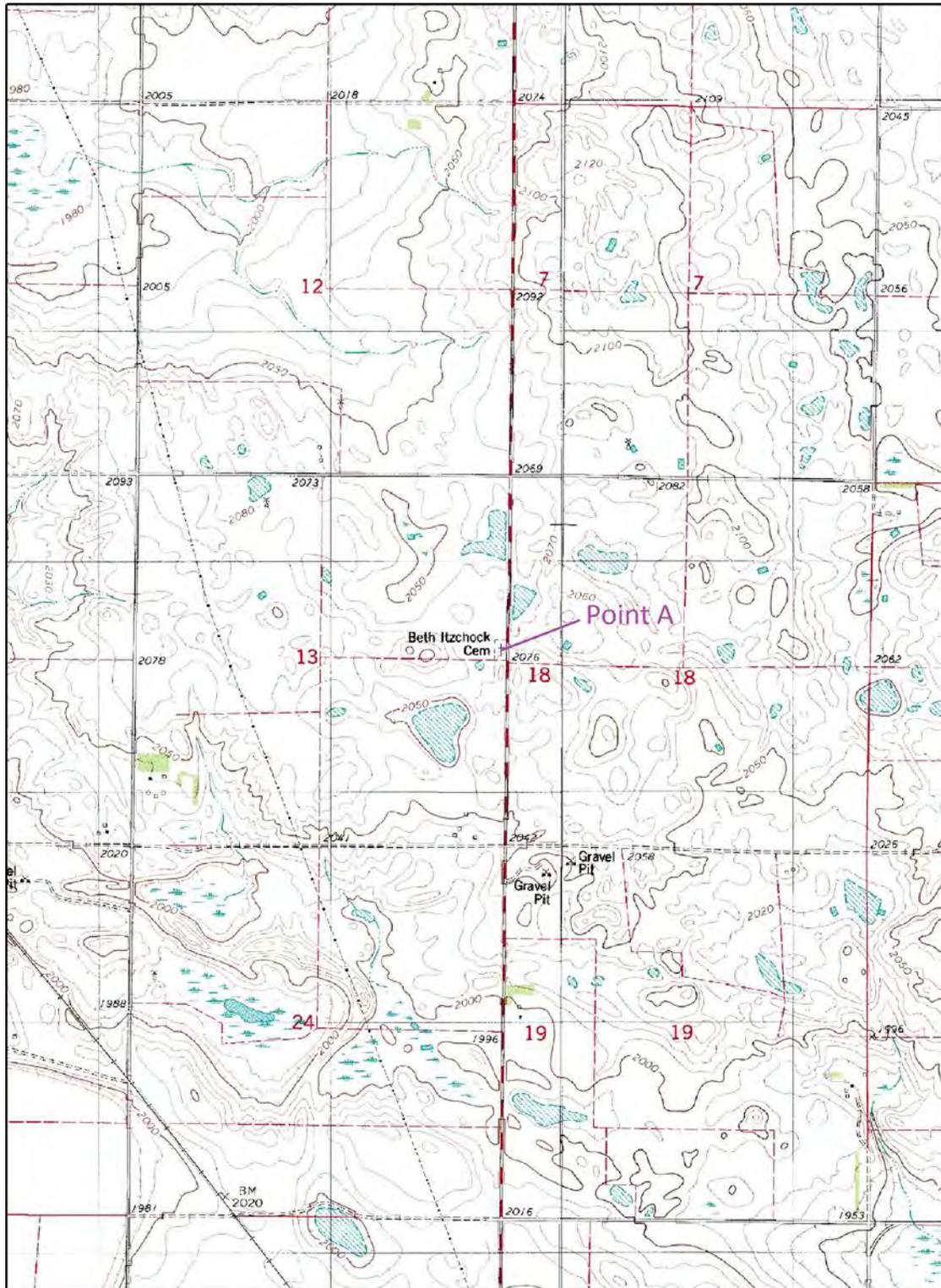
County and State

N/A

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 132



UTM: NAD 1983  
14 470689 512837

















WILLIAM B. BAKER  
BORN APR 1838  
DIED JUN 22 1918







MAXINE  
BECK



OURACH





פ"ו

אשה חשובה מרת בשר  
ראביב בת מישה וולד  
ה'ר"כט ונפטרה י"א תמו  
תלעו תוצבה



MRS. RUEBIN  
BORN MAR. 6. 1870  
DIED JULY 29. 1913



MRS RUEBIN

BENJEMAN B

REUBEN

OCT 10 1910

NOV 11 1918





ERIEIDA BOUTE (WIFE OF)  
DIED JAN 15 1885  
AGED 33 YEARS



ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד  
ה'תש"ה

FREDA DOREMAN  
DIED JAN. 25, 1915  
AGED 33 YEARS

*We miss you dear mother*

פ"ו

אחיו איש תם וישד רחום  
ליפואי ייטב וולד וולד  
ובטח ביום זאת תרע"ג  
תפ"ג



MR. BLOOM

BORN JAN. 5, 1873

DIED MAY 14, 1913



MR. BLOOM

BORN JAN 5 1873

בית

אשה נכבדה

התקבלה

ביום

בשנת

ה'תרצ"ז

REBECCA FILLER  
DIED FEB. 18, 1927  
AGE 37

פא

הבנות

שלום ושלום

בן שמואל

נפטר

ביום

ה'תש"ב





אֵלֵינוּ נִשְׁבַּח  
לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
כִּי אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
וּבְיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

JOSEPH GERACH  
1811 - 1881  
AUGUST 1881

אֵלֵינוּ נִשְׁבַּח  
לְפָנֶיךָ יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
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וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ  
וּבְיָמֵינוּ וּבְיָמֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ





SADDRE GOLDSTON

BORN AUG. 10, 1921

DIED NOV. 17, 1921

OUR BELOVED

BABY

FRIEDA RAY

BORN

APRIL 1918

DIED

OCT - 27 - 1918



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NORTH DAKOTA, McIntosh

DATE RECEIVED: 10/02/15      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/28/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/12/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/17/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000807

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT       RETURN       REJECT      \_\_\_\_\_ DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*This nomination provides much more information than is necessary for listing. The extensively documented context statement provides the context for a multiple property listing for Jewish immigration to North Dakota from the late 19th century to the 1930s.*

RECOM./CRITERIA A

REVIEWER [Signature]

DISCIPLINE History

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE 11/17/15

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

RECEIVED 2280

OCT - 2 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

To: Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
From: Claudia J. Berg/ Lorna Meidinger  
Date: 28 September 2015  
Subject: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this 28th day of September 2015, for the nomination of the Ashley Jewish Homesteaders Cemetery to the National Register of Historic Places.

\_\_\_\_\_ National Register of Historic Places nomination form on archival paper

\_\_\_\_\_ Multiple Property Nomination form on archival paper

\_\_\_\_\_ Photographs

\_\_\_\_\_ USGS map(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Sketch map(s)/figure(s)/exhibit(s)

\_\_\_\_\_ Pieces of correspondence

2 \_\_\_\_\_ CDs

1 \_\_\_\_\_ Signature Page

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

COMMENTS:

\_\_\_\_\_ Please insure that this nomination is reviewed

\_\_\_\_\_ This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67

\_\_\_\_\_ The enclosed owner objections \_\_\_\_ do \_\_\_\_ do not constitute a majority of property owners.

\_\_\_\_\_ Other: