

Jewish Miners in B.C.

The Adventures of Samuel and Joseph Abram

Liverpool, England.

Poverty, hunger, racism and political turmoil were a part of life for Jewish families in Europe all throughout the 1800s. The government in disarray paired with the discrimination of the Europeans made it very difficult for Jewish men and women to get well paying careers or jobs at all. Jewish migrants had moved into Spain, England, Portugal and France (amongst others) to make a better life, to no prevail. This is why when word of American prospectors becoming rich by mining gold came to Europe, many people thought it would be a great opportunity for them. Hundreds of young Jewish men left their families to try and strike gold in California and provide for themselves and their families. In October of 1849, two brothers named Samuel and Joseph Abram boarded a boat heading to a port in Nevada. They came from a large family living in Liverpool who could barely scrape together dinner each night. Sam and Joe were excited for the new world and landed in the middle of it, in a large port in northeastern Nevada, where they would rent a room for the two of them and start looking for mining companies to apply for.

Nevada, CA, United States America.

After about a week, they were both employed and had started working. They had realized that it was far more difficult than they previously thought, and was physically very challenging. They started making friends however, and got into the rhythm of the mining life. They would mine throughout the early morning into the afternoon, then go out to bars and pubs with their friends to drink and gamble.

Samuel was enjoying his life and was content for the next few years, but around November of 1856, he realized that they were not much better off than when they had settled here, they were still poor, and scrambling to pay for rent and food. He talked to Joe, and they decided to stay for a couple more years and try to make the best of it. It's now 1858 and Sam and Joe haven't struck rich, or even found much gold in the 9 years they've been mining in Nevada. Luckily for them, this is the year that would change their lives. Gold is discovered in a part of Eastern Canada in the Fraser river. The two men decided to leave their life in California in hopes that Canada would be less harsh on them. Unfortunately, they were wrong.

Fort Victoria, BC, Canada.

Joe and Sam have settled on residing and working in Victoria, away from the larger towns in the Cariboo. The bustle of the interior wasn't for them. Through the processes of moving they discussed the possibility of making a living without mining. The first theming that came to their mind was starting a business to provide the town with something, and they settled on a bakery. They bought a plot of land on one of the main roads in the centre of town with all the money they had (luckily land was cheap in the early days of this town) and got to work building a bakery. It took them many years to complete the building and put them in debt, but they were persistent and were very happy with the end result. Almost immediately after being built, they started making many sales and started making money back. Everybody in the town had seen the construction of the building, and were excited for the first source of fresh food in the area.

For many months everything was going well, and sales were high. Sam and Joe were making their money back and enjoying their lives once more. Unfortunately for them though, they would not be let off the hook so easily. One night in mid August 1860, a terrible fire swept through the town, setting a blaze dozens of homes, and ruining shops, businesses, the library and town hall. This fire destroyed the bakery, and devastated the brothers. Sam and Joe were not going to give up this easily, however. They quickly started remaking the bakery, and with the recent growth of the town, decided to construct a second location, where they could each run a separate building with the same name. The building and rebuilding of the bakeries was challenging, as they worked through the winter, the harsh conditions of Eastern Canada are uncomfortable and unforgiving. Persistent they remained, and almost a year later, with the help of some of their friends, they had two bakeries.

Victoria, BC, Canada.

The popularity of the bakeries grew with the rapid growth of the town. Within a year of opening for the second time, the population of Victoria had doubled. The value of the breads and dried goods they sold went up and soon enough, Sam and Joe made their money back and could now afford food for themselves. They were beginning to make their dream a reality. They became wealthy members of the town, and were known by everyone and Sam even became part of the city council to help make vital decisions about the future of the town.

In 1869 the two men started sending money back to their family. In the new world they had more money than they needed, and their family in England were far less fortunate. Joe and Sam were satisfied with their lives and knew that from their hard work, it would be unhelpful to not share their wealth with their family. Soon enough, they found wives and started families, and were proud of what they'd accomplished. They were persistent and relentless through their journey and couldn't have done it without each other.

They had achieved happiness, by working hard.