



"View Southward of Seventh and Massachusetts Street [1890s]." Photograph courtesy of the Douglas County Historical Society/Watkins Museum of History, Lawrence, Kansas.

The Children of Abraham and Hannah: Grocer, Doctor, Entrepreneur: The Summerfields of Lawrence, Kansas

by David M. Katzman

The three adult children of Abraham and Hannah Eylenberg Summerfield, like their parents, had unusual careers for Kansas settlers. As Jews, as German-speaking immigrants, as strivers, as entrepreneurs, and as politicians, they led lives that transcended the boundaries of religion, ethnicity, gender, and place. At the same time, their story illustrates small-town, Jewish, midwestern, nineteenth-century life in which kinship ties were strong and families maintained Jewish identity. They were active in local German-speaking culture and strove for commercial success. Unlike nearly all small-town Kansas Jews in the nineteenth century, they were not part of a niche economy in which most Jews were merchants or peddlers concentrated in dry goods, notions, jewelry, tobacco, and liquor. Instead, the Summerfields were deeply involved in new technologies, like railroads and mining, and engaged in professions and university teaching. By the turn of the twentieth century, there were no Summerfields left in Kansas; they had moved on to larger Jewish communities. As sojourners their stories have been overlooked by local lore and town histories. Scholars of American Jewish life too have passed over most nineteenth-century Kansas and midwestern small-town Jewish communities, because they have focused on communities with synagogues.¹

David Katzman is professor emeritus of American Studies at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. He is researching Jewish settlement and life in nineteenth-century Kansas and published "William Allen White Attends a Lawrence Jewish Wedding, 1887" in the summer 2011 issue of *Kansas History* (see <http://www.kshs.org/pl/kansas-history-summer-2011/17222>).

The author is grateful to David Evans, a prodigious local researcher of Lawrence newspapers, for sharing his research, and to Katie Armitage, Andrea Katzman, and Elissa Sampson for reading and commenting on a draft of this article.

1. Hannah had five children, three of whom lived to adulthood. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, January 22, 1904. The nineteenth-century milieu of the Summerfields and their circle is mostly absent from the otherwise comprehensive study by Lee Shai Weissbach, *Jewish Life in Small-Town America: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005). Weissbach focuses mostly on the later, Russian/Polish immigrant communities and, like most scholars, uses the presence of a synagogue to define a community. Thus Weissbach excluded the literally hundreds of midwestern German-speaking Jewish merchant communities like the Summerfields' Eudora and Lawrence communities, which flourished in the late nineteenth century and never erected a synagogue during that time. See David M. Katzman, "William Allen White Attends a Lawrence Jewish Wedding, 1887," *Kansas History: A Journal of the Central Plains* 34 (Summer 2011): 142–55. Hal Rothman did pioneering work on Wichita Jews during that town's formative years, as it grew from a railhead for the cattle drive to a regional center; see Hal K. Rothman, "Building Community: The Jews of Wichita 1860–1900," *Kansas Quarterly* 25 (1993): 77–86, and Rothman, "Same Horse, New Wagon: Tradition and Assimilation Among the Jews of Wichita, 1865–1930," *Great Plains Quarterly* 15 (Spring 1995): 117–132. Jay M. Price's study of mid-twentieth-century Wichita provides a larger context for the earlier German-speaking Jews, noting their geographic mobility and kinship ties; see Price, "Jewish Community in Wichita, 1920–1970: Same Wagon, New Horses," *Great Plains Quarterly* 28 (Fall 2008): 293–320.



In the 1860s, the growing city of Lawrence, Kansas, attracted merchants hoping to benefit from the postwar economic boom. Massachusetts Street was the home of Summerfield & Jacobs, a grocery store and bakery that sold specialized goods, reminding recent immigrants of home. Abraham Summerfield and his son-in-law, J. H. Jacobs, opened five branches of the store in eastern Kansas. Stereograph by Alexander Gardner courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

Marcus Summerfield, the eldest son of Abraham and Hannah, and perhaps the most ambitious, preferred the title of "Doctor" though he practiced medicine for only a brief time. He was deeply involved in politics and spent much of his career on the public payroll. First, in Eudora, Marcus served as assistant postmaster, debt collector, and city clerk. Then in Lawrence, he was county coroner and clerk of the district court as well as a law professor at the state university. When not holding public office, he served as counsel for the J. B. Watkins Mortgage Company, the largest such company in the late nineteenth-century United States. In private practice with other political figures, Marcus represented utilities, mining companies, and railroads. One client was the Kansas City, Wyandotte, and Northwestern Railroad, of which his brother Elias was superintendent and his brother-in-law, Newman Erb, vice-president. He held office in a number of German societies and was much in demand as a German- or English-language orator. He served on the national educational committee of the Jewish Chautauqua Society and frequently lectured on Jewish topics. Born in Posen, Prussia, he lived in Chicago, Eudora, Little Rock, Denver, St. Louis, and New York City, though he always considered Lawrence, Kansas his home. The blue-eyed Summerfield men were imposing figures. Abraham was 5'8" tall, and sons Marcus 5'10"

and Elias 5'11." They towered over most of their peers; most Lawrence merchants were just over 5' in height. Fellow Eudorans and Laurentians Frederick Deichmann and Aaron Urbansky were 5'2" and 5'4" respectively.²

Elias Summerfield, the middle child, was often referred to by the honorific "Major" or "Colonel." This reflected his three-year Civil War service in the Illinois Volunteers (he was a private) and his role in running railroads. He mustered out of the army and joined the family in Lawrence, where he worked as a clerk. He moved to Litchfield, Illinois, serving a brief apprenticeship around 1870 in his Uncle Edward's dry goods store. That was the path to a career in the Jewish niche economy as a dry goods merchant. But when he returned to Lawrence he did not join the family bakery or open a clothing store. Instead, he used family political ties to clerk in the county treasurer's department. After that he traded lumber and other local products; he often appeared in Lawrence council records, selling goods to the city. He made his initial fortune in the 1870s starting as a junior member of the Melville Mining and Reduction Company. With a capital of \$120,000, the company sunk a tunnel and built a smelter in Silverton, Colorado. Elias was secretary and

2. The heights are from passport applications through Ancestry.com.

treasurer of the company, and he assisted in running the mine. The company held half interest in the “Empire” mine, and when they hit a rich vein of gray copper in 1877, they “had struck it rich,” as Elias wrote Marcus, then the attorney for the company. Elias began his railroad career in Arkansas, helping to start a railway. A decade later he rejoined the Batesville and Brinkley Railroad as superintendent for nearly two years. Back in Lawrence, he helped found the Lawrence Waterworks and became superintendent and a board member of the Kansas City, Wyandotte, and Northwestern Railroad. He saw the Northwestern line through receivership, and then he ran the U.S. operations of the American Debenture Company, an English-financed firm that constructed waterworks plants in American cities. He was receiver when it defaulted on its bonds. All of this made Elias a millionaire, and though he never ran for office, newspapers and politicians often proposed his candidacy. In the 1890s he was mentioned as a candidate for the U.S. Senate, and in 1898 a group pushed for Elias to become chairman of the state Republican Committee. Other than ad hoc positions, like managing Congressman Justin Bowersock’s first campaign, he never showed an interest in political office, either party or elective. But like Marcus, politics furthered Elias Summerfield’s career. Beginning in 1877, when he oversaw the insolvency of the St. Louis, Lawrence and Western Railroad, he built a lucrative career as a receiver. Courts approved and appointed receivers, and Elias owed his appointments both to his railroad and financial experience as well as to his political connections.³

Elias moved to New York City in the late 1890s, and he and his second wife’s names often appeared among the city’s Jewish elite in society and charity columns. He occupied his time as a philanthropist and capitalist. Without children of his own, Elias was the uncle that mentored his nephews and nieces. He accompanied his nephew Benny Jacobs to enroll at the U.S. Naval Academy; he hired Benny’s brother Solon Jacobs to work for him in the Arkansas railroad; and he financed Solon E. Summerfield’s venture into ribbons and silk hosiery that led to the Gotham Silk Hosiery Company. Abraham and Hannah’s youngest child, Minna (Wilhelminna), married a friend of the family, J. H. Jacobs, and the two ran a grocery in De Soto for a short time. Both then joined with her parents to run Summerfield & Jacobs, a Lawrence

3. (Lawrence, Kans.) *Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, August 2, 1876, July 1, 1877, September 8, 1877, October 5, 1879; (Lawrence, Kans.) *Daily Herald-Tribune*, August 18, 1885; *Kansas City Times*, December 24, 1891; *Kansas City Journal*, May 24, 1898; *Republican Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, January 16, 1877.

wholesale and retail grocery and bakery. Minna and her husband opened and ran branches in other Kansas towns.⁴

The Summerfield story in America began in 1850, when Abraham Summerfield migrated to the United States alone, leaving his wife and three children in Posen, then part of Prussia. Several generations of Summerfields had been merchants in Posen. We can assume that like his brother Edward (the only other Summerfield relative to migrate to America), Abraham attended common schools in Posen then continued with private tutors. He was a cigar maker in New York, where he Anglicized his name from “Sommerfeldt” to “Summerfield” in 1855, becoming a U.S. citizen before moving west. In Chicago he joined a German-speaking land company, *Neuer Ansiedlungs Verein*, whose goal was to buy land to start a new town and settlement. Members included both Jews and non-Jews. Marcus, Abraham’s eldest son, joined his father in Chicago in 1856. He worked for a year as a pipe fitter before father and son moved to Eudora, Kansas, where the company had acquired land and platted a town. The site on the Kansas and Wakarusa Rivers was seven miles east of Lawrence, the county seat, which was garnering national publicity as an antislavery stronghold.⁵

4. *Lawrence Herald-Tribune*, December 24, 1885; *Kansas City Times*, December 22, 1891; *Daily Herald-Tribune*, August 4, 1884, 4; (Lawrence, Kans.) *Daily World*, March 22, 1893, 4. Joseph Hyman Jacobs always used J. H. Jacobs.

5. “Edward Summerfield,” William Henry Perrin, *History of Bond and Montgomery Counties, Illinois* (Chicago: O. L. Baskin, 1882), 172, eBook at <https://archive.org/details/historyofbondmon/perr>; *Lawrence Daily Record*, November 29, 1889; J. Neale Carman, “Continental Europeans in Rural Kansas, 1854–1861,” in *Territorial Kansas: Studies Commemorating the Centennial* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1954), 178. For background on German-Jewish emigration and émigrés’ expectations see Sonja L. Meikel, “‘Salvation Comes from America:’ The United States in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*,” *American Jewish Archives* 60 (Nos. 1–2, 2008): 1–23, and the earlier Stephen M. Lowenstein, “The View from the Old World: German-Jewish Perspectives,” in *The Americanization of the Jews*, ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 19–40. Though the Summerfields usually listed their birthplace as Posen, and occasionally as the Kingdom of Prussia, *Die Germania* described Abraham as emigrating “from Russia to New York in 1850.” The English-language *Lawrence Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune* of July 13, 1880, described his birthplace as “Prussian Poland.” Jews from Posen found it easier to migrate, and probably, these “Polish” Jews were more numerous than other Jewish immigrants from the German states. For an interesting, brief discussion, see William M. Kramer and Norton B. Stern, “Polish Preeminence in Nineteenth Century Jewish Immigration,” *Western States Jewish History* 17 (January 1985): 151–155. *Die Germania* translated by Ursula E. Huelsbergen, and reprinted in *Complete Tombstone Census of Douglas County Kansas* (Lawrence, Kans.: Douglas County Genealogical Society, 1989), 2:428; *Lawrence Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, July 13, 1880.

Abraham and Marcus were among the earliest settlers in the Eudora venture. Abraham Summerfield bought town lots in Eudora; most settlers were interested in farming and bought rural tracts. Abraham opened the first general store and saloon, and was part of the Jewish community that soon organized in Eudora. Abraham was president, and Marcus served as the first secretary. When Kansas incorporated Eudora, the elder Summerfield was elected to the first city council in 1859 and served as the second postmaster from 1858 to 1860. Elias Summerfield came to the United States next, in 1859, and in December 1860 Hannah and their daughter Minna came to Eudora. Hannah had been born in Pleschen, Posen, and she and Abraham wed there in 1841. At her death, the *Lawrence Daily Journal* recalled her as “an exceptionally bright woman. Her intellect was keen.” Marcus had been working for Eudora collecting debts, and when the city clerk, an elected officer, resigned in December 1861, the council elected Marcus Summerfield to replace him. Marcus resigned in January 1862, presumably to begin medical school.⁶

The City of Eudora could not match the fortunes of the expanding commercial center and county seat of Lawrence. Many merchants left Eudora for brighter prospects in Lawrence even though Quantrill’s raid had ravaged the city in 1863. As a trading center, Lawrence boomed during the Civil War. Kansas offered an opportunity to get in on the ground floor; a Jewish merchant could open a store in Kansas rather than be a peddler further east. In Lawrence in the 1860s and 1870s, Jacob House, Wolf Bergman, brothers-in-law Meir Newmark and Charles Levi, brothers-in-law Asher Cohn and Isadore Bernstein, A. Katzenstein, and the Steinberg brothers opened clothing and dry goods stores, while David Prager and Alex Marks were jewelers.

When the Summerfields moved to Lawrence during the Civil War, the city had a population of less than four thousand inhabitants, but it was growing again as it recovered from Quantrill’s raid. With their new son-in-law, they opened Summerfield & Jacobs as a wholesale and

retail bakery and grocer. They advertised a sophisticated variety of groceries: “Holland Herring, Limburg Cheese, Salmon, Halibut, Pickles, &c,” but they built their reputation as a bakery. Whether it was “family bread” or sophisticated Vienna loaves or pies, they bragged that they “make the best bread in town,” selling more loaves to hotels and boarding houses than they did to consumers. At its peak, Summerfield & Jacobs had five branches in eastern Kansas, from mining towns in the southeast to Clinton, near Lawrence. The partners were all family.⁷

In Lawrence, as in Eudora, the Summerfields were among the most prominent Jewish families. When Lawrence organized its first Jewish community in 1868 and took possession of the Jewish cemetery of Eudora, Abraham Summerfield headed the list of incorporators. When the Mercantile Agency evaluated businesses in Lawrence, its agents gave Summerfield & Jacobs superlative ratings. Their reports, based on interviews with local informants as well as the prejudices of the agents themselves, generally denigrated Jews, but their assessments reflected the Summerfields’ high esteem. During the war Marcus had attended the Cincinnati School of Eclectic Medicine and then served a residency in New York at Columbia University Medical School before returning to Lawrence. Dr. Summerfield hung out a shingle not only as a doctor but also advertised in the *Israelite* that he was a *mohel* (someone who performed Jewish ritual circumcisions). Soon afterwards he ran successfully for county coroner, serving for two years, and began a political career that would make him a leading local Republican.⁸

7. J. H. Jacobs and Minna Summerfield wed in 1864; he was thirty-four and she was sixteen. Minna Summerfield was a prize; she was one of the few unmarried Jewish women in the region. Most of the Jewish settlers were young men; few in the newly settled areas came as entire families, much fewer with teenage children. Obituary from (Lawrence, Kans.) *Die Germania*, which gives the date they moved to Lawrence as 1863, while the *Lawrence Daily Journal* has them moving in 1864. Abraham had renewed his Eudora liquor license in November 1864, so they probably moved that year rather than in 1863. *Die Germania* translation in Huelsbergen, *Complete Tombstone Census of Douglas County*, 2:428; Eudora Book of Commissions [p. 28], “liquor licenses issued in the year 1864,” City of Eudora Records, vol. 4, Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas; (Lawrence) *Kansas Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1867, July 8, 1868. On the pattern of brothers migrating and kinship relations, see Rudolf Glanz, “The German Jewish Mass Emigration: 1820–1880,” *American Jewish Archives* 22 (April 1970): 49–66.

8. “Summerfield & Jacobs,” *Kansas*, Vol. 8, p. 75, R.G. Dun & Co. Credit Report Volumes, Baker Library Historical Collections, Harvard Business School. On credit report bias, see David A. Gerber, “Cutting out Shylock: Elite Anti-Semitism and the Quest for Moral Order in the Mid-Nineteenth-Century Market Place,” *Journal of American History* 69 (December 1982): 615–637, and Rowena Olegario, *A Culture of Credit: Embedding Trust and Transparency in American Business* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); *Israelite*, December 2, 1866.

6. *Die Deborah*, July 10, 1860; Eudora City Council Minutes, March 10, 1859, City of Eudora Records, vol. 2, Council Minutes in German, February 26, 1859–May 7, 1860, Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence. I am indebted to my research assistant, Dr. Andrea Weiss, who researched the Eudora records for me, translated them from the mid-nineteenth-century German into English, and improved my translations of *Die Deborah* articles; Eudora City Council Minutes, December 2, 1861, October 7, 1861, January 23, 1862; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, Jan. 22, 1904. August Bondi, who was closely associated with John Brown, established the town of Walker (later Greeley), Kansas, and his appointment and service as postmaster preceded Abraham Summerfield.

Evidence suggests that the Summerfield and Jacobs women were as active as the men in running the business. In the 1875 state census, the Jacobs children were living in the Summerfield household in Lawrence, but their parents—Minna (nee Summerfield) and Joseph Jacobs—were listed as living in Carbondale, Osage County, Kansas, where they operated a branch of Summerfield & Jacobs. At another time Minna and Joseph lived in Clinton, running the branch there. In his last years in the 1870s, Abraham Summerfield was ill and often sat on a chair at the entrance to the bakery, acting as a greeter rather than manager or baker, while his wife Hannah ran the Lawrence store and the Jacobses oversaw the branches. After Abraham's death in 1880, business continued as usual. Hannah's role as the Summerfield of Summerfield & Jacobs was publically acknowledged, and she continued to run the store with her son-in-law and daughter. The business closed when Hannah retired in 1894, and Minna, ill with "muscular atrophy" since 1891, was no longer able to work in the store. J. H. Jacobs, not yet ready to retire, then began a second career at age sixty-three, as manager of the Lawrence Waterworks. When Hannah died in 1904, one of the local papers praised her as "a woman beloved for her qualities of head and heart."⁹

The Summerfield women were not unique in Lawrence. Women ran households and worked at domestic jobs, paid or unpaid; others found work teaching. Some women worked in Massachusetts Street (Lawrence's main street) retail shops, though a greater percentage of Jewish than Gentile women were found there. Jewish women often were partners with their husbands or worked in family dry goods stores serving other women by selling notions, women's clothing, millinery, and intimate wear. However, what distinguished the Summerfield women was that they worked in a Massachusetts Street grocery store and bakery, a role not ordinarily available to women workers, and helped run it.¹⁰

While the Summerfield women probably surpassed what most women ordinarily were able to do in nineteenth-century small towns, the brothers' ambition was not so bound by convention. Marcus, though by contem-

porary standards successful, seemed ever restless. His ambition led him to move often, and he lived in Kansas, Ohio, New York, Arkansas, Colorado, and Missouri. He had multiple careers as a doctor, lawyer, politician, and professor, and also worked in railroads, mining, and finance. His peripatetic career suggests that he remained unsatisfied all his life; he never rested on his laurels—which were many—but continued with new ventures in new places. When his younger brother Elias retired around 1900, Marcus was starting a new career in Denver.

The first glimpse of his ambition is as an eighteen-year-old in Kansas Territory in a published letter. In November 1860, Marcus, as secretary, sent the minutes of the Eudora Jewish community to the *Israelite*, a national Jewish paper with a wide midwestern circulation, published by Rabbi Isaac M. Wise out of Cincinnati. He included a poignant personal appeal in response to Wise's desire to recruit students for his proposed Hebrew college. Ambitious to attend college, Marcus appealed to the *Israelite's* editor or readers to sponsor him in the proposed college:

I propose to any one who will pay my way through the college, clothe and board me, to work for him through the whole course, and for one year after. I can commence right off; if wanted, at anything for which I will be competent. . . . I have a great desire to go there to study [at the proposed college].—If it would only be possible I would be the happiest of the living I believe. But

an Ethnic Middle Class: Portland Jewry over Four Generations (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982); recent general histories of Jewish women by Hasia Diner and Joyce Antler, and the collections and work of the Jewish Women's Archive have opened up tremendous new avenues: Hasia R. Diner and Beryl Lief Benderly, *Her Works Praise Her: A History of Jewish Women in America From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 2002); Joyce Antler, *You Never Call! You Never Write!: A History of the Jewish Mother* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Jeanne E. Abrams, *Jewish Women Pioneering the Frontier Trail: A History in the American West* (New York: New York University Press, 2006). In a study of midwestern "business ladies" in this period, Lucy Eldersveld Murphy concluded that "the majority lived in the new towns and smaller cities that were sprouting across the Midwest." Though their business careers took them into the marketplace, "most were enough immersed in middle-class women's culture to be considered 'ladies' by midwestern standards." "Business Ladies: Midwestern Women and Enterprise, 1850–1880," *Journal of Women's History* 3 (Spring 1991): 65. Murphy defined the Midwest as the Old Northwest plus Iowa. Nonetheless, inadequate attention has been paid to women in German-speaking merchant communities. More than other German-speaking women, immigrant Jewish women were more likely to work outside of the home, while the next generation of women were more likely to continue formal education, especially secondary and post-secondary schooling. Midwestern state institutions opened their doors to women as students and faculty long before other schools.

9. *Lawrence Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, July 13, 1880; *Daily World*, January 3, 1894; *Lawrence Gazette*, January 26, 1894; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, March 23, 1898; *Daily World*, January 20, 1904; Kansas State Census, 1875, Osage County, Carbondale; Kansas State Census, 1875, Douglas County, Lawrence.

10. Increasingly we are beginning to learn more about the role of Jewish women in communities. The pioneering work by Bill Toll in his studies of Trinidad, Colorado and Portland, Oregon: *Women, Men, and Ethnicity: Essays on the Structure and Thought of American Jewry* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991), and *The Making of*

I have hardly a hope; as I have tried and tried to get some education but never could I reach it.

Rabbi Wise interjected in the published letter: "(This may account for the bad composition of this letter.)" As if to anticipate criticism of his lack of mastery of English, Marcus showed a command of the language and his sense of humor by punning on the rabbi's name:

It seems that the proverb "They that seek wisdom will be wise," is not always correct; as I have tried and tried to get wise, but never could I get so. I would be glad if I only could get under the protection of "wise," then, I do believe, I would get wise. Now, dear Doctor, if you could and would help me to the above, I think you will add one more good act to the many that you have done already and the reward thereof will surely follow.¹¹

Marcus's appeal for the rabbi or a reader to perform a *mitzvah* (a good deed) by sponsoring him was premature; Hebrew Union College would not open for more than a decade. But the fortunes of the Summerfield family soon changed; Marcus probably earned enough as a collector for the City of Eudora, and briefly as city clerk, to go to medical school at the Eclectic College of Medicine, Cincinnati, which regularly advertised in Kansas newspapers. In 1859 the school charged per session (semester) \$5 for matriculation, \$20 for tuition, and \$5 for a "Demonstrator's Ticket," as well as \$25 for graduation. His father also prospered at the time, enough to assist Marcus, if necessary, in Cincinnati and New York.¹²

Upon graduation in 1864, Dr. Summerfield moved to New York for a year's residency at Columbia University Medical School. By 1866 he was in Lawrence, advertising in the *Israelite* that he was available to perform ritual circumcisions. His medical practice was brief; in 1867 he was elected county coroner. He was the first elected Jewish official in Lawrence. The role was a very public one; the coroner was consulted on all deaths, and where necessary, formed an inquest jury. Then as now, newspapers gave prime coverage to unexplained deaths, and Summerfield's name appeared regularly in the local press. He was also establishing a reputation as a public orator. At the 1869 all-day July 4th celebration in Lawrence, hosted by the

"German Turners," Dr. Summerfield was among the featured speakers.¹³

Law and politics went hand in hand, and his role as coroner gave him legal experience that further whet his appetite for the law. While serving as coroner and a local physician, he read law in his spare time. In November 1869, Summerfield was admitted to the bar. "Mr. Summerfield (we have always heretofore called him doctor) is a young man of education and ability," the *Republican Daily Journal* commented, "and, we doubt not, will make his mark as an attorney."¹⁴

The law, not medicine, would define Marcus's career. For forty years he was an active Republican politico. Although Jewish merchants in small towns often served on city councils and boards of education as part of their civic involvement, Marcus Summerfield was a career politician, running for office or seeking nominations over three decades. His legal career was often intertwined with politics. Beginning with his election as county coroner, Marcus continuously sought nominations for elective offices. When he formed partnerships, both times they were with other political figures; both of his partners would serve as Lawrence mayors. When he returned to Lawrence after a three-year sojourn in Little Rock, Arkansas, he resumed his political career and worked for the J. B. Watkins Mortgage Company. In 1882 and 1884 he was elected clerk of the county court. The clerkship was an influential position; it controlled the court docket and recommended lawyers for court-appointed legal work (probate, guardianships, etc.). While a clerk, Summerfield became a professor of law at the University of Kansas Law School in 1886, the first Jewish faculty member at the university. In the 1880s and 1890s newspapers mentioned him as a possible attorney general candidate.

Marcus's short venture in Little Rock was significant. Soon after he and Sarah Erb wed in Little Rock in 1875, he settled there as a partner with two brothers-in-law, Newman and Jacob Erb. The Erb family had been part of the Eudora settlement, and the Summerfields and Erbs would work closely together over the next century. Neman Erb started out as a lawyer for railroad interests

13. *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Columbia College for the Year 1865-1866* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1866), 98; *Israelite*, December 2, 1866; (Lawrence, Kans.) *Republican Daily Journal*, July 6, 1869. Dr. Summerfield was not the only Jewish physician acting as a mohel in Kansas. Long-time Leavenworth Jewish physician Charles C. Shoyer wrote the *American Israelite* in 1881 recommending substituting absorbent cotton for lint in dressing ritual circumcisions. "To Mohelim," *American Israelite*, March 11, 1881, 294.

14. *Republican Daily Journal*, November 10, 1869.

11. *Israelite*, November 30, 1860, 174.

12. (Lawrence, Kans.) *Herald of Freedom*, January 1, 1859.



Marcus Summerfield spent much of his life working in the legal profession in various capacities. While serving as the county coroner he studied law at night and was admitted to the bar in 1869. One of his prominent clients was the J. B. Watkins Mortgage Company. The Lawrence headquarters of the company, where Marcus would have worked, was housed in this stately structure after its completion in the mid-1880s.

and became a national figure as a railroad executive and investor. Marcus represented a number of Erb's railroads. His brief venture in Arkansas and as law partner with the Erbs took him away from his political base in Lawrence, but he soon moved back to Kansas and resumed his political and legal careers.

Further distinguishing the Summerfields, beyond baking, the law, and politics, was their involvement in new technologies: railroads, utilities, and mining. While midwestern Jewish merchants supported local railroad ventures as boosters and eastern Jewish financial houses were involved in new technologies as investment houses, the Summerfield brothers operated, managed, and represented such ventures.

They were involved on a day-to-day basis with railroads.

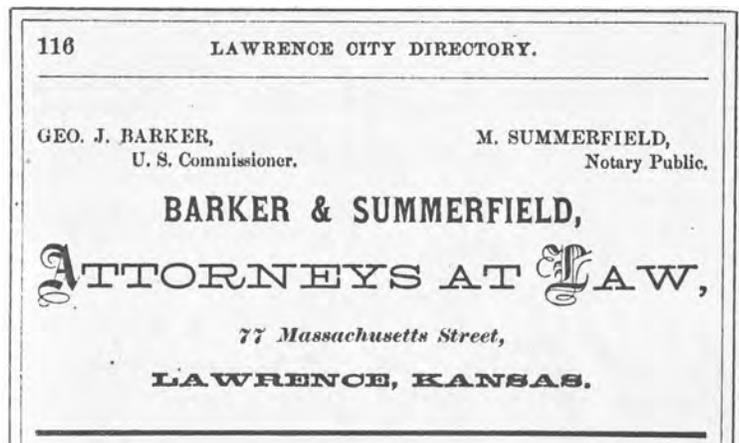
The cities in borders of settlement, an ever-shifting westward area between the Mississippi and the Rockies, offered entrepreneurs opportunities that the East did not. These areas offered cheaper land for farming, lower start-up costs for merchants, more open access to the political process and government, greater chances for starting over, and a more fluid social order. Immigrants and Jews in particular had greater chances to participate and succeed (as well as to fail) than they had in Europe. The result was that while many Jews occupied niche economic roles—as peddlers, as clothing and dry goods merchants, as jewelers, and later as liquor or scrap dealers, etc.—the newly settled western states and territories offered men like the Summerfields chances to

go beyond the proscribed economic niches. Thus the Summerfields were in railroads, mining, utilities, the professions, and education. They participated more broadly in the American economy than did most other immigrants and most Jews.¹⁵

Railroads offered an alternative to the Jewish economic niche. The story of American railroads is often told as a heroic one—the achievements of railroad barons like the Vanderbilts or Goulds, or railroads creating a continental nation, or fostering industrialization and urbanization—or a more notorious one like the railroad’s tentacles suffocating farmers. Yet it was most often a local story of bust rather than boom, of track never laid, of investments gone sour, or of communities fleeced. This was aggravated by the boom and bust cycles of the late nineteenth century. Like the internet bubble at the end of the twentieth century, for every Microsoft, Google, Amazon, or Cisco that fulfilled dreams and created corporate giants, there were hundreds if not thousands of ventures—dot.coms and railroads—that deflated boosters’ hopes and ruined investors, that raised enormous amounts of capital but never earned a penny of income. Railroad failure was so common that often lawyers and receivers made more money than investors.

In the late 1870s, a second railroad boom took shape. Post-Civil War expansion and government subsidies had spurred a boom that subsided in the hard times of the 1870s. As historian Richard White has noted, a second boom of overbuilding began in 1879, as railroads competed to form, through construction and mergers, transcontinental lines. According to White, rail building exceeded freight and passenger demand. Factors other

15. For a discussion on the niche role of Jews in the American economy, see the chapters in Rebecca Kobrin, ed., *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2012), especially Ira Katznelson, “Two Exceptionalisms: Points of Departure for Studies of Capitalism and Jews in the United States,” 12–31. Hasia Diner in her sweeping synthesis of mid-nineteenth-century American Jewry and Ewa Morawska in her micro study of a Pennsylvania town affirm the niche pattern. “In just about every American Jewish community of this period,” Diner concludes, “the vast majority of families made a livelihood in small business, especially clothing and the closely related field of dry goods.” Morawska, as did Diner, noticed the niche role as merchants or peddlers. It meant that Jews were often more in competition with each other than with Gentile merchants. Hasia R. Diner, *A Time for Gathering: The Second Migration 1820–1880* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), 3, 61, 76; Ewa Morawska, “A Replica of the ‘Old-Country’ Relationship in the Ethnic Niche: East European Jews and Gentiles in Small-town Western Pennsylvania, 1880s–1930s,” *American Jewish History* 77 (September 1987): 27–86; and *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890–1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).



Marcus Summerfield opened a law office in Lawrence in 1880 on Massachusetts Street, not far from Summerfield & Jacobs. Marcus entered into law partnerships twice in Kansas; both times his partners were notable figures in Kansas’s Republican Party. His partner in this entry from the city directory, George J. Barker, became the mayor of Lawrence for one term in 1887 and was elected to the office for a second time in 1907.

than demand influenced the expansion. New rail lines raised the value of adjacent land and minerals as well as served to keep out or undercut a rival rail line. Especially important was Jay Gould’s attempt in the late 1880s and early 1890s to consolidate lines into the Missouri Pacific and Southern Pacific as rivals to the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and the Northern Pacific. By the end of 1869 the United States had 161,000 miles of rail, 20 percent built within the previous four years. Kansas had 2,400 railroad miles in 1878; by 1890 it had grown to 8,900 miles.¹⁶

Railroad investment in midwestern towns not only attracted those interested in the latest technology or looking for personal gain but also had a more fundamental civic and communal appeal: town boosters saw railroads as a lifeline to survival if not to grow the local economy. Financiers and rail entrepreneurs competed with con artists for the wallets of local elites and subsidies from governments. In the nineteenth century, any market town or group of merchants might be lured by corporate shells calling themselves railroads, promising to link the town in any direction to nearby and distant cities. Hope trumped common sense so often that some midwestern states, like Missouri, first banned state investments

16. Richard White, *Railroaded: The Transcontinentals and the Making of Modern America* (New York: Norton, 2011), 209–214. See also Julius Grodinsky, *Transcontinental Railway Strategies, 1869–1993: A Study of Businessmen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), passim. For a more traditional view of railroads, emphasizing business barons and rational decisions, see Maury Klein, *Unfinished Business: The Railroad in American Life* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1994).

in railroads, and then in 1875 extended the ban to counties and municipalities. Towns had to be protected against the lure of such risks. In Kansas, the Board of Railroad Commissioners had to adjudicate complaints by citizens and towns as railroads failed to provide or maintain promised services. Guilford, Kansas, had raised \$22,000 in bonds but the Missouri Pacific failed to keep an agent at the station. Similarly, Tasco Township, Sheridan County, had raised \$18,000 for railroad bonds and had to appeal to the railroad commission to get the Union Pacific to fulfill its obligations.¹⁷

At the local level, entrepreneurs continued to spur investment not through successfully operating railroads but by starting local feeder roads and hoping to sell to a larger rail system. “‘Sharpers’ were ready to build a local line,” Richard White noted, “then force one or another company to buy it to keep it out of a rival’s hands.” The Vanderbilt and Gould interests were putting together national trunk lines by buying local railroads. As in the internet bubble, when the greatest profits were to be made by selling startups either to larger firms or to traders through public offerings, railroad entrepreneurs and investors hoped to profit by the sale of the line itself.¹⁸

In this environment, the Summerfield family came to be aligned with the new technology of the railroad. Marcus became involved as a lawyer, while Elias became a “railroad man.” Family and professional ties often merged. The Summerfield brothers worked closely with Marcus’s brother-in-law, Newman Erb, who was perhaps the most prominent of Jewish railroad men in the nineteenth-century United States. In the 1880s and early 1890s, Elias and Erb ran the Kansas City, Wyandotte and Northwestern Railroad, referred to as the Northwestern. Elias as superintendent ran the line while Marcus’s law firm represented the company (railroads were frequently in court). Elias was involved in many joint ventures with Erb, from railroads, mining and waterworks to traction companies in Kansas. Erb gained fame as a rival of Jay Gould, and Newman Erb, known as “a doctor of sick railroads,” was a household name at one time. In 1915 when Erb fell ill, newspapers carried reports of his status on their front pages. Stock and bond fluctuations ran in the millions of dollars, according to

17. P. Rhodes, *A Missouri Railroad Pioneer: The Life of Louis Houck* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008), 67; Kansas, Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Twelfth Annual Report 1894* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Co., 1895), 71–72, 75–76, 88–89, 89–90.

18. White, *Railroaded*, 214.

the *New York Times*, as regular bulletins reported on his condition—yet he is rarely even mentioned by historians. Summerfields were directors on many Erb boards.¹⁹

What distinguished the Summerfields and their kin from other merchants and town boosters was that they made a career out of railroads. Many Summerfields were “railroad men.” The Summerfield family sent most of its men into the railroad business—they built and ran railroads, invested in urban streetcar companies, and were superintendents and directors of rail lines. Nephew Solon Jacobs worked and ran railroads in Arkansas and Alabama, and nephew Benjamin Jacobs, like Marcus both a lawyer and physician, dabbled in railroad ventures in Kansas City. The Summerfields found lucrative rewards not only from running successful roads but also as court-appointed receivers, thus turning floss into gold.

Elias Summerfield entered railroad work when he got a job in Brinkley, Arkansas, in 1876 and later was superintendent of the small line. He gave his nephew Solon Jacobs his first railroad position with the Brinkley line in 1884, leading to a twenty-year career in railroads in the South. Marcus’s brothers-in-law ran streetcar lines in Kansas, and both Elias and Marcus were investors. Louis Erb ran the Leavenworth streetcars and at one time held the Lawrence and Salina streetcar franchises. As a physician in Kansas City, Ben Jacobs was part of a start-up street railway line in 1914. Even Marcus’s son, Solon, an industrialist and hosiery industry leader, served on the board of the Ann Arbor Railroad in the 1920s; his uncle Newman Erb was president.²⁰

Kansas newspapers gave extensive coverage to the Northwestern line. For much of its independent life, Elias Summerfield ran it as superintendent. He became involved with it in the late 1880s; the Northwestern hoped to become the dominant line in the eastern third of the state, making it indispensable to the continental lines.

19. *New York Times*, September 16, 1915. The *Times* continued daily coverage of Erb’s condition for more than a week. Quotation from *Boston Herald*, March 26, 1925, 26. The connection of Jews and railroads in the United States, especially at the regional and local levels, is an inadequately explored area. Goldman’s dissertation on Texas merchants discusses Jewish involvement in railroads, but in combining it with investments in wharves, warehouses, financial institutions (banking and insurance), and growing cities, she does not appreciate how it represents discontinuity with other Jewish economic activity. See chapter four, “After the Conflagration: From Shopkeepers to Community Builders,” Marilyn Kay Cheatham Goldman, “Jewish Fringes Texas Fabric: Nineteenth Century Jewish Merchants Living Texas Reality and Myth,” (PhD diss., Texas A&M, 2003), 95–143.

20. (Topeka) *Kansas Semi-Weekly Capital*, March 19, 1901; *Western (Wakeeney) Kansas World*, June 9, 1894; *Kansas City Times*, November 13, 1894; *Kansas City Times*, January 17, 1895.

Summerfield extended the Northwestern to the north, founding the eponymous town of Summerfield, Kansas, in Marshall County. The Northwestern then crossed the state line to Beatrice, Nebraska. It went to Carbondale, the mining district south of Topeka, and chartered the Kansas City, Lawrence, and Wichita Railroad as a subsidiary, intending to reach the growing city of Wichita, the gateway to Oklahoma Territory, and eventually Texas. In 1889 the Northwestern applied to list its stock on the New York Stock Exchange, but the line had expanded too rapidly. They were over optimistic about subsidies from towns along the planned expansion and underestimated the opposition from competing lines, which, in some cases, denied them access to stations. By 1890 the line had defaulted on its bonds and Newman Erb became receiver while Elias continued to run the line. The Kansas City, Lawrence and Wichita Railroad was a pipe dream; it had proposed building 157 miles of rail, but by 1894 it had just 31.9 miles. In 1892 Jay Gould purchased the Northwestern, absorbing it into the Missouri Pacific.²¹

Elias Summerfield left the Northwestern to run the American Debenture Company. Elias had been involved in urban waterworks ventures in Lawrence and other cities, so when English investors sought to invest in urban utilities, especially waterworks, and to issue bonds, Elias Summerfield was a natural choice to run the firm. But the Chicago-based company was forced into insolvency amidst the hard times in 1894 and the insolvency of its New York bond house, Coffin and Stanton. Elias Summerfield then became the court appointed receiver for American Debenture. Fortunately, its assets exceeded its debts. Though a frequent receiver, Summerfield was more involved in running companies (as with the Topeka Waterworks and the Northwestern line) than merely as an investor or speculator.²²

The Summerfields benefitted from family ties. Marcus's marriage to Sarah Erb cemented an already close relationship with the Erbs, and the two families worked closely in business. As a lawyer, Marcus Summerfield got many clients through the Erbs. In Little Rock, Dr. Summerfield had been secretary of the Erb-led Ouachita Valley Railway Company, and in Lawrence, Hutchins and Summerfield were counsel for the Northwestern line. Elias,



Most small-town Kansas Jewish immigrants worked as merchants or peddlers, but the Summerfields were different. Elias Summerfield, pictured here, worked for a short time in his uncle's dry goods store in Illinois but soon quit, moved to Lawrence, Kansas, and obtained a position in city government. A brilliant entrepreneur, he branched out into mining and railroads, and helped found the Lawrence Waterworks, quickly becoming a millionaire. Even as he grew wealthy, Elias Summerfield remained close to his extended family, often engaging in business ventures with his family. Photograph courtesy of the Douglas County Historical Society/Watkins Museum of History, Lawrence, Kansas.

former Lawrence Mayor Justin Bowersock (then a state representative) and C. P. Brotherton, Elias's chief assistant on the Northwestern line, invested in the Erb-led Kansas City, Lawrence, and Wichita Railroad. Elias Summerfield worked closely with Erb on a number of waterworks and rail and traction companies. Marcus was attorney for the Lawrence Water Company. In 1922 Marcus's son, Solon, garnering a national reputation as head of the Gotham Hosiery Company, joined the board of directors of the Erb-led Ann Arbor Railroad Company, whose major asset was the Lake Michigan ferries. The Ann Arbor's investment banker was W. J. Wollman, formerly of Leavenworth's

21. White, *Railroaded*, 214; *Wichita Eagle*, May 22, 1889, 4, June 1, 1889, 4, June 2, 1889, 5, June 23, 1889, 7, July 4, 1889, 4; *Kansas City Times*, April 6, 1891, 8; *Kansas Semi-Weekly Capital* (Topeka), Aug. 28, 1896, 3; *Lawrence Gazette*, May 23, 1889, 2; Kansas, Board of Railroad Commissioners, *Twelfth Annual Report 1894*, 285.

22. *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1894; *New York Tribune*, October 7, 1894; *New York Times*, October 11, 1894, 7.

Jewish community. Wollman represented Bache and Company as managing partner on the Ann Arbor Board, and then after 1916 he represented his own firm.²³

There is no evidence that anti-Semitism was ever a factor in the public, entrepreneurial, or professional careers of the Summerfields. The Mercantile Agency gave the family strong, positive ratings. In the public arena, opponents of the Summerfields attacked them but never used their religion against them. Elias was accused of being part of a fraudulent scheme after he left the county treasurer's office, but it turned out to be a bookkeeping error. Twenty years later Populist John W. Leedy, who successfully ran for governor with Democratic endorsement, accused Elias and others of watering the stock of the Northwestern line and profiting from its sale to Jay Gould, but there was never a hint of anti-Semitism. Even in 1890, when Marcus ran for county attorney on a Republican ticket aligned with prohibition, the attacks were all political. Democrats needed candidate Marcus Summerfield for personally disagreeing with his party's stand endorsing prohibition. The Democratic *Lawrence Gazette* editorialized, "The Doctor has always been an anti-prohibitionist, but he can not gull the anti-prohibitionists or Germans to vote this year." Another local paper reprinted a translated *Die Germania* editorial acknowledging German-speaking criticism of the Republicans. Nonetheless, *Die Germania* endorsed Summerfield; he would enforce the law, but liberally, and they believed it was important to have a German-speaking county attorney because, "Germans must necessarily consult with him about county affairs." The Republicans met a "political cyclone" in the election. Summerfield suffered his only electoral loss; the Republican endorsement of prohibition split its base at a time when Populism was rising. Yet anti-Semitism never raised its head. In 1877 when the Grand Union Hotel in fashionable Saratoga Springs, New York, adopted a policy of Gentiles only, turning away banker Joseph Seligman and his family, the *Lawrence Republican Daily Journal* joined the chorus of editorials across the country condemning anti-Semitism. The paper accused Judge Henry Hilton and the A. T. Stewart estate of "the meanest and most stupid thing the public has witnessed for many a long day."²⁴

23. (Little Rock) *Arkansas Gazette*, March 28, 1880; *Lawrence Gazette*, April 10, 1890; *Lawrence Gazette*, May 23, 1889; *Kansas City Times*, June 17, 1894.

24. *Lawrence Gazette*, October 22, 1885; *Lawrence Gazette*, October 16, 1890; *Germania* editorial reprinted in the *Lawrence Daily Journal*, October

In Eudora and Lawrence, the Summerfields were stalwarts of the Jewish community. They were among the organizers of Eudora's Jewish community, and Abraham Summerfield was its first president. When Eudora donated ten lots for a community cemetery in 1859, Councilman Summerfield noted the presence of the Jewish community and that they did not have their own religious ground. Since Judaism forbade burial with non-Jews, Summerfield explained, he proposed that one of the ten lots be given to the Jewish community as a burial ground. The council approved Summerfield's suggestion. The matter did not end there. On October 13, the council reconsidered the decision giving the Jewish community a lot, but it was affirmed provided that they build their own fence. Summerfield resigned from the council on October 24 (probably in deference to Marcus's rising political career), and at the next council meeting, a councilman again asked to reconsider giving the Jewish community a lot for burials. The council tabled the motion.²⁵

The Summerfields were also a link between the local and national Jewish communities. Abraham, as a

24, 1890; *Lawrence Daily Record*, November 5, 1890; *Lawrence Gazette* Sept. 18, 1890; *Republican Daily Journal*, October 24, 1877; *Kansas Semi-Weekly Capital*, August 28, 1896; *Lawrence Gazette*, September 25, 1885; *Republican Daily Journal*, June 23, 1877. Ewa Morawska, in *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America*, first noted the pattern of the local press treating Jewish issues sympathetically and empathetically. See also Katzman, "William Allen White Attends a Lawrence Jewish Wedding," 154-55, for the coverage of Jewish merchants and their families in the local press. That in reconstructing the lives of the Summerfields the author had to rely so heavily on local newspaper accounts reflects their absence from traditional histories. Exceptions to ignoring Jewish merchants in Lawrence and Eudora are found in Katja Rampelmann, "Small Town Germans: The Germans in Lawrence, Kansas, from 1854 to 1918," (master's thesis, University of Kansas, 1993); Carol Buhler Francis, whose ownership of the building of a former Jewish merchant, Jacob House, led her to explore the family in her history of the building, *The House Building: My Search For Its Foundations* (Lawrence, Kans.: Transomworks Press, 1990); and the various editions of the history of Eudora, produced by the city, of which the latest version is *City of Eudora Sesquicentennial Anniversary Edition* (2007). In its discussion and acknowledgment of Jewish pioneers and settlers and their community, it is unusual.

25. *Die Deborah*, July 20, 1860; Eudora City Council Minutes, September 26, 1859, October 13, 1859, October 24, 1859, October 30, 1859. This reference to the requirements of Jewish burial as well as the advertisements for a *shochet* are among the few documentary references to Jewish religious life or ritual that the author uncovered in the lives of the Summerfields. Abraham obviously was concerned about traditional Jewish ritual in calling for a Jewish burial ground, in recruiting a *shochet*, in heading the incorporation of the Lawrence Jewish community, and in his own burial in Leavenworth's Jewish cemetery (though his sons later reinterred his body in Lawrence's secular Oak Hill Cemetery). Jonathan Sarna describes three strategies that Jews debated and took in maintaining Judaism. The path that the Summerfields seemed to follow was that "community and kinship, rather than rituals and faith, should form the new basis for Jewish life." This was another freedom that the

subscriber to the *Israelite*, played that role in Eudora. Marcus Summerfield sent the *Israelite* notice of the Jewish community and when in August 1863 the congregation advertised for a *shochet* (ritual slaughterer) and *hazan* (leader of services) for the high holidays, Abraham Summerfield placed the ad. The following year, when the community again placed an ad for a *shochet*, Marcus Summerfield, then a medical student in Cincinnati, was listed as a local contact.²⁶

When the Eudora community disbanded and transferred its cemetery to the newly formed Lawrence community—Bene Yisrael—Abraham’s name written in bold script led the list of incorporators. When Abraham Summerfield died in 1880, he was the first Jewish resident of Lawrence to be buried in the Leavenworth Jewish Cemetery—the Sons of Truth—the oldest and most active at the time of Kansas’s Jewish burial grounds. In the 1890s Marcus served on the Educational Committee of the Jewish Chautauqua Society. Sarah Erb Summerfield, an early member of the National Council of Jewish Women, organized the Lawrence chapter in 1895 and attended the national convention in Chicago. All the Summerfields who lived in New York—Elias and Selina E. Summerfield, Abraham and Sarah Erb Summerfield, and their son Solon—were members of Temple Emanu-El. The Summerfields appeared in many lists of donors to Jewish causes in New York. Elias and Marcus responded in 1905 to Jacob Schiff’s National Relief Committee campaign to help Jewish “sufferers by the massacres in Russia.” In 1926 the *Times* listed Solon as giving an annual donation of \$5,000 to the Federation for the Support of Jewish Philanthropies. Six months later, when the Ninety-Second Street YMHA expanded, Solon Summerfield made a lead gift of \$15,000.²⁷

The Summerfields were also active members of the German-speaking community. In Lawrence they were part of the *Turn Verein*, the German society, and had organized the *Sociator Verein*, its counterpart social club, of which Marcus was president in 1883. They were active in German-speaking politics and were as comfortable giving talks in German as in English. At

borders of settlement offered. Not only did they have the freedom to maintain their Jewish identity, but also they could follow whatever Jewish practices they wished. Unlike most Jews in Europe, they were not under pressure to conform religiously. Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2004), 75.

26. *Israelite*, November 30, 1860, February 7, 1862, 255, February 12, 1864, 262.

27. *American Hebrew*, July 10, 1896, 257; *New York Times*, November 18, 1905, November 12, 1926, May 8, 1927, January 30, 1928, 11.

an 1869 meeting at Turners’ Hall to protest the absence of any German-speaking candidate on the Republican ticket, the audience elected Dr. Summerfield chair. In the 1870s Marcus Summerfield partnered with the Erbs to start a German-language newspaper in Arkansas, hiring away the editor of the Lawrence *Germania*. Eudora had been a German-speaking settlement in its early days; the town records were kept in German for a number of years, and the first notice of the organized Eudora Jewish community appeared in *Die Deborah*, the German-language sister publication of the *Israelite*. Clearly, they were comfortable in a German-speaking society. The Summerfields saw no conflict between their identities as German speakers, as Jews, as Kansans, and as Americans.²⁸

What accounts for the Summerfields’ successes? Living in the borders of settlement was a critical factor; so too was the human capital they brought with them, a resource that proved most apt in expanding towns and a market economy. Part of that capital was their family commercial experience, both in Europe and the United States. Nearly all German-speaking Jews who migrated to the United States before the Civil War came from small towns in Europe. They had been part of Jewish petty merchant communities that played a mediating role between cities and towns in the countryside and among

28. *Republican Daily Journal*, April 1, 1871; *Arkansas Gazette*, June 13, 1874, July 2, 1874. For perceptive discussions of German-speaking Jews in the nineteenth-century United States, especially Chicago and large American cities, see the work of Tobias Brinkmann, particularly “Jews, Germans, or Americans? German-Jewish Immigrants in the Nineteenth-Century United States,” in *Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness*, ed. Krista O’Donnell, Renate Bridenthal, and Nancy Reagin (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 111–40. For a situation more similar to Kansas, see the insightful exploration of Southwestern frontier Jews’ triple identity, Gerhard Grytz, “‘Triple Identity’: The Evolution of a German Jewish Arizonan Ethnic Identity in Arizona Territory,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 26 (Fall 2006): 20–49. Grytz argues that they evolved from German Jewish pioneers into “German Jewish Arizonans, into American Jewish Arizonans and sometimes into American Christian Arizonans” (p. 21). While Kansas Jews shared many aspects of culture with Gentiles from the German states, even in Lawrence, German-speaking Jews were much more varied in background and culture than Gentile German immigrants. Lawrence had Jews from Polish Prussia, like the Summerfields, Jews from Austria, like Jacob House and family, a leading clothing merchant, Jews from Alsace-Lorraine, like the J. H. Cohn family, and even German-speaking Dutch Jews, like the Drukkers. Thus, at best, they were united as German-speaking rather than as Germans. Grytz does emphasize, however, the role of family ties and networking in the success of Arizona Jewish families. The Lawrence *Germania*’s distinction (see above, note 7) that Abraham Summerfield was from Russia, though he was born in Prussia (Posen or Polish Prussia), reveals much about distinctions that Germans made about who was German.



At least five members of the Summerfield family taught at Kansas universities. Marcus, bottom row, second from the left, taught law and became the first Jewish professor at the University of Kansas in 1886. At the time, the University of Kansas was sometimes referred to as "Kansas State University." One of Marcus's nephews taught at the University of Kansas's medical school, and three of his female cousins also taught at universities. His cousin, Sadie Mossler, became the first female journalism instructor in the United States when she began teaching at Kansas State Agricultural College in 1911.

different ethnic and language groups. This was especially true in Posen in Polish Prussia, where Jews regularly traveled in the countryside. Outsiders in much of Prussia, most of which was Polish but ruled by Prussians, they relied heavily on family networks in both personal and commercial life. Indeed, family and kinship ties were critical to Jewish participation in the capitalist economy. While the individual firm was the basic economic unit,

for Jews it always involved kinship ties.²⁹ As traditional Jews, the Summerfields were familiar with Judaism and Jewish culture, but they were not insular. Jews were exposed more to modernization and liberal winds than others in the countryside. From schooling, home and family tradition, they knew Hebrew and Yiddish and were fluent in German and Polish, the street languages of Posen. Multilingual, they easily added English. Besides this human capital, they benefitted enormously from luck—the decisions of Abraham to leave New York for Chicago, to join the German-speaking land company, to open the first store in Eudora, and to enter public service. The Summerfields were well positioned to take advantage of the commercial opportunities in the Post-Civil War era created by new technologies and western expansion. Their experience in Europe had prepared them well to participate in new opportunities in the Midwest.

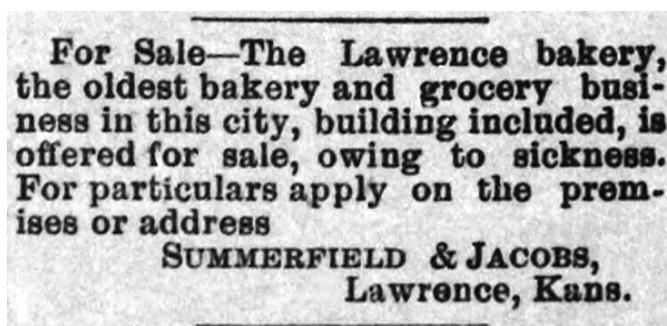
Ambitious, they also acquired new skills and education in the United States. Kansas, despite the turmoil over slavery, offered unique opportunities to the small number of Jewish families who settled there, especially the Summerfields. Abraham Summerfield had limited capital—it took him some years to afford to bring all of his family across the Atlantic to America—but he had enough to migrate. In the German-speaking settlement company, he and the other Jewish participants were among the few with commercial rather than agricultural aspirations. In Eudora, Abraham could open a store in the late 1850s; probably the same capital would have made him a peddler in the East. He was not yet successful enough to employ his second son, Elias, who went to work with his

29. "Family," Hasia Diner has noted, "underlay a Jewish communal credit system," and suggests that whether in small towns or cities, "Jews opted overwhelmingly for partnerships with relatives, friends, and coreligionists." The author's study of small-town midwestern Jewish merchants refines that pattern; it suggests that in more than 90 percent of all partnerships, partners were blood relations or related through marriage. (The single exception the author has identified here was among attorneys, as Jewish lawyers often had Gentile partners.) Only detailed family information reveals this pattern; time and again the author uncovered kinship ties among what seemed to be unrelated Jewish partners. Moreover, retailers tended to have kinship ties to their wholesalers or jobbers who provided credit. Diner, *A Time for Gathering*, 77, 78.

uncle, but public service for both Abraham (postmaster of Eudora, city councilman) and his son Marcus (collector for Eudora, city clerk) gave them steady income. Within a short time, Abraham could afford to bring the rest of his nuclear family to the United States and to assist his son in the modest costs of medical school. By the middle of the Civil War, Abraham Summerfield appeared among income tax payees, a rather short list in Eudora. As merchants, the Summerfields traded on both German-speaking and Jewish ties. They offered the hearty European bread often cited by ethnic Kansans as a thing they missed from the old country, and they used family connections as paths to work and careers.

At the same time, the level of education of Jewish settlers in Kansas, as a group, was more advanced than their Gentile neighbors. They were exposed to formal Jewish education and text learning as well as secular studies. Marcus's ambition to attend college speaks to this as does the experience of Benny Jacobs, who after attending the naval academy, followed his uncle into both medicine and law and became a clinical professor at the university medical school. Solon E. Summerfield, unusual for his day, obtained a college degree before entering law school. Abraham's niece, Minna Summerfield from Litchfield, married I. J. Mossler, a partner with her father, and they moved to Lawrence where Mossler ran clothing stores and then became a commercial traveler. They had three daughters—all of whom taught at universities. Hettie Mossler taught French as an instructor at the University of Kansas while her sister Gertrude taught elocution and directed theater productions at Kansas and later at Northern Michigan University. Sadie worked as a reporter and then editor of one of the local newspapers; she left the paper in 1911 to become the first women instructor of journalism in the United States, teaching at the Kansas Agricultural College in Manhattan. She returned to newspaper work, achieving journalistic fame with an article on the role of "hen editor"—women journalists—an essay reprinted in a standard anthology used in journalism courses for generations.³⁰

30. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, December 11, 1930; (Lawrence, Kans.) *Jefferson Gazette*, February 8, 1911. Sadie L. Mossler, "They Call Me the 'Hen Editor': The Story of a Small-Town Newspaper Woman," in *How to Write Special Feature Articles*, ed. Willard Grosvenor Bleyer (Boston, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1920), 63–68. The article appeared originally in *Woman's Home Companion* (October 1918). A Lawrence paper, calling Hettie "one of the best students ever in Lawrence," mentioned that she was being treated "for nearly two years for stomach trouble," but added that "She worked hard, too hard, and undermined her health." The Kansas City paper, after listing her academic degrees and teaching at the university, said: "Hard study and nervous troubles were the cause of her death." It is hard to believe that, at the time, such a conclusion would be



While Abraham Summerfield suffered through a long-lasting and ultimately fatal illness, his wife Hannah ran Summerfield & Jacobs. After he died in 1880, Hannah legally acquired her husband's interest in the store, which she ran until her retirement in 1894. Hannah's role as co-owner and operator of the bakery was exceptional because similar businesses typically did not hire women.

One strength of the children of Abraham and Hannah was their ability to make the most of their experience, to educate themselves. Often associated with the German tradition of *Bildung*, it was not widely aspired to or achieved in America (much less in Germany). If anything, it seemed to be an outcome of the German-speaking Jewish experience in midwestern small towns. Marcus's ambition to attend medical school reflected this. So too did the experience of Minna Summerfield Jacobs, who had no prior commercial experience before starting and managing, with her husband, branches of Summerfield & Jacobs. Baking, groceries, and retail sales required many diverse talents, and Minna met the challenge. Running a store involved dealing with suppliers as well as customers, supervising employees, handling finances, bookkeeping, and so forth. But she excelled in public. Minna "was one of those lovable natures," the *Daily Journal* noted, "that draws every one to them with whom they come in contact."³¹

drawn about a male scholar. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, June 1, 1907; *Kansas City Star*, June 2, 1907. With Marcus Summerfield, Benjamin Jacobs, and Hettie and Gertrude Mossler, all having taught at Kansas University by 1906, the Summerfield family supplied four of the first seven known Jewish faculty members. The other early Jewish faculty members were Ida Henrietta Hyde, the famous physiologist whom the University of Kansas hired when it started a medical school, Jacob Bloch, a medical school professor, and Max Winkler, who taught German before leaving for the University of Michigan.

31. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, March 23, 1898. I thank Elissa Sampson, a scholar and sometime "docent" of New York's Lower East Side, for making the connection between German-speaking Jews and *Bildung* in the United States. As the author uses the term, *Bildung* in German culture involves individual transformation through experience, education and reflection, leading to self-understanding.

Sarah Erb Summerfield exhibited more formal aspects of *Bildung*. Once settled in Lawrence, after moving from Arkansas, she became a social, intellectual, and organizational leader in the Jewish community. A key player in local Jewish clubs, literary and social, she organized and was president of the Lawrence chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women, the sixteenth such chapter in the country. She attended the national convention in New York City in 1896, and was a regional president. The NCJW had a rather rigorous reading program of Jewish history. The community was too small to print its own newsletter, so they developed an oral one read at social events. The Lawrence Jewish community sent most of the women to high school and men to college, though Sara's niece Hettie Mossler and her friend Rachel Cohn Passon earned BA and MA degrees.³²

Elias Summerfield married twice, extending the Summerfield network both times. His first marriage in 1893 to Jennie Samuels Kohn, a widow with three children, linked him to a network of elite Kansas Jewish families—the Kohns and Wollmans—that were prominent in New York City as well. Jennie had grown up in Marysville, Kansas, where her father Joseph Samuels ran a general store, traded produce, had a pork-packing house, and was president of the local bridge stock company. Jennie's sister Sarah married Reuben N. Hershfield, a manufacturer and wholesale and retail jeweler in Leavenworth and Kansas City. During the Civil War he served briefly as commanding officer of Ft. Leavenworth and later was a regent of the state university and a director of the Kansas Academy of Science. Another sister married Jonas Wollman, scion of a Leavenworth-Kansas City family that became influential in New York City as lawyers and financiers. Their son William J. Wollman, as managing director of Bache and Company as well as his own brokerage house, was a leading Wall Street figure and Elias's stockbroker. Jennie's first husband, Morris Kohn, had been involved in banking in Wichita and then moved to New York where he ran a dry goods store on lower Broadway. He died in 1890.³³

Jennie died in 1896, and Elias moved back to Lawrence with his stepchildren Harry A. and Josephine Benita.

32. *Lawrence Daily Journal*, May 30, 1895; *Proceedings of the First Convention of the National Council of Jewish Women, Held at New York, Nov. 16, 17, 18, and 19, 1896* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1897), 6, 221; *Kansas City Star*, June 2, 1907.

33. (Marysville, Kans.) *Big Blue Union*, December 12, 1863, January 16, 1864, February 27, 1864, April 9, 1864; on the Kohns, see *Wichita Daily Eagle*, October 23, 1891; *Kansas City Star*, January 16, 1895; Hal Rothman, "Same Horse, New Wagon," 86, 87, 89; *New York Times*, November 18, 1920, 12, July 13, 1929, 15, July 24, 1929, 9.

Harry dropped out of the University of Michigan to complete his degree at the University of Kansas, and Benita went to school in Lawrence. After their mother died they spent the summer with the Summerfields in Colorado Springs, and in summer 1899, Elias, Harry, and Benita toured Europe. When Harry married in 1901, his sister went to live with him.³⁴

Meanwhile, Elias remarried in 1900 to Selina Dinkelspiel Eckstein, a wealthy woman in her own right. Her late husband Monroe Eckstein had run a Staten Island brewery and bank. Another Dinkelspiel sister married Milton Weil, and Weil and Selina's nephew Henry Eckstein would play critical roles in supporting Marcus's son, Solon, as an industrialist. When Solon bought the Bernstein Ribbon Company, his uncle Elias financed it. The incorporators of the new firm were Eckstein and Elias. The board members were all family: Solon, Uncle Elias, Selina's brother-in-law Milton Weil, and her nephew. When Weil retired from what had become the Gotham Silk Hosiery Corporation, by then the industry leader, Solon's first cousin Roy Erb Tilles replaced Weil as board member and vice president. Marriage reinforced business and business reinforced marriage.³⁵

Elias and Selina Summerfield settled in New York City. Though his railroad, waterworks, and receivership career had taken him to Illinois, Kansas, and Arkansas, and then he spent twenty-five years in New York City, when Elias died in 1924, his nephew Solon told the *New York Times* that "he claimed Kansas as his home." In the 1890s Elias bought Simon Steinberg's luxurious Lawrence home on Louisiana Street, then renovated and enlarged it. He shared the house with Marcus and Sarah Summerfield and J. H. Jacobs. The Lawrence home was large enough that Sarah gave a sit-down luncheon for 150 ladies in 1900. But 1904 was a turning point in the lives of the brothers. Their mother died that year. That same year widower J. H. Jacobs moved to Arkansas to live with his daughter Bertha Tilles (and to start a third career in retail at seventy-five), and Marcus and Sarah, who had already moved to Denver, now visited Lawrence less and less. As if acknowledging that New York City was his residence, Elias sold the Louisiana Street home and other property in Lawrence that year. In New York he appeared in society columns and supported Jewish institutions. The

34. *Lawrence Weekly World*, September 17, 1896; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, October 17, 1899; *New York Times*, March 24, 1939, 23.

35. *New York Times*, April 15, 1895, 4; *Textile World Record* 30 (February 1906): 169.

Times reported the Summerfields attending the opening night of the Metropolitan Opera season in 1909. Though retired, Elias served on the board of his nephew Solon's flourishing hosiery company and still participated in railroad ventures, joining the controlling group of the Pere Marquette Railway. When Elias died in 1924, on his way to his broker—William J. Wollman—he left an estate of more than \$4 million. He was buried in Salem Fields, the cemetery of Temple Emmanu-El, New York. The city of Summerfield, Kansas memorializes him. Selina Summerfield died in 1930.³⁶

Marcus Summerfield moved to Denver in 1901, after his son graduated from Kansas Law School. In the next few years he and Sarah spent months at a time in Lawrence. As a former law professor, he opened a prestigious partnership in Denver, Muller and Summerfield, and Solon worked in the firm briefly. Marcus and Sarah were in the social columns of the secular and Jewish press. In 1906 Marcus retired, and Marcus and Sarah moved to St. Louis, living with her sister and brother-in-law. Around 1916, they moved to New York City, where they lived with their son, Solon, on West End Avenue. Marcus died in 1922 and was buried in Salem Fields. Sarah E. Summerfield, then living in the luxury Hotel Ritz Towers in New York, died in 1939.

The Summerfields lived lives of comfort and luxury. Their Lawrence houses were grand and spacious. Though in immigrating to America they sailed on the lower decks, by the end of the century they could travel first class, as Marcus did in 1891 when he returned from Europe. Elias, as superintendent of the Northwestern line, had use of the private rail car, "Magnolia," and the Summerfields often used it to travel. Marcus and Sarah traveled widely and took long vacation trips. For example, in 1889 they took a two-month trip to California and the Pacific Coast. In 1890 the Summerfields spent the summer at Nantasket Beach, a Jewish summer resort between Boston and Cape Cod. In 1897 the Summerfields headed east to join Elias in Europe for the summer. Active locally and nationally in Jewish life, Marcus and Sarah often hosted Jewish social and literary events as well as distinguished visitors, as when Rabbi Henry Berkowitz lectured at the university.

Marcus had a wit and playfulness that Elias never exhibited. Elias took everything seriously and always

engaged in a business-like manner. Marcus, as he displayed when he wrote to the *Israelite* in 1860 and punned with Rabbi Wise's name, had a light touch. In 1880 when Marcus Summerfield opened his own law office in Lawrence on the same block as Summerfield & Jacobs, the newspaper reported the event, but a typo listed Summerfield as opening a "loan" office. Marcus used humor to reprimand the paper and correct the error:

You call[ed] my law office a "loan" office. Please take that back. I can't stand it. My office is besieged. I am stopped on the streets. I had no idea there were so many borrowers in this county. . . . I would ask you for the sake of my carpets, to say nothing of my very valuable time, to have the JOURNAL, which is evidently very much read, show the necessary correction.³⁷

Given his sense of humor, it was appropriate that a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court would pun the name "Summerfield." In 1898 the law school invited Supreme Court Justice David Brewer, a Kansan, to speak at the law school alumni banquet. Marcus Summerfield, as "toastmaster," and J. J. Mitchell, acting secretary, sent a mock legal summons for Justice Brewer to appear at the June 7 dinner. Brewer replied in kind, questioning whether the summons had been "duly and legally" served. But, since he was already "ordered" by Iowa to appear there on June 8, then "it will be impossible for me by any known means of conveyance to be present in Lawrence on the evening of the 7th and in Iowa on the morning of the 8th of June." He then proceeded to pun the names of Kansas chancellor Francis H. Snow and Summerfield. "And, finally, he submits," the justice wrote, "that one of his delicate health ought not to be called upon to come to a place where 'snow' prevails all seasons of the year, and of course destroys all the bright blossoms of the 'Summerfield.'"³⁸

Solon Summerfield, after graduating with a law degree, lived two years in Denver with his parents and then joined a touring theatrical company. He signed on to Wilton Lackay's theater company as stage manager, settling in New York City as a theatrical manager. Involvement in the theater probably exposed him to the ribbon industry, and when the Bernstein Ribbon Company was up for

36. *New York Herald*, April 23, 1896; *New York Times*, November 1, 1924, 15; *Lawrence Weekly World*, June 4, 1896; *Lawrence Daily Journal*, February 17, 1900; *Lawrence Weekly World*, November 3, 1904; *New York Times*, November 18, 1905, 6, November 16, 1909, 9.

37. *Lawrence Daily Journal and Daily Kansas Tribune*, February 17, 1880.
38. Summons and letter reprinted in *Kansas City Journal*, June 12, 1898.

sale, he bought it, financed by his Uncle Elias. Solon went from ribbons to hosiery and became a whiz in producing silk hosiery and gold toe socks, turning Gotham Hosiery into an innovative and New York Stock Exchange-listed corporation. His distribution and manufacturing systems changed the industry. His roots remained in Lawrence, however, and in the 1930s he transferred ownership of most of his stock to the Lawrence Industrial Corporation, which would eventually fund his charitable foundation. His successor as president at Gotham was long-time vice-president and first cousin Roy Erb Tilles. When Solon died in 1947, his estate exceeded \$10 million.³⁹

The Summerfields had a flair for publicity; their name popped up in odd places. Charles Dickens, in "Pistol-Practice in America," which appeared in 1879 in his magazine *All the Year Round*, repeated a story then circulating about a member of the Little Rock law firm of Erb, Summerfield, and Erb. J. D. Hall had assaulted Jacob Erb in the street ("gave him a sound caning") and then gave himself up in court. While there, according to Dickens, Jacob Erb and his three sons beat up Hall, putting a bullet in his leg. The Erbs then fled. Later a judge, Jacob Erb was notorious for his quick temper. Marcus Summerfield made a brief appearance in Frank Harris's much embellished autobiography, *My Life and*

Loves, a ribald American classic. Harris, who lived for a short while in 1880s Lawrence, claimed falsely to have been a law partner of Marcus Summerfield.⁴⁰

Other than the city of Summerfield in Marshall County and Summerfield Hall and the Solon E. Summerfield professorship at the University of Kansas in Lawrence, the Summerfields, like other German-speaking Kansas Jews, have been lost from memory. Their careers in Lawrence and in Kansas go unacknowledged in local lore and histories. Yet their experiences typify those of German-speaking Jewish merchants who helped develop scores of Kansas towns from early settlement through the end of the nineteenth century. Kansas, newly opened to settlement, offered them opportunities for commercial success and lives as ordinary citizens, something denied Jews in Europe at the time. In return, they were prominent in Kansas small towns; they linked the towns to the larger society and exemplified the diversity of Kansas. As they acculturated, they maintained their Jewish identities and participated in German-speaking life. Their ambitions, their kinship ties, and their Jewish identities transcended Kansas and eventually led them to larger urban centers. Nonetheless, Kansas always remained a part of their lives.⁴¹ [KH]

39. *Lawrence Daily World*, November 10, 1905; *Kansas City Star*, June 8, 1908; *Graduate Magazine of the University of Kansas* 12 (October 1913): 49; *Lawrence Daily World*, October 16, 1906; *New York Times*, September 4, 1947, 25, July 1, 1950, 17.

40. "Pistol-Practice in America," *All the Year Round: A Weekly Journal* 22, May 24, 1879, 536; Frank Harris, *My Life and Loves* (Paris: privately printed, 1922), 1:246, 279–82. The Grove Press edition in 1963 brought it to a wide audience.

41. In a perceptive comment on the outmigration of many of the early German-speaking Jewish settlers of Wichita, Jay Price noted that "for several families, New York was a final destination, not a point of origins." Among those New York settlers Price discusses are Morris Kohn, Sol H. Kohn, and M. W. Levy. Levy, a Wichita banker and Kohn's partner, in flowery Victorian rhetoric, expressed the loyalty of its native (and adopted) sons and daughter before the 1893 World Congress of Bankers. "Once a Kansan always a Kansan. Her peripatetic investor may move, he may roam, he may locate on the banks of the Ganges or under the shadow of the Pyramids, on Greenland's icy mountains or even in New Jersey. . . for such a one to permanently locate, to live and have his being elsewhere, is impossible. As is the Sahara to the wandering son of Hagar, the trackless sea to the life long sailor, so to the devotees of the realm of the sunflower is the unending green of his illimitable prairies." M. W. Levy, "Banking and Resources of Kansas," *World's Congress of Bankers and Financiers, . . . Addresses upon Selected Financial Subjects . . .* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1893), 460; Price, "Jewish Community in Wichita," 296.