



# Temple Israel FOUNDATION

## Biographical Information

### Davidson

Herman Davidson  
Born: Milwaukee, 1890.  
Died:  
AKA: Charles Miller  
AKA: Ray Goodwin

Herman Davidson came to Leadville, likely in January of 1909. There are no records of Herman in Leadville city directories under his legal name, or either of his two aliases; Ray Goodwin or Charles Miller. Herman's time in Leadville was spent under nefarious circumstances having passed a forged check in the name of Ray Goodwin and standing trial for the same. During questioning for that crime, Charles told police he was a cook but sometimes worked as a traveling minstrel, who at the age of 19 years old had claimed he had been to every state in the Union and many countries across the globe. It is also undetermined as to whether Ray Goodwin was an alias he created or someone whom he posed as after pilfering identification documents found on his person at the time of his arrest.<sup>1</sup> The identification card gave a Denver address, but a search of 1908 and 1909 Denver city directories revealed no one named Goodwin at that address.

Davidson was arrested in Pueblo, Colorado on February 7, 1909, under the name of Charles Miller, for passing a bogus check for \$14 a few days earlier at the Leadville clothing store of Hyman Isaacs.<sup>2</sup> He was extradited and brought to Leadville by Sherriff Campbell on February 11.<sup>3</sup> On February 13, Davidson gave the following account of his life to Judge Cavender:

*"If you'll allow me, your honor," he said,  
"I'll make a statement covering the last five  
or six years of my life."*

*"On June 12, 1905, after having knocked  
about myself for several years, I left  
Chicago in company with a friend, Harry  
Morris. We went into the theatrical*

*business. For a time we did well-very well.  
During the first three and a half years I  
saved some money. I also lived well and  
spent much. I am not ashamed to say that,  
as I earned all my money honestly.*

*"Seven months ago, after a successful  
campaign on the coast, we started back to  
the east. At Salt Lake City Morris was taken  
sick and after a long illness, died."*

*"I spent all my money in caring for him.  
After his death I was helpless. We had been  
doing 'team work' and alone I could do  
nothing. I tried at several theaters, but it  
was no use."*

*"Finally, in desperation, I secured a job at a  
cement works in Portland Colorado. I  
worked hard-harder work than I had ever  
done before-and it wore me out."*

*"Being compelled to quit that work, I went  
to Grand Junction (Colorado), then to  
Denver, but with the same story everywhere.  
There was no work for me to do."*

*"Last November I secured a job on the  
dining car service of the Rio Grande  
(Railroad) out of Denver, but after a few  
weeks of work, they told me I was no longer  
needed."*

*"Since then, judge, the lord knows I have  
been trying to make an honest living. I came  
to Leadville a few weeks ago, and believe  
me, I have walked all over this town trying  
to sell goods on commission."*

*"I had the promise of the Eagles here to  
appear at a 'smoker' which they had  
planned on giving, but I had no money and  
could not wait until that time came."*



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*“For nearly fifty hours I had nothing to eat. I found that check and filled it out.”*

*“I needed the money and just had to do something to buy a little to eat.”*

*“I’m guilty, and I believe that anyone else would have done the same thing.”<sup>4</sup>*

Herman testified that he was 18 years old, but jailers said his appearance was much more mature (see the booking below and it’s identification of Davidson as a Jew).

Herman went on to claim that the blank checks discovered on his person at the time of his arrest he had found and picked them up for “no particular reason” but not with the intention of using them. Judge Cavender responded by sentencing Herman

to an eighteen to thirty-six-month sentence at hard labor in the state penitentiary in Canon City.<sup>5</sup> Also unexplained in court testimony was the connection between Herman’s claim of hunger as his motive and the reality that he passed this forged check in a clothing store.

Ironically, Herman was also wanted in Jackson County, Oklahoma. When the marshal arrived in Leadville to retrieve Davidson, he discovered he was short of money for the return trip. After proving his identity, the marshal asked if the officer on duty could cash a check for \$30. The check did not clear, but the money was sent a few days later to accommodate the debt.<sup>6</sup>

Likely owing to Davidson’s transient status, no other records can be found detailing his life in Leadville.

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<sup>1</sup> *Around The City*. (Leadville, CO: Herald Democrat. February 11, 1909). P5.

<sup>2</sup> For more information on Hyman Isaacs and his family, please visit: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/isaacs.html> .

<sup>3</sup> *Arrested In Pueblo*. (Leadville, CO: Herald Democrat. February 8, 1909). P5.

<sup>4</sup> *Miller’s Look Didn’t Fit Age*. (Leadville, CO: Herald Democrat. February 14, 1909). P8.

<sup>5</sup> *Miller’s Look Didn’t Fit Age*. 1909. P8.

<sup>6</sup> *Couldn’t Cash Check*. (Leadville, CO: Herald Democrat. February 27, 1909). P5.



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STABLE URL: <http://www.jewishledville.org/davidson.html>