



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Kraft

Marx Kraft

Born: Germany, 1851

Died:

Bertha Kraft

Born: Germany, 1844

Died:

Blanche (Wert) Kraft

Born: Ohio, 1869

Died:

Solomon Kraft

Born: Wisconsin, 1871

Died:

Herbert Kraft

Born: Leadville, January 29, 1881

Died:

Lilly Kraft

Born: Leadville, 1881

Died: Leadville, July 14, 1882.

In 1879, Marx Kraft visited Leadville for the first time and stayed at The Grand Hotel with the intention of making Leadville the new home for his family.¹ It is not clear where the family came from initially, but quite likely settled in Denver temporarily while they made long term plans. There are records of the family in Ohio and Wisconsin prior to arriving in Colorado in the late 1870's, but definitive timelines cannot be confirmed.² By 1880, Marx had secured employment with the tailor firm of S. Berry as a clerk and had moved his wife, Bertha, and two children, Blanche and Sollie, to 314 North Leiter street.³ The family settled in to their new community quickly.⁴ Their third child, Herbert, was born in Leadville on January 29, 1881,⁵ and Sollie attended the joint birthday party of Charles Loeb and Judah Levy on October 30 of the same year.⁶ Later that same year a fourth child, Lilly,⁷

was also born in Leadville. The family found Leadville quite prosperous and endeavored in multiple business ventures that focused primarily on real estate and mining speculation. Somewhat unusual for the times, Bertha was heavily involved in the family business operations and much of their business property was titled in her name. In 1882, during a wave of cattle rustling and horse thievery, Bertha announced that one of her horses had been stolen. She offered a fifteen-dollar reward for the return of the animal or capture of the bandit.⁸

In July of 1882, Lilly suffered briefly with an illness that claimed her life. No cause of death is listed, but there is mention in the newspapers of Lilly's funeral on July 14.⁹ Her remains were interred at the Leadville Hebrew cemetery though her original headstone is lost. Temple Israel Foundation replaced the headstone during the cemetery restoration project and her gravesite (Block B, Lot 2, Grave 6) can be visited there today.¹⁰

The family maintained the same city residence through 1883,¹¹ however Bertha acquired a large 80 acre ranch near Alma, Colorado, that year. Over the course of the season the rash of rustling continued in the area and many ranch owners experienced heavy losses. Bertha reported that during their first year at the ranch more than twenty head of cattle had been stolen.¹² Despite their second home in the country, the family was still very involved in the Leadville community. Bertha and Marx attend a card party given by the Monheimers on December 1¹³ and the whole family was present at the Chanukah festival at City Hall on December 28.¹⁴

In 1884, Bertha was a regular hostess of the Pleasant Hour Club, a small organization of local Jewish ladies who met for coffee and tea on a weekly basis.¹⁵ Blanche attended a large children's party given at the Mater home on January 4.¹⁶ Sol performed in the chorus during a school presentation of the play "Patience" at the Tabor Opera House on April 25.¹⁷ Likely frustrated with



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the continued cattle and horse theft, Bertha sold the family's Alma ranch to G.M. McKinney on May 17, 1884.¹⁸ After the sale the family became even more visible at community functions. Marx and Bertha were present at the Strawberry Festival given by the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society on June 12.¹⁹ Bertha and Blanche attended a moonlight picnic at Evergreen Lakes on July 9 where the Hermans and Schlosses were also present.²⁰ Later in September, Marx and Ike Baer were nominated along with David May for the Congregation Israel office of Vice President. Both Baer and Kraft declined their nominations and May was elected unopposed.²¹

In 1885, the Kraft family was quite active socially.²² Fourteen year-old Sol played second base for the Leadville Athletics baseball team.²³ Bertha and Marx attended the Purim Masque Bal on March 4,²⁴ while Herbert and his parents also attended the Children's Purim Masque Ball on May 8.²⁵ The family was also present at the Simchath Torahs Hop given by the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society at city hall on September 25.²⁶

Bertha worked briefly for B. Zemansky Clothing at 506½ Harrison Avenue in 1886.²⁷ This arrangement did not last long. In February of that year, Bertha purchased Zemansky's shop and changed the marquee to B. Kraft Clothing.²⁸ Marx continued with his position at S. Berry while Sol began working as a clerk for his mother.²⁹ Blanche was noted to be one of the most charming young ladies in the high school.³⁰ The family attended Jacob Schloss' fiftieth birthday party on March 14.³¹

Bertha joined in an agreement with other prominent Leadville retailers that included David May and Charles Sands. The agreement was for merchants to close their stores by 12 o'clock Sunday mornings in an effort to designate Sundays as a non-business day.³² The family remained very active socially. They attended the Strawberry and Ice Cream Festival given by the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent

Society on June 9.³³ Blanche attended the Weiss-Jeffries wedding on September 9.³⁴ Herbert contracted scarlet fever which lingered for some time although he did recover.³⁵

On June 23, 1886, Henry Morton walked down Harrison Avenue and attempted to steal a pair of boots that were on display outside of Bertha's shop. Morton tried to flee with his 'booty' and was promptly arrested. Morton pleaded guilty and was sentenced to ten days hard labor on the chain gang.³⁶

In 1887, Bertha and Sol continued to clerk for B. Kraft Clothing and Marx became the firm's manager.³⁷ Blanche attended the St. George Episcopal Church Young Ladies Guild Hop on July 13.³⁸ Bertha hosted a coffee party for a large number of women at her home on July 21; these ladies would continue to meet weekly and would eventually call themselves The Pleasant Hour Club.³⁹ Marx sat on a jury for the robbery trial of Charles Patton and Robert Wisdom on May 19 and 20.⁴⁰ Bertha attended the ladies afternoon luncheon at the Manville Smelter on September 1.⁴¹

Blanche was a teenager who engaged in many activities. She became a member in a dancing and singing ensemble called the Peak Sister's. The group performed what is described as a 'burlesque' show while clad in special 'uniforms' and delighted their audience as the opening act for the city orchestra that performed following the Peak Sister's on August 5 at the Tabor Opera House.⁴² On August 27, Blanche announced to the Herald Democrat that she would be moving to Denver permanently.⁴³ Sol and Blanche attended the wedding of Jacob Frankle and Jennie Schoenberg at Temple Israel on December 4.⁴⁴



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In 1888, Blanche was signatory to an agreement among Leadville merchants to patronize only one of the three Leadville railroad services in an effort to control shipping costs.⁴⁵ Blanche was also noted as one of the larger landholders among Leadville real estate speculators.⁴⁶

Marx moved his family residence to 2129 Champa Street in Denver during 1889. The family remained active with their Leadville business and real estate holdings well into the twentieth century despite their relocation.⁴⁷ They continued to visit Leadville regularly for business and social events. Blanche was present at the Schloss-Stern Wedding on April 7, 1891.⁴⁸

By 1894, Marx was the owner of the Tivoli building at Harrison and Third.⁴⁹ On February 26, a fire that broke out at the C.E. Maguire & Co. fruit and confectioner's shop at 223 Harrison Avenue which was run by Julius Raabe. There was extensive damage to the entire block but luckily the wind was slight that day, otherwise the block of mostly wooden-frame structures would have burned entirely. Marx owned the two lots on the block located at 223 and 225 Harrison which were completely destroyed along with Tivoli Hall and the Chronicle Building. Several other buildings on the block suffered heavy damages.⁵⁰ Soon afterwards Marx announced he would be constructing a new brick building at the 223 and 225 address.⁵¹

The family was far less visible in Leadville after 1900. Sol became a salesman for a firm in Chicago⁵² and continued to visit Leadville every year for business until 1910.⁵³



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- ¹ "Hotel Arrivals". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. May 23, 1879. P4.
 - ² "United States Census, 1880," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MFDJ-SRW> : 19 August 2017), M Kraft, Leadville, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district ED 75, sheet 344A, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 0091; FHL microfilm 1,254,091.
 - ³ TB Corbett, WC Hoyer and JH Ballenger. "Corbet, Hoyer and Co's First Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville for 1880". *Democrat Printing Company*; Leadville, CO; USA. 1880. P219.
 - ⁴ TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. "Corbet, and Ballenger's Second Annual City Directory: Containing A Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville for 1881". *Corbet and Ballenger Publishers*. Leadville, CO; USA. 1881. P182.
 - ⁵ "Colorado State Census, 1885," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K8WN-NZK> : 1 April 2016), M Kraft, 1885; citing NARA microfilm publication M158 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 498,507.
 - ⁶ "Birthday Parties". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. October 30, 1881. P3.
 - ⁷ "United States World War I Draft Registration Cards, 1917-1918," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K3T9-P2X> : 12 December 2014), Herbert Kraft, 1917-1918; citing St. Louis City no 28, Missouri, United States, NARA microfilm publication M1509 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.); FHL microfilm 1,683,862.
 - ⁸ "Brown's Canon". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. June 25, 1882. P2.
 - ⁹ "Rays". Leadville, Co; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. July 14, 1882. P4.
 - ¹⁰ Manly, Nancy. "Who's Where In Leadville's Evergreen Cemetery". Leadville, CO; USA. *Historical Research Co-operative*. 1981.
 - ¹¹ TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. "Corbet, and Ballenger's Fourth Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms Etc. in The City Of Leadville for 1883". *Corbet and Ballenger Publishers*. Leadville, CO; USA. 1883. P170.
 - ¹² "The Camps". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. January 7, 1883. P3.
 - ¹³ "A Pleasant Party". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. December 9, 1883. P7.
 - ¹⁴ "A Brilliant Affair". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. December 29, 1883. P12.
 - ¹⁵ "A Pleasant Hour". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. March 4, 1882. P4.
 - ¹⁶ "Juvenile Gathering". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. January 4, 1884. P4.
 - ¹⁷ "Patience". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. April 26, 1884. P9.
 - ¹⁸ "Buena Vista Bits". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. May 17, 1884. P9.
 - ¹⁹ "The Hebrew Festival". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. June 13, 1884. P4.
 - ²⁰ "A Moonlight Picnic". Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. July 11, 1884. P4.
 - ²¹ "The Congregation Israel". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. September 23, 1884. P1.
 - ²² TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. "Corbet, and Ballenger's Sixth Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List Of The Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville For 1885". *Corbet and Ballenger Publishers*. Leadville, CO; USA. 1885. P155.
 - ²³ "Out-Door Sports". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. August 1, 1885. P3.
 - ²⁴ "The Great Purim Ball". Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Herald*. March 5, 1885. P4.
 - ²⁵ "Children's Ball". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. May 9, 1885. P3.
 - ²⁶ "Hebrew Hop". Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. September 26, 1885. P4.
 - ²⁷ TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. "Corbet, and Ballenger's Seventh Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List Of The Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville For 1886". *Corbet and Ballenger Publishers*. Leadville, CO; USA. 1886. P161.



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- 28 “506 ½ Harrison Avenue”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. February 24, 1886. P4.
- 29 Corbett and Ballenger. Leadville, CO; USA. 1886. P162.
- 30 “Personal”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. January 5, 1886. P1.
- 31 “Birthday Party”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. March 16, 1886. P3.
- 32 “Self Explanatory”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. May 22, 1886. P2.
- 33 “Festival And Hop”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. June 10, 1886. P2.
- 34 “The World Of Society”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. September 5, 1886. P5.
- 35 “The Doings Of The Week”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Carbonate Chronicle*. November 22, 1886. P1.
- 36 “Police Pickings”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. June 23, 1886. P3.
- 37 TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. “Corbet, and Ballenger’s Sixth Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List Of The Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville For 1887”. *Corbet and Ballenger Publishers*. Leadville, CO; USA. 1887. P166.
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- 39 “Social And Personal”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. July 25, 1887. P2.
- 40 “Legal Log”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. May 20, 1887. P3.
- 41 “An Afternoon Luncheon”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. September 2, 1887. P3.
- 42 “The Peak Sister’s Entertainment”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. August 6, 1887. P3.
- 43 “Sundry Social Scraps”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. August 28, 1887. P6.
- 44 “Frankle-Schoenberg”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. December 6, 1887. P3.
- 45 “Sentiments Of Shippers”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. January 14, 1888. P4.
- 46 “Tax Payers Talk”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. May 2, 1888. P1.
- 47 JH Ballenger and Richards. “Ballenger & Richard’s Seventeenth Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City of Denver for 1889”. 2011. *Brigham Young University Internet Archive*. Provo, UT; USA. P701.
- 48 “Merry Wedding Bells”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. April 8, 1891. P4.
- 49 “Three Brick Blocks”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Leadville Daily Evening Chronicle*. March 29, 1894. P1.
- 50 “Blaze On The Avenue”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. February 27, 1894. P6.
- 51 “Three Brick Blocks”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. March 29, 1894. P8.
- 52 “Personal Mention”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. May 31, 1902. P8.
- 53 “Around The City”. Leadville, CO; USA. *Herald Democrat*. January 2, 1910. P6.



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