



Fred Butler
Born: 1856
Birthplace: New York
Died: 1911
Occupation: Pioneer, Merchant, Republican
Politician, Insurance Agent, and Business owner

Father Benj Butler
Mother Henrietta Butler

Brothers
Possibly a Henry Butler
Samuel Butler
Louis Butler
Isaac Butler

Sister
Hannah (Butler) Frankle

Wife
Theresa Butler

Daughter
Loretta Butler

Names associated with the Butlers
John Fogle – Worked for the Palace of Fashion
David May
Henry Frankle
Philip Grossmayer

Addresses of the Butler's In Leadville

Fred Butler was born in New York in 1858. Both of his parents, Benj and Henrietta were immigrants from Germany. Fred Butler had four brothers. Louis was born in 1850, Henry in 1852, Isaac in 1854, and Samuel in 1862. Fred also had one sister, Hannah, who was born in 1855.¹ Fred Butler first came to Leadville in 1879. He was representing a group of capitalists which wished to invest in Leadville's budding smelting industry. When Butler arrived in Leadville in March he was intrigued by the potential opportunities in the dry goods industry.² Fred, his brother Louis, and Henry Frankle banded together and decided to invest in Leadville. They opened "The Palace of Fashion," running their first advertisements in the *Leadville Daily Herald* on October 21, 1880.³ Louis Butler is listed as being one of the owners of the store, however he resided in New York City.⁴ Henry Frankle was in a similar arrangement in 1882, when he began residing in Denver.⁵ Fred Butler's obituary reveals his sister was married to Henry Frankle.⁶ However, it is unclear whether Hannah Butler was married to Frankle at this time.

Disaster struck on May 19, 1882 when the Palace of Fashion burned down due to an arson attack.⁷ Butler and some of the other Jewish employees were suspected. However, the true culprit was found and they were cleared of suspicion.⁸ During this time, the Palace of Fashion was a dry goods, clothing, and furnishing store. In 1884 Fred Butler became the sole proprietor of the Palace of Fashion⁹ and both Henry Frankle and Louis Butler cease to be listed in the city directories.¹⁰ In 1885, a Henry Butler appears in the city directories as a cigar manufacturer.¹¹ Samuel Butler is listed in the 1891 directory as a miner.¹² It is uncertain whether these are the same Henry and Samuel who are listed as Fred's siblings on the 1870 census. Fred's other brother, Isaac began to work with him at the Palace of Fashion in 1885.¹³ This arrangement persisted until 1892 when Isaac Butler left the



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Butler

Palace of Fashion in order to work as a merchant at Callaway Block, 610 Harrison Avenue.¹⁴ It is fortuitous Isaac Butler left the Palace of Fashion, for 1892 and 1893 would be trying years for Fred Butler. On May 28th, another one of Fred Butler's buildings, "The Famous Shoe Store," was condemned due to fire damage. "Mr. Butler [complied] with the order, and he [proposed] to build a handsome new building at once."¹⁵ This new construction added to significant financial restraints that same year.

In 1892, Fred Butler began to run into business troubles with the Palace of Fashion and he began borrowing from friends, family, and other businesses. This self-destructive situation led to bankruptcy and Sheriff Kennedy was forced to take possession of the Palace of Fashion on the 14th of September.¹⁶ Sheriff Kennedy supervised the liquidation of the remaining stock in order to alleviate some of Fred Butler's debts. At this time the following claims were made against Fred Butler:¹⁷

Sweitzer, Pembroke & Co., New York - \$5,194.83
J.V. Holcomb, Denver - \$8,450.00
Richard Metz, Denver - \$1,500.00
Hyman Stern, Denver - \$1,500.00
Denver National Bank - \$10,115.32
Isaac Butler et al., Denver - \$6,983.27
David May et al., Denver - \$1,270.00
C.C. Davis & Co. - \$598.00
C. Boettcher - \$341.25

This was a total of \$35,952.67. Not all of these claims were satisfied by the clearance sale. Sweitzer Pembroke & Co. opened up a law suit against Sheriff Kennedy wanting compensation for their losses. Although the suit was against Sheriff Kennedy, it concerned Fred Butler, who agreed to pay all expenses related to the trial.¹⁸ This was followed by a number of other suits which directly targeted Fred Butler. The

following suits were covered in the trial pertaining to Fred Butler's bankruptcy:¹⁹

Sweitzer, Pembroke & Co. vs. Sheriff Kennedy
Denver National Bank vs. Fred Butler
David May et al. vs. Fred Butler
Richard Metz vs. Fred Butler
J.B. Fulton vs. Fred Butler
M. Hyman vs. Fred Butler
Isaac Butler and Sam Butler vs. Fred Butler
Hyman Stern vs. Fred Butler

The trial lasted from January 11th to the 15th. The subject of the trial was the "questionable" business dealings of Fred Butler. The allegations were that Butler had been borrowing money while failing to disclose his already substantial debts to his creditors. Luckily for him, the jury decided he had borrowed money with the belief he would not be declaring bankruptcy. Sweitzer, Pembroke & Co., not satisfied with this verdict, attempted to appeal the court's decision in February. However, this appeal was rejected.²⁰

Remarkably, Butler bounced back from this setback. After his bankruptcy he ran a dry goods store with his brother Isaac. This arrangement lasted from 1894 to at least 1895.²¹ After 1895 Isaac Butler ceases to appear in the city directories.²² Fred Butler's fortunes once again improved in 1898 when he became the Receiver of Public Monies for the United States Land Office. Butler did not expect to be appointed and had only given tacit approval to his friends who had nominated him. Butler only found out about his appointment when informed by reporters asking for his feelings on his success.²³ Butler was appointed by both presidents McKinley in 1898 and Theodore Roosevelt in 1903, for this position and served from 1898 to January 1906 when he finally resigned.²⁴ This career was more successful than the exploits in the dry goods business but was still marred with controversy.



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Butler

On August 15th, 1901 Attorney A. J. Sterling called for charges against Fred Butler for reasons of his supposedly questionable moral standing in society. These charges were not against his business practices, rather Butler's private life.²⁵ However, before calling for these charges, an associate of Sterling's, D. H. Clute, had an application for a homestead patent rejected by Butler. Interestingly:

"When asked what connection the charges had with the reversal of an application for a homestead patent by his client, D. H. Clute, Colonel Sterling said: "The present charges have nothing to do with that case, other than that the first charges against Butler's moral character were sent along to the authorities at Washington at the same time that papers were sent bearing on Butler's judgment in the case of my client, D. H. Clute. Instead he went beyond his jurisdiction by inserting a clause charging Clute with being a felon."²⁶

Despite the timing of the allegations Sterling claimed it was not due to any quarrel in regards to D. H. Clute. When the charges were announced there was bipartisan disagreement against Sterling in Leadville local politics, "a large number of local Democrats and Republicans have filed favorable endorsements in regard to Receiver Butler, commendatory of his character as a land office official, and generally denying the charges that have been filed against him."²⁷ Regardless of the seemingly doubtful verity in these accusations, an inspector, A.H. Burke, visited Leadville and found all charges by Sterling against Butler to be "completely unfounded."²⁸

Besides this inconsequential snafu, the remainder of Fred Butler's career as a land officer was a success. He was relieved of his duties on March 1st, 1906. Afterwards his new

title was "Insurance Man." Butler left his job as land officer to become an agent for Travelers Insurance based out of Hartford Connecticut. Butler began working for Travelers after he "bought out the insurance business of Philip Grossmayer."²⁹ Fred Butler is mentioned in the *Herald Democrat*, and praised for his business acumen in 1909³⁰ and 1910.³¹ This was quite the turn around from 1893 when Butler was in court and under suit due to his business practices and bankruptcy.

Between 1900 and 1910 Fred Butler was married to Theresa Butler. She was born in Illinois in 1873, and both her father and mother were from Indiana. It is likely Fred and Theresa were married around 1908 or 1909, because they had a daughter, Loretta born in 1909.³² It turned out Butler had started his family late in his life and sadly he passed away due to stomach and liver complications on June 21st, 1911.³³ His death was unexpected and came as a shock to the community.³⁴ His obituary reveals Fred Butler was a great Shakespeare enthusiast as the following excerpt from the *Herald Democrat* explains:

"Fred Butler was endowed by nature with all the physical and mental attributes of a great actor. He possessed to a remarkable degree the dramatic temperament. Had he followed the bent of his own inclinations and had not the accident of environment possibly interfered there is no reason why he should not have made a great name for himself on the stage. He devoted much of his leisure to the study of elocution and became a finished Shakespearian scholar and reciter. Some years ago when Mr. Butler was at his best physically, his noble talent for the rendition of familiar Shakespearian roles was always at the service of the community. It was a rare treat to listen to that magnificent voice now stilled in death. It is hard to believe that "the rest is in silence."³⁵



In his obituary it is noted that Fred Butler was lifelong member of the Leadville Elks Society and a trustee at Temple Israel.³⁶ This shows he was active in many sectors of his community, not just business or politics. Fred Butler was interred at

Leadville's Hebrew Cemetery.³⁷ Mrs. Butler and her child cease to appear in the Leadville city directories after 1911. It is unknown where she and her child moved to, but it appears they did not remain in Leadville.

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. 1870 Census.

² "Fred Butler Passes Away." *Herald Democrat*, June 22, 1911. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

³ "Advertisement" *Leadville Daily Herald*, October 21, 1880. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

⁴ 1880 Leadville City Directory

⁵ 1882 Leadville City Directory

⁶ "Fred Butler Passes Away." *Herald Democrat*, June 22, 1911. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

⁷ <http://www.jewishleadville.org/palaceoffashionfire.html>

⁸ <http://www.jewishleadville.org/palaceoffashiontrial.html>

⁹ 1884 Leadville City Directory

¹⁰ 1884 Leadville City Directory

¹¹ 1885 Leadville City Directory

¹² 1891 Leadville City Directory

¹³ 1885 Leadville City Directory

¹⁴ 1892 Leadville City Directory

¹⁵ "The Building Condemned." *Leadville Daily Chronicle*, May 28, 1892. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁶ "Levied On The Goods." *Herald Democrat*, September 14, 1892. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

¹⁷ "Levied On The Goods." *Herald Democrat*, September 14, 1892. Accessed July 22, 2016.

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¹⁸ "It's In Court At Last." *Leadville Daily Chronicle*, January 11, 1893. Accessed July 22, 2016.

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¹⁹ "Fred Butler's Doings." *Leadville Daily Chronicle*, January 12, 1893. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

²⁰ "A Motion Overruled." *Herald Democrat*, February 9, 1893. Accessed July 22, 2016.

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²¹ 1894-1895 Leadville City directories

²² 1895 Leadville City Directory

²³ "Fred Butler Appointed." *Herald Democrat*, March 23, 1898. Accessed July 22, 2016.

<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>

²⁴ "Fred Butler Passes Away." *Herald Democrat*, June 22, 1911. Accessed July 22, 2016.

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Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Butler

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- ²⁵ "Charged With Immorality." *Herald Democrat*, August 16, 1901. Accessed July 22, 2016.
<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ²⁶ "Charged With Immorality." *Herald Democrat*, August 16, 1901. Accessed July 22, 2016.
<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ²⁷ "Charged With Immorality." *Herald Democrat*, August 16, 1901. Accessed July 22, 2016.
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- ²⁸ "Butler Exonerated." *Herald Democrat*, September 3, 1901. Accessed July 22, 2016.
<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ²⁹ "Ex-Receiver Butler Today." *Herald Democrat*, March 1, 1906. Accessed July 22, 2016.
<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ³⁰ "Fred Butler's Good Record Large Insurance Business." *Herald Democrat*, January 1, 1909. Accessed July 22, 2016. <https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ³¹ "Fred Butler's Business Record." *Herald Democrat*, January 1, 1910. Accessed July 22, 2016.
<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ³² U.S. Census Bureau. 1910 Census.
- ³³ "Fred Butler Passes Away." *Herald Democrat*, June 22, 1911. Accessed July 22, 2016.
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- ³⁴ "Fred Butler Passes Away." *Herald Democrat*, June 22, 1911. Accessed July 22, 2016.
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<https://www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org>
- ³⁷ Leadville Hebrew Cemetery