

*My father was in partnership with his two brothers running a hardware store business closing on Saturday, the Sabbath, in accordance with Jewish law. My uncles decided they were losing a lot of business. They wanted to open up Saturday. My mother told my father that if they open that store on Saturday she'd divorce him. So the partnership split up.*

—Sam Aronin, MSCUA/UWL, 2660-001

endowed it with a “back East” flavor by naming it the Brooklyn Bakery. However, neither the New York Bakery nor the Brooklyn Bakery endured under the Mosler entrepreneurship. Harry moved on to Portland, and in 1925, Sam Mosler left the bakery business to set up what was perhaps the first health foods store in the state. “Sam, he was just crazy about all that stuff,” said Henry Ralkowski, who, with his father, took over the New York Bakery. “He opened a little place on Union Street . . . he made dry cereal before Kellogg did. He used to toast bran . . . sprinkle it with malt and oat, no sugar, and that was a health food, and a very good laxative.” What Sam Mosler pursued for personal interest and satisfaction, others like Kellogg and Post developed to immense profit. Henry Ralkowski pointed out that “around Skid Road [Yesler Way], there were quite a few famous people, like Mr. Campbell. . . . He was cooking down there. He went East, and everyone said, ‘that crazy cook is going to put soup in cans.’ It was a joke.”<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately, the kind of joke produced by Mr. Campbell of Campbell Soups was not reproduced by any of the start-up businesses of Seattle’s Jewish immigrant butchers, bakers, and grocers. Nevertheless, many of them built their businesses and prospered, some to a greater degree than others. For example, Abe Brenner started his first bakery near the King Street railroad station (ca. 1903), but later moved it to 1803 Yesler Way. Other kosher shops followed on Yesler Way, Cherry Street, and streets in between, such as Louis Hoffman’s kosher grocery on Yesler between Seventeenth and Eighteenth (1918).

The bakery that Abe Brenner started early in the 1900s provided bagels, pumpernickel, rye bread, and challah, and it remained an institution in Seattle and its environs for almost a century. Consistently turning out hard-crust bread, Brenner’s Bakery was one of the few Jewish bakeries to sustain Old World tastes through the years when soft white breads such as Wonder and Langendorf were the norm. A number of bakeries were established by men who had worked with Sam Mosler or Abe Brenner and who later left to open their own firms. These included Lippman’s Bakery and Eger Brothers Bakery.

How Abe Brenner came to Seattle in 1902 after working a year or two in a bakery owned by a relative in Newport News, Virginia, was a story he often told. Constantly in trouble with his disapproving uncle, Brenner went to the train station and asked for a ticket that would take him “as far away as I can get.” The ticket brought him to Seattle.<sup>34</sup>

After Brenner opened his first bakery near the King Street Station, he peddled his bread door-to-door with a horse and wagon. He never really approved of the delivery truck that eventually replaced the horse-drawn wagon because it “wouldn’t follow you door-to-door like a horse.”

“Once our reputation spread, people from all over town came to buy our bread,” said his son Joe. Brenner’s family grew as steadily as did his bakery business. Itsy, Charlie, and Joe grew up measuring and stirring flour, firing ovens, and delivering bread. Five sons were followed by a daughter, Yetta, and a sixth son, Joe. A seventh son, Mark, was born after the death of Brenner’s wife, Bessie Rosenthal, and a second marriage to Ruth Kutoff.



*Charles Aronson at the reins of his express wagon, outside his hardware business at 111 First Avenue South, ca. 1905–10. Like Aronson, many immigrant Jews who began peddling goods house-to-house eventually became store owners. WSJHS, 98.*