



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Blumberg

Samuel Blumberg

Born: 1851

Birthplace: Russian Poland

Immigrated: 1883

Died: ?

Occupation: Clothier

Paulina/Pauline? Blumberg

Born: 1841

Birthplace: Russian Poland?

Immigrated: 1883?

Died: October 5, 1891

Occupation: Housewife and Shop Assistant

Other Names Associated With the Blumbergs

The Isaacs

Sam Lavinsky

Ben Loeb

Jacob Bergman

Pearl Bergman

Ed Jackson

The Blumberg family was an interesting group of people who acquired a history of conflict with their neighbors and the police in Leadville. They were particularly protective of their staircases. The family was representative of the "Wild" element in the Wild West. Their escapades with staircases would begin after they moved to Leadville.

Samuel Blumberg was born in 1851 and emigrated from Russian Poland in 1883.¹ Blumberg was married to Paulina Blumberg when he came to Leadville in 1887. The Blumbergs had at least one child, Pearl, who was born in 1866 in Russian Poland.² This means Sam and Paulina were married prior to immigrating in 1883. Their daughter, Pearl Bergman came over separately in 1887 with her husband Jacob Bergman.³ Samuel first appears in the Leadville city directories in 1887 as a peddler on 105 S. Harrison Ave.⁴ Examining the

city directories it is possible to trace the success of Blumberg as he rose from a peddler in 1887 to a manager of a clothing shop in 1897. This was a trajectory common for many Leadville Jews. In 1888 he opened a second hand clothing shop on 120 Harrison Ave.⁵ In 1890 Blumberg moved to 122 Harrison Ave.⁶ From 1892 to 1895 Blumberg worked with Ed Jackson, another prominent Jewish merchant, at a clothing store on Harrison Avenue.⁷ In 1897 Samuel was a manager of a clothing shop with his daughter Pearl Bergman.⁸ The Blumbergs were quite industrious, but they also had a number of conflicts with their neighbors and the police. Paulina Blumberg was a feisty figure with a temper. Apparently there was a violent disagreement with the Blumberg's neighbors, the Isaacs, over the use of a staircase around September 22nd, 1891. This would have occurred at 122 Harrison Ave.⁹ The staircase was between both houses, and each family claimed ownership of the property in question. However, "it was decided to send for the city engineer, who, after taking a few measurements, decided that the passage was the property of the Isaacs, estate."¹⁰ After this decision, Mr. Isaacs decided to board up the staircase to prevent its further use by the Blumbergs. This caused ample distress to

"Mrs. Blumberg, who, in the absence of her husband, was in charge of the business. During the progress of nailing up the doorway she appeared very much excited, but made no hostile demonstration until Sunday, when, wrought up to a high pitch of nervous excitement she secured a hatchet and began the work of demolition. She had not proceeded far in her work of destruction when Capt. McDonell appeared and arrested the woman, who gave bonds for her appearance in the police court. Monday the case came up before Magistrate Moore and Mrs. Blumberg was fined \$5 and costs."¹¹



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Whether due to the stress of this altercation, or an unrelated cause, Mrs. Blumberg passed away on October 5th, 1891.¹² This had a serious impact on Samuel financially and emotionally. Samuel began putting advertisements in the *Herald Democrat* which publicized his wife's death and used it as a reason for clearing out his shop.¹³ Either Samuel could no longer run the shop without his wife's help, or he shrewdly used Paulina's death as an opportunity to clear out his shop with a sale...

Paulina's death may have been one of the reasons Samuel stopped managing his own shop after 1891. No doubt there were also hard feelings with his neighbors, the Isaacs due to the hatchet episode. After these events Blumberg begins to be listed as a clerk working for Ed Jackson in 1892. It wouldn't be until at least 1897 that Samuel would once again be operating his own business.

Samuel tangled with the law on multiple occasions. On April 13th, 1892 Samuel is mentioned in two cases which Judge Goddard heard in the same day.¹⁴ Following this Samuel had an altercation with his neighbors which would be worthy of Paulina Blumberg's memory. In fact, due to this particular event, Samuel is listed as having "more trouble than half the town."¹⁵ The colorful confrontation was with Blumberg's neighbor Sam Lavinsky, and it was once again over who owned the shared staircase between their premises. Lavinsky was a saloon owner whose exploits could rival Blumberg's. Accordingly, the scene was set for clash. The following is an excerpt from the article which describes the incident:

"Mr. Blumberg had enjoyed ingress and egress to his apartments through a certain stairway on the Lavinsky premises from some ancient landlord whose power had long since grown obsolete. As

long as the relations between the two neighbors were not strained he was permitted to continue in the enjoyment of this ancient privilege, and to which he did not prove the shadow of a title, the landlord testifying that Lavinsky paid the rent and was required to make good the damages that Blumberg inflicted with the ax on the hall door. The relations became so upset that Lavinsky nailed up the doors while Blumberg would chop them down with an ax. This led to Blumberg kicking Lavinsky down stairs and running him up stairs with his gun, while Lavinsky would, as occasion required, lay his neighbor's scalp open with a billiard cue. Blumberg became so engaged that whenever Mrs. Lavinsky appeared on the scene he would call her the worst and vilest of names. After being placed under a bond for keeping the peace and after being warned by an officer, he chopped down a door on the disputed stairway. For this breach of the peace and defamation of character Samuel Blumberg was let off with a fine of \$5 and costs..."¹⁶

This altercation is reminiscent of Paulina Blumberg taking a hatchet to her disputed stairs in 1891. It is also representative of Samuel's turbulent personality. In December of 1895 he got into a confrontation with Duke McGlynn over their shared affection for the same "bewitching maiden of uncertain chastity."¹⁷ The following excerpt describes the event at the Primrose Club:

"Blumberg was unkind enough to declare Duke a vagrant, which charge, Duke says, was prompted by jealousy. To prove that it was not Blumberg called a number of witnesses, and to show that his position was beyond reproach the accused also had a host of friends present. Susie Reynold's smiling face was seen among the Duke's friends, as was also the noble figure of Ben Loeb. But it was all in vain. The Duke had not paid his monthly assessment for November to the club, which amounted to \$32.60, and he could expect no more favors. He couldn't prove



that the charge of vagrancy was not true, so went on the slide. He will have to put up \$33.80, in addition to the former assessment, before he can see Birdie again.”¹⁸

Sam Blumberg became a frequenter of shadier premises after his wife’s death, however as evidenced by this article, he was not a vagrant, and was quick to point that out if he felt it was to his benefit, as in the case of Duke McGlynn.

Despite all of his exploits, Samuel Blumberg does not appear in the city directories after 1900 and unlike his wife, he is not buried in Leadville’s Hebrew Cemetery. Sam’s daughter, Pearl, continued to live in Leadville until at least 1910¹⁹ and it is possible he stayed with her until then. It appears Samuel did not spend his last days in Leadville and it is possible he moved on like so many others when the town’s economy began to slow down. Perhaps he was in need of finding a more suitable habitation where he could own his own staircase in peace and quiet.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 1900 Census.

² U.S. Census Bureau. 1900 Census.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. 1900 Census.

⁴ 1887 Leadville City Directory

⁵ 1888 Leadville City Directory

⁶ 1890 Leadville City Directory

⁷ 1892-1895 Leadville city directories

⁸ 1897 Leadville City Directory

⁹ 1891 Leadville City Directory

¹⁰ “Bandy with a Hatchet.” *Herald Democrat*, September 22, 1891. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹¹ “Bandy with a Hatchet.” *Herald Democrat*, September 22, 1891. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹² Leadville Hebrew Cemetery

¹³ “Advertisement.” *Herald Democrat*, January 10, 1892. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁴ “District Court.” *Herald Democrat*, April 13, 1892. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁵ “Blumberg Vs. Lavinsky.” *Herald Democrat*, October 3, 1895. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁶ “Blumberg Vs. Lavinsky.” *Herald Democrat*, October 3, 1895. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁷ “The Primrose.” *Herald Democrat*, December 31, 1895. Accessed June 15, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁸ “The Primrose.” *Herald Democrat*, December 31, 1895. Accessed June 15, 2016.

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¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. 1910 Census.