

**From: Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959, Allen D. Breck,
University of Denver, Department of History, The Hirschfeld Press, Denver
Colorado, 1960. pp 156 -161**

The Bnai Brith was trying to assist a plan to help distribute Jewish immigrants from Russia to move to Colorado. In 1894, the Nehry Investment Company along with the T. C. Henry Investment Company offered the following “opportunity” to these Russian immigrants. These immigrants, who currently resided in New York and Philadelphia were thought to be hard-working, robust and sturdy, just the type to succeed in the harsh winters of northeastern Colorado and who would succeed in making this project a success.

Logan County had large and vast plains that were advertised as an excellent place to farm and the investment companies laid out a plan that would include assistance to the Russian immigrants. Seventy-five adults and six children arrived in Denver (via Galveston) on March 17, 1896. For \$20.00, each family was to receive forty acres of land with perpetual water rights. The company was to erect houses and supply implements, teams and a cow. There was no initial cost for the settlers and they could pay it back at 6 percent over 19 years.

T. C. Henry, of the Henry Investment Company handled the mortgage and perpetuated the plan. He and Miller noted that if there was a flaw in their planning, it could easily be rectified, and the settlers should be out of debt within 15 years.

The prospective colonists were told that the land was all fenced and they would be able to build houses in a compact group, Russian style, and be supervised by the company as they knew nothing about irrigation methods. Much of the land would be in market gardening (Henry thought 1200 acres), the rest in small crops such as broom corn which could be made into useful articles by the farmers, and enough alfalfa for their stock. Later would come a creamery and cannery. In the meantime, the company would furnish seed, the colonists contributing only their labor.

Their first summer (1896) was marked with hope and despair. Henry sent 300 pounds of potatoes and 900 pounds of flour and some implements. Farmers were hired to do the plowing. But, this still proved to be inadequate. The crops were not planted until the middle of June, the alfalfa crop was a poor one, horses arrived but they were in poor shape and needed to be fed and fattened before they could be used for anything on the farms. The colonists had no experience in farming or in organizing themselves and had no experience in farming so that they had to learn the most rudimentary skills of raising animals and crops.

In September, the Denver B'nai Brith sent out Sigmund Friedenthal, Moses Epperstein, and David Kline to report first hand about the Atwood Colony. On their visit they discovered that

the colony was near starvation. On October 18th, they directed the secretary to write the Baron de Hirsch Fund for assistance for the colony. In March, 1987, they learned that the Fund Trustees would furnish two thousand dollars toward buying cows, land, and implements.

Because of the continual fluctuation of colonists, arriving and departing it can only be estimated that at the peak there were approximately 200 colonists, but only about 16 families remained as of early 1897.

From: Guide to the Jewish Rockies by Amy Shapiro, Rocky Mountain Historical Society pamphlet. Rocky Mountain Jewish Historical Society, Center for Judaic Studies, University of Denver: 1979.

They arrived in March 1896 to find the 6,500 acres of promised land barren and lacking the houses, fences and grass the promoters had described. After a summer of hard work, the would-be farmers broke their Yom Kippur fast with watermelon – all there was to eat.

The following year, Denver's B'nai B'rith and the Baron de Hirsch Fund sent money and equipment to the few remaining settlers. Although 200 – 300 individuals may have lived in Atwood at one time or another, almost all the original families had left by August 1899, and only a few Jews remained in the region.

Sources:

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