



Happy 150th Canada! 1867-2017



Jewish Canadian Involvement



by Rochelle Burns, PhD ©

Lillian Freiman (1885-1940), Ida Siegel (1885-1982) -- two of Canada's Jewish contributors to a better society, at home and abroad. And what awesome women they were!

To improve girls' education, Siegel began a girls' school above Caplan's Butcher Shop on Dundas Street. In 1930, she became the first Jewish woman elected to the Toronto Board of Education. She represented Toronto at the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She drew inspiration from her American friends, suffragette Susan B. Anthony, and Hadassah's Henrietta Szold.

Szold's 1909 trip to Palestine led to a 1912 meeting at New York's Temple Emanu-El. She was elected president of a new organization. Like Queen Esther, they wanted to save their people, so they adopted her Hebrew name -- Hadassah.

Meanwhile, in Canada, Toronto's Siegel worked assiduously helping her friend, Montreal's Lillian Freiman, found Hadassah here. Freiman became the first Canadian president from 1919-1940.

In addition, like Siegel, Freiman worked at many worthwhile causes. In 1921, she brought to Canada about 150 Jewish World War 1 Ukrainian orphans. One, 12-year-old Gladys Rozovsky, was adopted by her and her husband.

Freiman was nicknamed 'The Poppy Lady'. After reading Dr. John McCrae's poem, "Flanders Fields", she had a group of women come to her home and hand make poppies to help the World War 1 effort. In 2008, the Canadian Government designated her a 'Person of National Historic Significance'.

Following in Queen Esther's footsteps, Canadians Siegel and Freiman became inspirations and role models for humanitarian achievements. How very Jewish. How very Canadian.

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Ida Siegel: photo credit CJN

'Siegel's great-granddaughter is Rabbi Gail Labovitz, PhD (b. 1966), who received Rabbinic ordination (1992) and a PhD in Talmud (2002) from the Jewish Theological Seminary and at present is Associate Professor of Rabbinic Literature at the American Jewish University in Los Angeles.'