

**PAINTED WOODS**

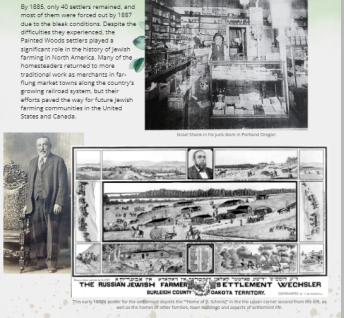
In 1882, Jewish farming settlement Painted Woods was established in the Dakota Territory before North Dakota became a state in 1889. The settlement was situated near the towns of Bismarck and Watkinson and was named after trees in the area that had been painted by Indians with various colors.

Painted Woods was one of the earliest Russian-Jewish farming settlements in the Americas, and it played an essential role in the history of Jewish agriculture in North America. Similar settlements were also established in South Dakota, Colorado, Northern California, Oregon, Virginia, Connecticut, and New Jersey.

Many Russian Jews were not allowed to own land in the Park of Settlement, so they dreamed of farming in Palestine and the Americas. Painted Woods was established with this optimistic spirit. Encouraged by the Homestead Act, which granted free acreage to homesteaders on federal land in the West, Jews from Russian-speaking lands came to Painted Woods. The colony started with 20 families, and each family received 160 acres, which was the maximum allowed by the Homestead Act. They received support from Rev. Rabbi Judah Wechsler of St. Paul, Minnesota, and his Jewish community. By the end of 1882, Painted Woods had grown to 54 families, consisting of about 200 people.

In a letter dated May 15, 1883, Rabbi Wechsler wrote enthusiastically, "I have just returned from a trip to the Wechsler colony at Painted Woods, Dakota, and am more than pleased. A most favorable opinion has been received. Arriving at Bismarck, which is one of the most flourishing towns of the territory, I found a majority of the colonists assembled to welcome me. In the evening, until twelve, had a consultation with them regarding their present and future wants, and resolved to visit the colony in person."

However, despite their enthusiasm and hard work, the settlers faced numerous challenges. Drought, fire, drought, crop failures, diseases, and other natural disasters resulted in heavy losses and great physical and emotional distress. Due to these harsh living conditions, the settlers often left after working the land for the minimum number of years required to obtain ownership.



**12x12 - Soft Touch Finish**  
Includes as many available photos, historical document images and narratives as it takes to tell the story of your ancestry.

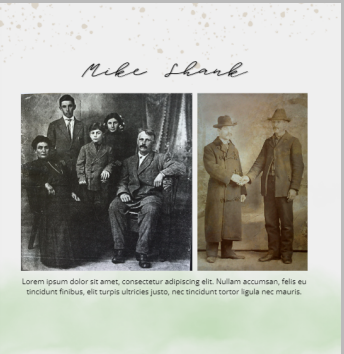


Israel Shank was known for having a bit of a fiery personality and a tendency to stir up trouble wherever he went. When he moved from Bismarck to Portland, he brought with him his hot temper, age issues, mischievous antics, and penchant for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. His adventures even made it into the local news.

**UNLUCKY NUMBER FOR MR. SHANK**

**RUN DOWN Electric Car Injured Israel Shank.**

**HIS COSTLY WAGON WORRIES MR. SHANK**



**Pictorial Family History Book**  
WATERCOLOR DREAMS

Return to main site

