

Jewish Life in Livingstone

The town of Livingstone was established in 1905. In the next few years, it became home to the first Jewish community in Northern Rhodesia. During the First World War and in the years that followed the majority of stores were owned or run by Jewish traders. By 1913 there were 10 Jewish families in Livingstone involved either in cattle trading or general dealerships. The Susmans and the Grills, whose families had known each other in Lithuania, formed the nucleus of Livingstone's Jewish community. A significant factor in the Livingstone community's growth was the arrival of Marcus and Faiga Grill and their ten children in 1909.

An early highlight of Jewish life in Livingstone was the marriage of Harry Susman to Annie Grill in June 1910. Rabbi Moses Isaac Cohen, spiritual leader of the Hebrew Congregation in Bulawayo, officiated, and his was the first visit a Jewish religious leader had made to Northern Rhodesia. That year, the founders of the community included the Susman brothers, Harry Susman's father-in-law, Marcus Grill, the Levitz brothers, the Peimer brothers, Max Shapiro, David Wersock, and Messrs. Jacobson, Bloch, Barnett, and Keihl. Many had been Barotseland cattle traders.



M Grill General Outfitters, Livingstone, circa 1910



Elias Kopelowitz General Store, circa 1910



The hospitable Joe Furmanovsky and his taxi



The building that housed Grill's Kinema in 1919

NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM

From ancient times Jewish prayers have included the phrase 'Next year in Jerusalem'. When Jewish pioneers began to settle in the Holy Land, the Jews of Livingstone, like Jewish communities the world over, supported the re-establishment of a Jewish homeland in the Biblical Land of Israel. The Livingstone Herzl Zionist Society was founded in 1912 and named after Theodor Herzl, founder of modern political Zionism. In the years between the two world wars leaders of the Zionist movement visited Livingstone on communication and fund-raising missions to Southern Africa. The most important of these was that of Chaim Weizmann and his wife Vera in 1932. Vera was one of the main founders of the global women's Zionist movement, and Chaim later became the first president of the State of Israel.



Harry Susman's marriage to Annie Grill in 1910 was the first Jewish wedding in Northern Rhodesia



Maurice Rabb pictured with President Kenneth Kaunda, circa 1970