

Yetta Brenner, clerking in her father's bakery, delighted in handing out free cookies to children coming in with their mothers. Youngsters were drawn to Yetta by more than cookies. She wore glittery pins on her chest, flowers and ribbons in her platinum blond hair, and red, red polish on her fingernails. Children loved her. When the youngsters in a Sunday school class at Temple De Hirsch Sinai were asked to come dressed as a famous person, a person they admired, one little girl put on all her jewelry, all her bangles and beads—and came dressed as Yetta Brenner, the lady at the bakery.

—“Yetta,” *The Bellevue Journal-American*, 31 July 1989

This gave a sense of spaciousness and openness to the neighborhood, with lawns in front and in back of every house. Furthermore, “no single nationality group, including Jews, ever constituted a majority in any area as large as a half-mile square” outside the large eastern cities of the United States.³⁷ The presence of a large number of Sephardim relative to the whole Jewish population lent a richness and diversity to Seattle Jewry. The Sephardim formed a critical mass that allowed them to maintain their traditions, customs, and language to an extent not seen outside of New York.

The Jewish neighborhood began to break up after the Second World War (see chapter 13, “Postwar Growth”). While it lasted, the neighborhood produced a vibrant Jewish community. The legacy of the Yesler Way–Cherry Street neighborhood is still evident in many buildings and families. For instance, the Bikur Cholim sanctuary at Seventeenth Avenue and Yesler Way has been recycled as the Langston Hughes Cultural Arts Center, and the Seattle Talmud Torah building on Twenty-fifth Avenue, near Cherry Street, now houses the Islamic School of Seattle.

According to a prominent historian of American Jewry, Henry Feingold, “Most urbanized American-born Jews found their mates within a 20-block radius of their homes. . . .”³⁸ While there are no statistics to prove it, Seattle Jews who grew up in the old Yesler Way–Cherry Street neighborhood would concur with

On Saturday afternoons, children congregated in Cherry Street's Madrona Garden Theater to see Hoot Gibson, Tom Mix, or Rin-Tin-Tin. The soda fountain in the Garden Drug Store next door was the neighborhood source for pints and quarts of hand-packed ice cream. MSCUA/UWL, neg. 14648.