

department. From 3 o'clock until 6 the departments fought the blaze. Their job was a big one, and the manner in which they handled it won nothing but praise. The prompt response and efficient work of the Chaska department earned for its members no small amount of compliments. This is little doubt that it was the thoroughness of both departments that kept the fire from becoming a more devastating configuration."

It was not until the Eastern sky reddened with the dawn before the fire got under control. By that time, the Ferdman building was burned out, and the adjacent store of R.C. Kline was damaged.

Samuel Ferdman's loss was estimated at \$20,000. It was partly covered by insurance. Damage of the building was estimated at \$6,000. The building was owned by James Condon of Minneapolis.

Before bed, Samuel placed a roll of bills in his trouser pocket before retired Saturday night for bed. After the fire, he went with the fire department into the building to search for his glasses. No trace of the spectacles was found. But a small portion of the trousers, containing the pocket and the money, was found!



The south side of First Avenue, with the Ferdman's Store was located. Picture from the Huber Collection from the Shakopee Heritage Society.



By 1940 census, Sam and Anna were in Chicago, where Sam was a proprietor for an apartment hotel.

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Eventually they moved to California. Anna died on August 30, 1963. Samuel died on May 2, 1966 in San Joaquin, California. Both of them were buried at the Congregation of Ahavas Achim Cemetery, a place for Jewish people in San Joaquin.



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## SHAKOPEE HERITAGE SOCIETY



# Samuel Ferdman

1893-1966

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Samuel Ferdman was born on December 8, 1893 in Russia. He moved to the United States in 1913, and by 1920 he was a peddler walked the roads in St. Paul. He married Anna Sherin, who arrived from Lithuania. Both Sam and Anna were Jewish, and spoke Yiddish. They had two children, Max Melvin, who arrived on November 10, 1917, and Lucille, who was born on June 9, 1927, both in St. Paul.

Not too long after this, the family moved to Shakopee, where Sam was a merchant in downtown Shakopee, on First Avenue. The Ferdman's Bargain Store was located on the South side of First Street. The Ferdman's lived upstairs in an apartment. Samuel Ferdman, his wife, Anna, and their two children, Lucille and Max, lived there. This was probably one of the first Jewish families in Shakopee.



Peddlers was a way to make a living in the 1920s. Samuel Ferdman was one of several peddlers in St. Paul.



The Ferdman's Bargain Store was located on the right side of First Avenue, or the south side of the street. Later, after the fire, the Shakopee Theatre was located at the same place. Picture from the Huber Collection, Shakopee Heritage Society.

Betty Dols remembered her mother asking her to head to First Avenue to pick up something from the Ferdman's Bargain Store.

On a sunny Sunday in September of 1934, a low explosion, followed by a roar of fire shattered the Ferdman Bargain Store at 3 a.m., according to an article *Blaze Demolishes Ferdman Store*, *Argus-Tribune*, October 4, 1934. The fire siren wailed, and the roused people of Shakopee stared at the mounting flames. They hurriedly rushed to the scene in various stages of dress and undress.

The Ferdman family, including Sam, his wife, Anna, and their children Max and Lucille, who occupied an apartment above the store, barely escaped with their lives. Also in the apartment was Sam's aged mother-in-law, Rebecca Sherin, and Gladys Price who had to escape quickly with only their night clothes on. Gladys Price was the one who aroused the other people in the house, and they left the building through the First Street entrance.

The fire had already made great headway in the store room at the south end of the building, and filled the entire rear of the brick structure with flames. The area inside stairs leading to the Ferdman apartment on the second floor was ablaze before the family was awakened by the dense smoke. They exited the store on First Street, almost cut off by roaring fire and acrid smoke.

Apparently, the fire started in the storeroom.



Ferdman's Bargain Store ad, *Shakopee Argus*, April 1, 1926.

There was a stock of rubbers, socks, gloves, woolen goods, groceries, flour, and bulk food stuff which all started burning, and then it spread rapidly to the second story and over the first floor. According to the *Argus-Tribune* on October 4, 1934, "Windows burst from the building and the liberated flames leaped up the walls sending pillars of smoke and sparks towering skyward. The tin roof, which covered the structure, made it a veritable furnace."

"Power wires leading to the building caught fire and stretched glowing streaks across the smoke-heavy sky. Fallen wires endangered firemen and hundreds of spectators."

"Three streams of water were played on the fire from as many fire pumps. Immediately realizing the difficulties and dangers the blaze offered, Leo Siebenaler, Shakopee fire chief, summoned the Chaska fire