

## **Atwood Colony, Atwood Colorado – 1891 – 1899 (excerpts from newspapers and publications listed below)**

In 1891, the National B'nai Brith requested the Denver lodge to report a plan for the systematic distribution of Russian Jews throughout Colorado. A proposal was made to the lodge by T. C. Henry, a prominent irrigation man and land developer. Although the lodge minutes do not reveal his plan, subsequent events indicate what his suggestions were.

According to Mary Fine Fishman, who at sixteen was the colony's secretary, a group of sweatshop workers, tailors and small businessmen, who had met at Laandsmanshaft gatherings in Philadelphia had heard that there was land in the far west suitable for farming. All of them were poor and had suffered greatly in the Panic of 1893. They met together in 1894 to discuss what possibilities there might be for them to form a colony and acquire land. Mrs. Fishman, relates that a member of the group, a Mr. Silver, was sent to Baron de Hirsch with the idea of the philanthropic financing a colony. Since the Baron had established the fund named for him in New York in 1891. With the purpose of aiding immigrants in the establishing themselves throughout the US, the delegate was surprised when the Baron refused.

There upon , the group, most of whom could neither speak nor write English adequately, sent Mary to her school teacher asking that she write an advertisement to the effect that a group of twenty-five families want to be settled on farmland. The ad brought responses from California and Colorado. The Colorado answer came from T. C. Henry, who may have envisioned a project when he made his proposal. Silver, the delegate was sent to investigate the Logan Valley in the area around Sterling, land Henry had under contract. Together with Henry, the men outlined a plan in which Henry would allot cattle, horses and lumber, and flour and potatoes for six months.

## March 16, 1896 - Denver Republican:

100 Russian Jews arrived in Galveston late on the night of March 15, 1896 travelled on the Mallory Line steamship S. S. Concho from New York. About 100 Russian Jews were aboard and will be bound for Atwood, Colorado where they will settle. The tickets paid for were 75 wholes and 18 halves. Many were children too young to pay fares. These people were dispatched to their destination [Atwood] via the Houston & Texas Central [train] to Fort Worth, and then by Fort Worth & Denver and the Union Pacific, Denver & the Gulf.



(photo of ship taken from Internet (URL on photo) of the ship)



The Mallory Line's Concho (shown as a troop transport in 1898) was built in 1891 for service between New York and Texas' gulf ports. She was frequently chartered by the Ward Line for freight service to Mexico



Atwood, Colorado (photo of 2013 landscape)

### **March 18, 1896 – Rocky Mountain News**

The Henry Investment Company of Denver furnished land, equipment and “everything” for the Denver Market. The Gulf train brought 100 “Russian-Hebrews” to the Union station at 10:00 pm on March 17, 1896. 400 more are scheduled to follow in the next few weeks. These passengers were transferred to the Julesburg Line. There were 75 adults and six children in this group. These Jews are a portion of that agricultural Jewish population which was expelled from Russia along with some Austrians who were also farmers. All of them had spent the past few years in New York and Philadelphia and area suburbs. They had sent a group ahead to the west, searching for an area where they could once again be farmers. These men visited Denver and the Henry Investment Company agreed to help them relocate to Atwood in the southern part of Logan County. There they will each have 40 acres of land with perpetual water rights. It will cost them \$20.00 an acre. The Henry Company would also erect houses for them and supply them with implements, tools, teams, and one cow per family. The families do not have to pay anything for this and will receive the land after 15 years at 6% interest. The land is all fenced and broken and some of it has had a crop of alfalfa. The property will be deeded to the settlers, the company taking the mortgage. At the request of the settlers themselves, the houses will be erected in a compact little village, each house standing on a 2-acre lot. The settlers coming were hand picked from their own group for their fitness. They are all married and many speak English.

Should this experiment prove successful, there are 1,000 more families waiting in the East to join the colony.

For the first year, the members of the colony will farm entirely under the direction of the Henry Investment company, since they know nothing of irrigation.

After the first year, it is believed that they will understand irrigation system sufficiently to proceed without direction. Much of the land will be planted in a "market garden" the produce of which will be disposed of in Denver. A special arrangement has been made with the Gulf road by which advantageous rates for the marketing of this stuff will be had. Broom corn will also be raised which the settlers will make into manufactured articles. Contemplated are other forms of manufacturing which include a creamery, a cannery, etc. The idea is to have the land cultivated entirely in small holdings with none of the larger crops like wheat, etc that require large expenditures. The first year, each man will be allowed to plant only enough alfalfa for his stock with the rest of the land used for raising vegetables. Later fruits will be grown. The company will furnish all of the seed. All the settlers are responsible is providing the labor; the company using this labor to "good advantage". Mr. T. C. Henry, president of the company ensured that this project was well thought out after studying other countries new settlements. He said, "There may be a flaw in it, but if there is we shall remedy it as soon as discovered. There are more than 2,000,000 acres of land under ditch in Colorado lying idle. It is of no use to wait for people with capital to come in and buy this land for homes. Times are so uncertain, profits so problematic that people with capital will not farm. Only those people will farm who have to. It is because these [Russian immigrants] have no capital that they wish to come. I am convinced that in order to get their lands occupied the land companies of Colorado have got to fairly exploit their lands.

## **Denver Republican (Denver), March 26, 1896**

The Atwood Colony is an experiment in colonization made by the Henry Investment Company

This experiment was watched with interest because it was thought that if successful, it would be followed by similar attempts to provide homes for poor people and at the same time help populated some of the agricultural valleys. .

In this experiment, “the company sells the land on long-time contract, furnishes with all they require in starting, including cattle, tools, houses and food”.

All of these amenities are to be paid by proceeds from the farms. Apparently, the new citizens understand what a difficult undertaking this will be but are grateful for the opportunity to secure homes of their own and become independent.

These Jews are immigrants from Russia who were driven out of that country by the tyranny of that government. Most of them originated from Germany and although were living in Russia, German is their language.

It was thought that because they are from the peasant class, they are used to hardship, poverty, and hard labor and since they are used to being frugal and working hard, they have the perseverance to succeed under these harsh conditions. Many of them have already spent the past several years in the Eastern United States. It was thought that it was unlikely that those brought up in America would be less likely to succeed. It was also thought that Colorado would benefit from this experiment by bringing new people who otherwise would not come, and it would help the undercultivated soil which otherwise would remain unproductive for an indefinite time.

## **Denver Republican, Tuesday, November 17, 1896**

Title of Article: *Jewish Colony Broken Up –*

*Logan County: Experimenters Abandon Their Unstable Homes – Stranded in a Strange Land.*

[compiler’s note: Throughout this article, Atwood is referred as “Edward”]

The unfortunate Immigrants from the tenement houses of New York and Philadelphia make all sorts of charges against the management of the colony. They are now living on the charity of co-religionists in the bottoms but can not [sic] do so much longer.

On last St. Patrick's day, 76 families of Hebraic origin, sailing from New York and Philadelphia, set foot on the block of unpaved and ungraded street, with its eight-room hotel and five cottages, which comprises the town of Edward. They had been led out of the far East, out of the tenement houses and junk shops which were their first choices when they came to this country from Russia and Poland, by the promise of T. C. Henry, prince of Colorado Colonizers, that they would find a land flowing with milk and honey.

Leaving milk and honey out of the question, they say the Logan county Canaan did not even flow with water enough to irrigate the sand farms they were set to cultivate. They also say other things derogatory of Mr. Henry's Logan county colonization scheme.

The Henry colony is now scattered far and wide from Edward into Colfax. The settlers reached Edward on St. Patrick's Day, and, odd coincidence, on the Fourth of July about 20 families out of the total of 76 quit in a body. Prior to that time a small number of colonists had preceded these in the flight back to civilization. Saturday night 36 more families with their metaphorical asses and oxen manservants and maid servants, took a train from Sterling for Denver, arriving here early Sunday morning. They have left behind them in the busted Canaan 15 other families....

A small part of the earliest ones to abandon the colony lands are back in their New York and Philadelphia homes. The great bulk, including all those who reached here Sunday are quartered on the charitable and kindly, if poverty stricken members of their race and dwell along the Jordan of Denver – the Platte river – in Colfax and about the east end of the Larimer street viaduct.

The account they give of their sojourn in Logan county is pitiable. Their actual condition greatly corroborates what they say. Yesterday H. Goodman of 1031 Larimer street called on Secretary Whitehead of the Humane Society to report the sufferings of the returned colonists and the plight in which they left their companions who remained in Edward. It was in this way the tale of how T. C. Henry's latest colony fared became a public news subject.

The desire of the disappointed colonists is to be sent back to where they came from as speedily as possible. They have no money to pay railroad fares and are now subsisting on the generosity of the poor families of Colfax and Denver who are providing them with food and shelter in their time of need.

From Leopold Frisch and H. Goodman, at different times occupied the position of leader among the colonists. Goodman and his wife abandoned the Edward lands some months ago and the head of the family is now running a small tailor shop at 1021 Larimer street. The Frisch family were among Sunday morning's arrivals. H. Goodman is caring for three other families besides his own in his little tailor shop and two living rooms.

The statements obtained in fragmentary shape from Goodman, Frisch and others of the colonists is in substance as follows:

Nearly a year ago T. C. Henry acting it is understood for Boston and other Eastern capitalists who own land in Logan county, visited the East with a view toward organizing a colony on the land indicated. In New York city and Philadelphia he found 76 families, all Hebrew willing to seek their fortune in the Far West. They followed every vocation except farming. Forty families were recruited in New York and 36 in Philadelphia. They organized themselves into two companies, with Leopold Frisch president of the Philadelphia company and H. Goodman at the head of the New York Organization.

The Philadelphia colony was composed of people who were liberal in their interpretation of the Hebrew religious doctrines and they styled it the Philadelphia Colonization company. The New Yorkers were strictly orthodox Jews and their community was known as the American Jewish company.

Before the departure of the migrants for Colorado an agreement was drawn up between them and T. C. Henry so they say, by which the expense of their journey, the cost of the land and everything having to do with their settlement in Logan county was provided for. Each family first deposited, through Alfred Muller of Denver, who was retained as general attorney for all the colonists, the sum of \$40.00 in the First National Bank of Denver to pay the entire cost of the trip to Sterling, in Logan county.

On his side, Mr. Henry agreed to furnish every family with 53 acres of land. Cultivated land was to cost them \$30.00 per acre and uncultivated land \$20. 15 years being given within which to make payment. Arrangements were also made to furnish the colony with seed for crops, farming utensils, horses, cows, lumber for building purposes and food, until the first crops were harvested. None of these contract stipulations were kept by the colony promoters, according to the colonists.

The band of home seekers, 365 persons in all, came from New York via steamer to Galveston and the railroads to Sterling reaching their destination on the 17<sup>th</sup> of March.

“When we got to Edward there was no one to receive us and no accommodations to speak of,” explains Leopold Frisch, who kept a furniture store in Philadelphia, and talks very good English. “We saw about five small houses and a hotel of eight rooms. Only the hotel and two of the houses were vacant. We crowded into them, the whole 365 of us and there we had to live the best we could for over a month. There was hardly room enough for all of us to lie down, and we had to pack ourselves together, just like sardines in a can.

“Before we left New York we were promised that lumber enough for building every family a house would be ready for us when we got to Edward. Instead of that there wasn’t a stick of wood in sight. We had to live on the food we brought with us from the steamer. Afterwards we did get some food but never enough to keep one-quarter of the colony alive.

“We had no idea what land we were to take but a few days after we settled in the hotel and two cabins Mr. Henry paid us a visit. Then we asked him for our land and he said: “Come along and I’ll show it to you. He took us up to the top of a hill and waving his hand around him showed us the whole country in sight. “There is land enough for 100,000 families,” he said, “and it’s all mine. Just settle down anywhere you please.”

“Some time after that, Adam Abbott, Henry’s superintendent, came to Edward and took charge of the colony. We were in two colonies with Mr. Goodman at the head of one and I at the head of the other. Under Abbott’s directions we planted nearly 500 acres of land, although we never had any claim to an acre of it. One hundred acres of broom corn was planted too late and it is till down there frozen to the ground.

“Our chief crops were onions and alfalfa. Abbott made us plant all the onions in among the alfalfa and that was the last of them. What alfalfa we raised to seed was attached by Miller, who was an attorney and also in partnership with Mr. Henry, and Henry’s superintendent for \$365 worth of provisions they gave us. The two colonies got together then, for we saw that Attorney Muller was fighting us and I was elected president. I brought the attachment suit and won. Out of \$200. I got for the alfalfa seed I had to pay \$175. For milk that Henry had ordered for us.

“Another 50 acres of alfalfa seed was taken by a man named Young because we had planted it on his land. We raised 50 acres of broom corn but before it was ripe the man who plowed up the ground for the crop attached it for his wages. We set out 48 acres of beans, 23 acres of potatoes, but none of them grew on account of want of water. We tried to take water from some of the other farmers’ ditches and got into trouble.

“Whenever we asked Mr. Henry for anything he told us to have patience and we would get everything we wanted. At first we were more badly off for house room than for anything else. The first time he promised to send us lumber and it did not come he told us the train that had the lumber on board struck a snowbank on its way to Sterling and ran off the track. The next time the lumber did not come he explained that by mistake it had been sent to Edward, California instead of Edward, Colorado.

“He promised we would get it sure in side of a few days and gave a day when we might expect it. The lumber did not come that day, either, and when we saw Mr. Henry again he told us the town of Cripple Creek had been burned up and that all the lumber in Denver had been sent to rebuild it.

“At last we got the lumber, only there wasn’t enough to build more than 30 houses. The walls were shingled with paper and whenever it rained we could swim in our rooms , for the water soaked in on us from the walls as well as the roofs.

“Soon after we got to Edward some of the farmers around there told me all about Mr. Henry’s other colony schemes and said we’d get stuck sure. The sensible ones believed that way and some of them cleared out in May and June. Mr. Goodman and about 15 other families came up here on the Fourth of July but I stayed until Saturday night, as all of us were mixed up in law suits. I was sent to Sterling to find out I f Henry owned the land we were upon, but the records showed that not a single foot of it belonged to him.

“About two months ago we were all ready to clear out, but down came Attorney Muller upon us and replevined everything the colonists had on a claim for groceries. After Mr. Henry let us alone, Muller from time to time sent us down groceries and other provisions from Denver. When the whole business was replevined I and the others stayed to fight it out as we wanted to save something. Judge Allen came to Sterling from Denver to hear the case and his appointed the county sheriff a receiver to wind up the business for the benefit of the colonists. We expected to get some money from the sheriff and stayed until Saturday night but then we gave up and came to Denver the other 15 families are still down there.

“We have lost all of our savings coming out here, and have no money to get back East again, where we might find some work to do. Mr. Goodman went to the Humane Society to try if some money couldn’t be got out of Muller, who was our attorney, or railroad tickets got to New York and Philadelphia for the colonists. All the money we ever tot out of the crops we planted was \$65. Clear.”

A number of the returned colonists who are quartered on Colfax families used a stronger language than that quoted from Leopold Firsch [sic].

“We lived like dogs down there.” Said Abraham Goldstein of Philadelphia, ”and some of us sold our shirts to keep our little children from starving. Muller sent us some food at first, but for three months before we came up here we got nothing to eat from Denver.”

E. Katzerman, who kept a furrier store in Philadelphia before he came West said, “ Henry agreed to take us to a good agricultural country, and told us he was worth a million dollars. He said he would furnish the land and give us everything a farmer would need; all her cared about was to have the country settled up. His manager, who doesn’t know any more about farming than my boots, wanted us to plant onions all over the land. Mr. Henry, too, said we could get \$375 an acre for what onions we raised. I offered him the onions for \$75 an acre and he said: “Oh no: I wouldn’t rob you people”. The onions we raised there wouldn’t bring 75 cents an acre, most of them were lost in

the alfalfa . There wasn't a think grew on the whole of our land but onions and alfalfa and these were no good.

"Henry promised us all we needed, but the whole colony got no more than 40 horses, most of them colts and burros, 15 plows, 4 wagons and 2 mowing machines."

Mr. Frisch stated afterward that Mr. Henry furnished the settlement near Edward with nine horses and two cows in addition to the farming implements, but everything was furnished rather late in the season.

Katzerman further said that the first lumber for houses was not sent until the colonists had been "settled" over three months.

"When we first wanted to plant crops, " said Katzerman, "Henry told us it was too early. Then, when we did begin planting he told us it was too late, and that we were no good for farmers."

Abraham Ashner's tribute to the symposium of complaints was: "We found nothing down there but wild land. We mostly planted broom corn, which froze up. All the other things we planted were no good and nothing came up but onions and alfalfa.."

From H. Goodman it was learned that there is still some money belonging to the colonists, lodged in the First National bank. It was paid by families who are still in the East, \$40 per family, as traveling expenses. The colonists in Denver and Colfax say this money has been tied up by Attorney Alfred Muller. Judging from the consensus of stories told by the impoverished colonists T. C. Henry undertook to be the Moses who should lead them into the land of promise. After he failed Attorney Muller appeared in the guise of a Joshua, to complete the job. Under his guidance the unfortunate emigrants wound up in bankruptcy, instead of in Canaan.

#### Sources:

Denver Republican, March 16, 1896 p.1 publisher: Republican Publishing Co, Denver, CO 1879

Denver Republican March 18, 1896

Rocky Mountain News, March 18, 1896

Denver Republican, March 26, 1896

Denver Republican, November 17, 1896

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The following information related to T. C. Henry was found on the Internet, URL:  
<http://www.coloradoplains.com/otero/history/oterohistory1895.htm>

Several canal companies were formed and much surveying was done, with the view of building a ditch, but all schemes failed until Mr. T.C. Henry, of Denver, organized the Colorado Land and Water company, and constructed a fine large canal at a cost of over \$400,000. This canal was taken out of the river some ten miles above Nepesta, in Pueblo county, and runs northeast to Horse creek, covering more than 40,000 acres of the state land and as much more in the northwestern part of the county. There are several large reservoirs in the system. It enters Otero county north of the center of the west line, and runs north of the Missouri Pacific railroad. The Arkansas River Land, Reservoir and Canal company's ditch, T.C. Henry manager, starts at a point some three miles west of La Junta on the north side of the river, and covers about 165,000 acres in Otero, Bent and Prowers counties. It is nearly 120 miles in length, including the Prince Reservoir lateral in Prowers county.

T.C. Henry envisioned building a canal to transport irrigation water from the Arkansas River near Boone to the Kansas line and irrigate a million acres of land north of the Arkansas River. Mr. Henry started building the canal with his own money, but quickly sold it to the Bradbury family, who in turn sold it to the Colorado Canal Company. By 1891 the first water was released into the canal, but the original goal of irrigating a million acres was in reality irrigating 57,000 acres and the canal stopped in Crowley County. This irrigation system brought a burst of growth in the population of the area, and the dry prairie flourished.