



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Baer

The Baer brothers, Isaac and Adolph (also Adolf), were prominent amongst the early merchants in Leadville and can be found in the first city directory published in 1879. The Baer Brothers' Mercantile, a wholesale liquor business, remained in the family until 1909 and spanned Leadville's glory days. The significance of the brothers was not confined to fueling Leadville's famously thirsty denizens, however, as they were active politically, socially, and especially so within the Jewish community.

Originally from Baden, Germany, the brothers, Isaac (b. 1852, arrived in New York City on September 11, 1869) and Adolph (b. January, 1855, immigrated to America on November 16, 1873) passed through Pueblo, Colorado, on their way to Leadville. By 1879 they had established themselves in business at 30 Harrison Avenue and Adolph was one of the founding members of the local chapter of B'nai B'rith, its first vice-president, and an organizer of the inaugural banquet which took place on November 9. A splendid event, the feast lasted until midnight and the dancing until 4 in the morning. The following year, 1880, found the brothers working and living at 119 East 4th Street and Isaac was involved with the inception of a German social and athletic organization known as Turn Vereins which constructed a facility at 4th and Pine Streets (just across the street from what would become the Temple Israel). Isaac, a bass singer, was also a member of the choir for the Yom Kippur service which was held that year in the then new synagogue, a converted Masonic Temple, above Harris and Herman's clothing store at 112 East Chestnut Street. Baer Brothers' moved to 122 Harrison Avenue in 1881 and Adolph lived at that address while Isaac took up residence at 125 West 8th Street with his new bride, the former Hattie Kahn. They were married on March 13, 1881. A dispute that year caused the county commissioners to increase the assessment of the brothers' business to \$5,500 from \$4,000. A sign, perhaps, of their prosperity. Another transportation of the business occurred in 1882 when they moved to 116 Harrison Avenue and took on as a clerk Bernhard Baer. Isaac changed his residence

to 308 East 4th Street in 1883 and by that time had become president of the Hebrew Benevolent Association of Leadville and also superintendent of the Hebrew Sabbath school which claimed seventy nine members. The Benevolent Association was responsible for the Hebrew Cemetery and other charitable functions. On October 16th of that year Adolph took as his bride Mathilda A. Ettinger (b.1863, in Germany). Adolph was also busy politically, supporting Fred Shaefer as alderman for the Fourth Ward.

1884 was a pivotal year for Leadville's Jewish community with the construction of the Temple Israel building. Isaac was a member of the building committee and he continued in his role as superintendent of the Sabbath School. Enrollment had declined to some forty students with six or seven teachers available, he reported, but with the new building an increase was anticipated. Both Isaac and his wife, a soprano, sang in the choir for the first Yom Kippur celebrated in the freshly dedicated synagogue. During this year Adolph finally found a home outside of the business and moved his family to 315 West 8th Street. They remained at that address until 1901. Tragically, that October 10th Adolph and Mathilda buried their two day old daughter Thea (Hebrew Cemetery, Block B, Lot 4. Another Baer infant had been delivered stillborn on July 5, 1882 and is interred at Block B, Lot 12, Grave 8). Adolph continued his political activities by supporting David May as treasurer of Lake County and signing, with others, the requisite \$125,000 bond. Isaac and his wife, meanwhile, are recorded attending a chess exhibition at the Jacob Schloss home wherein the "famed chess player" Dr. J. H. Zuckertort was challenged by six locals. Having given odds by removing pieces, Dr. Zuckertort lost three of the simultaneous games.

The next year, 1885, was also a busy one. Mathilda attended a farewell reception and luncheon for Mrs. M. Shoenberg at the David May residence in January. On July 26 the Jewish community led by Isaac, Marcus Monheimer, and Ben Davies, hosted a



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picnic at the racing grounds. Various sporting events ensued and Isaac's horse won a race. Continuing in his activities with the Congregation Israel, Isaac sang at the memorial service for Sir Moses Montefiore on July 31 and during the annual meeting on September 13 he was elected president of the Congregation. Isaac's family moved again, this time to 318 West 6th Street where they stayed until 1895. Still politically concerned, Baer Brother's supported a new road to Aspen.

January 27, 1886, saw the birth of Minetta Camilla to Adolph and Mathilda, followed by Ernest Oliver about four years later. Baer Brothers' Mercantile also accomplished its final relocation in 1886 when it moved to 503 Harrison Avenue, propitiously located between the Lake County Courthouse and Alfred Brisbois, Leadville's finest photographer (see above). Business appears to have been good in 1887 as Adolph joined David May and Sam Meyer in the \$40,000 purchase of 425-427 Harrison Avenue from Joseph H. Monheimer. Baer Bros. also rented space on East 5th Street from Jacob Schloss as storage for their wholesale business. The business community must have thought well of their enterprise as Adolph was elected to the board of directors of the newly formed Leadville Board of Trade. On the social front, Isaac was part of the reception committee at the very elaborate eighth annual Purim Bal Masque and his wife was noted as having attended an afternoon coffee party given by Mrs. Sam Meyer.

The records are less forthcoming during the ensuing years. In 1888 and again in 1889 Adolph signed pleadings from the Chamber of Commerce. Isaac helped post bond for a councilman accused of killing a man in 1888 and Mathilda was honored by a banquet in recognition of her services to the Jewish community. In 1890 Adolph served as a poll watcher and a Joseph Baer was clerking for Baer Bros. whilst living at 425 Harrison Avenue. Joseph reappeared in 1892 residing at room 17, 501 Harrison Avenue where he stayed until 1897. Then in 1893, Baer Bros. joined a consortium of "public spirited citizens" to buy the Hotel Kitchen for \$50,000 and

run it as the Vendome Hotel (the present day Tabor Grand at 701 Harrison Avenue). Another Baer, a nephew named Theodore, (b. November, 1869, immigrated from Germany in 1893) surfaced in 1894 as a bookkeeper for the firm. Theodore lived at 501 Harrison Avenue.

1895 revealed another move by Isaac, this time into the recently acquired Vendome Hotel and portending a change of circumstances. The hotel remained his home until he dropped from the city directory in 1899 and Adolph was thereafter referred to as president of the business with a new home address at 501 Harrison Avenue. Theodore also moved in 1895 to 137 East 5th Street and again in 1899 to 13 American Bank Building. In the 1902 city directory Theodore was referred to as secretary and treasurer of Baer Bros. Mercantile. During 1903 he moved his household to 214 West 7th Street, having married May H. Kahn on January 27 and in 1905 to 318 West 8th Street.

Baer Brothers' Mercantile became Muller Mercantile in 1910. The only Baers accounted for in the Leadville census of that year were Theodore, his wife May (33), their children Fredrick (4) and Louise (2), and May's father, Marx Kahn (born in Germany during 1829 and an immigrant in 1850).

An after word by Jennifer McGeorge (great, great granddaughter of Adolph and Mathilda Baer)

The Baers were close family friends of the Browns, as in "Unsinkable Molly", and the Baers moved to Denver close on the heels of the Browns (1890s). My great-grandmother was known to tell stories of going to their grand home in Denver for birthday parties. Minetta attended Miss Wolcott's School for Girls from 1901 to 1904. Some time thereafter the family moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, and Minetta met Daniel Alexander, her future husband and the son of a prominent resident of the city. Minetta went to Smith College but left in her sophomore year



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(1908) to care for her father who was very ill. Adolph died in 1914 of kidney cancer. Mathilda stayed in Salt Lake City close to her family until she was about 65 when she started to split her time between San Francisco and Salt Lake City. In San Francisco she lived at the Clift Hotel and her daughter Minetta joined her in the late 1940s. Mathilda lived there until her death at the age of 93 in 1954. My great grandmother, Minetta, lived at the Clift until 1978 and then was moved to a convalescent hospital in Tiburon, California. She died there on her 94th birthday on January 27, 1980.

I have met with my Great Uncle Daniel Alexander (Minetta's Son) and also received a letter from my Great Aunt Marion Peterson (Minetta's youngest daughter). Most of what Aunt Marion wrote we already know but she does give some insight into the family.

She thinks everyone was born in Karlsburgh, Germany and the boys left Germany to avoid Bismarck's draft and "to follow their dream to freedom and adventure". When they got to Leadville they "looked around to see what wasn't there and opened a tobacco store-cigars and cigarettes were popular with the miners. No. 1 friends in the community were the Mudd family of the Cyprus Mines Corp. Harvey Mudd Jr.'s wife Mildred Mudd was a lifelong friend of Minettas. The Baer brothers expanded their business vision and decided to go into ranching-thus they found beautiful land 5 miles outside of Meeker, Colorado, where they bought thousands of acres and established the K-T Ranch-one of the largest ranches in that part of the state-next to the Alfonzo Bell ranch (5 miles away). Adolf did not want to be a rancher so he owned the minority stock in the K-T, but Isaac and wife and children, Ruth & Ezra, lived on the ranch-only a short time as Isaac, wife and chauffeur were killed crossing a railroad track! Ezra married-lived in Meeker- Ruth, the brains and brawn of the two lived on the ranch until it was sold just before World War II."

His obituary, July 15th 1961:

Rites Held for Ernest Baer

San Francisco-Services were held here for Ernest O. Baer, a pioneer of the industry, who died suddenly last week. Mr Baer had been a member of this industry actually since before Repeal, starting as a representative of Frankfort Distillers selling medicinal spirits. Starting as a wholesaler immediately after Repeal, Mr.Baer became a whiskey broker in 1935, and remained in that capacity until his death. At the May convention of the Whiskey Brokers of America he was elected a lifetime member. He was a member of the Shrine, and an inveterate sports fan of the S.F. Giants baseball team, and the 49ers football team. Mr.Baer is survived by his son, Ernest O. Baer Jr., a granddaughter Leslie Ann Baer, and a sister, Minnette Alexander. Services were held from Sinai Memorial Chapel in San Francisco with inurnment at Portals of Eternity Cemetary.

From the Goodwin's Weekly (no date):Adolph Baer. A strong and very true man was Adolph Baer. He was better known in Colorado than in Utah. A pioneer of Pueblo and Leadville. A stalwart man of affairs of everywhere, he filled his place and performed his work with honor and tireless industry, till his call came. He earned the rest that has come to him, and this should be a comfort to the family that are left desolate by his death.