



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Loeb

Ben Loeb

Birth: 1846, Germany

Immigrated: Dallas in 1866

Married: Georgia Flynn by 1885

Divorced: 1900

Occupation: Theater, Saloon, and Brothel owner

Death: 1912, Obit in Herald Democrat, 1-29-12

Ben Loeb was born in Germany in 1846 and immigrated to America in 1866. Loeb resided in Dallas, Texas with his brothers Solomon and Simon and worked in the dry goods business at Sanger Bros. on Main Street from 1866 until he relocated to Leadville, Colorado in 1881. *i* Once Loeb arrived in Leadville he “had charge of the Delmonico hotel and bar, the then principal resort for material and spirituous refreshments in the camp, for three years, after leaving which he started the concert hall where he is now located.” *ii* In 1886 Loeb moved from the Delmonico at 114 Harrison Avenue to just next door at 116 Harrison and established Loeb’s Variety Theater and Concert Hall. The next two years proved eventful for Loeb as he purchased not one, but two theaters in 1888. The two theaters Loeb acquired were Mike Goldsmith’s Carbonate and Laura LeClair’s Central Theater. *iii* Loeb’s consolidation of Leadville’s preeminent entertainment houses was a strategic business move for Loeb’s Variety Theater and Concert Hall. Once Loeb had bought out Goldsmith and LeClair, he proclaimed his theater as “the ONLY theater in Leadville, and the leading theater in Colorado.” *iv* Loeb employed the same actors and entertainers at both The Carbonate and The Variety Theater on Harrison, and he advertised the Central Theater as “*the palace of pleasure*”. *v* A short two years later and a formal name change for the Central Theater resulted in Loeb’s Palace of Pleasure, which was boasted as the premier burlesque theater and brothel in town.

In addition to burlesque and dominating the brothel scene, Loeb was instrumental in bringing the most popular and cutting edge vaudeville and novelty acts of the 19th century to Leadville. Entertainment troupes and acts such as the Mexican Typical Orchestra, which boasted the Spanish dagger dancer, Senor Antonio Martinez, *vi* and The Miranda Sisters, a famous trapeze duo known for their “iron jaw” aerial act that consisted of death defying stunts performed with the sole use of their teeth were a regular occurrence under Loeb’s management of Leadville entertainment. *vii* For the more physically minded, there was the famous pugilist George LeBlanche, who had been defeated only once in his boxing career and offered Leadville’s men a test of strength with regular contest bouts at Loeb’s Variety Theater. *viii* For those seeking the unexplained, there was Lena Loeb (no relation to Ben Loeb), a slight teenage girl of 16 known as the “electric wonder.” *ix* Lena was famous for astounding feats of strength in which “[s]trong men are handled with perfect ease”. *x* And as always, Ben Loeb’s girls, or his “sweet-forget-me-nots,” *xi* as he nicknamed them, were

regularly featured attractions as Loeb actively recruited the prettiest girls in town to serve his customers.

Loeb’s multiple theaters and saloons were rife with action that demanded police and court intervention. And on more than one occasion Loeb’s businesses were the backdrop for Leadville’s seedier and more sordid happenings. Leadville police frequented Loeb’s establishments weekly due to barroom brawls, *xii* the occasional wayward wife on the run from a husband, *xiii* elaborate theft schemes, counterfeit money busts, *xiv* razor wielding patrons, *xv* and of course, there was Ben Loeb posing as a “protector of female innocence” *xvi* to the chagrin of husbands when there were young, pretty employable wives on hand. All of these incidents (*and these are simply a few of the more interesting events*) together made Loeb’s businesses a center for not only Leadville’s premier entertainment events, but also for the town’s more deviant denizens.

Despite the often lawless characteristics of Loeb’s operations, he was a well connected and extremely involved within the community and loaned his house band and even his Novelty Theater on Harrison to several community events and hosted multiple complimentary entertainment events. *xvii* Loeb even organized his own baseball team to participate in Leadville’s local league, they were known as Ben Loeb’s nine and were one of the finest teams to entertain the city. *xviii* However, Loeb was ever the businessman and hosted balls where he advertised that his “corps of ladies” *xix* would be in full attendance, so as to entice higher attendance and profits from Leadville’s male patrons.

Ben Loeb was married in 1885 to Georgia Flynn, but by 1900 (01?) was divorced. Loeb’s divorce may have been the product of Loeb’s colorful personality and leading role within Leadville’s nightlife. Nothing other than her marriage to Ben Loeb is known about Flynn.

Though Ben Loeb was one of Leadville’s, and even the state of Colorado’s, most prominent names in entertainment during the 19th century, his popularity waned in tandem with the city’s relevance to the market economy. And it was in 1912, “after a life connected with merry making of the wildest sort and with display of the most spectacular kind, after winning the name of being of being one of the most striking figures of early Leadville” *xx* that Ben Loeb died and was buried in the cemetery by the Hebrew Society at cost.

“Ben Loeb’s death and funeral was a strange contrast to his life. In attendance of 3 and the absence of any service was sharply out of keeping with a life, which was one of long feast of pomp, ceremony, and display. The attendance was not large



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Loeb (continued)

enough to supply pallbearers.” *xxi*

Missives to his brother, Solomon who still lived in Dallas, were answered with promises of reimbursement for a “decent burial”, *xxii* but the money was never sent. Loeb’s funeral was a sad affair and the whereabouts of Loeb’s burial plot within Leadville’s Hebrew cemetery are currently unknown.

i Leadville Herald-Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) January 1, 1886

ii Ibid.

iii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) December 31, 1888

iv Ibid.

v Gretchen Scanlon, A History of Leadville Theater: Opera Houses, Variety Acts and Burlesque Shows (Charleston: The History Press, 2012), 92.

vi Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) August 30, 1888, page 1.

vii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) August 18, 1888, page 5.

viii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) March 1, 1889, page 1.

ix Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) February 20, 1888, page 3.

x Herald Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) February 22, 1888, page 3.

xi Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) August 30, 1888, page 1.

xii Herald Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) July 22, 1891, page 9.

xiii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) September 30, 1892, page 1.

xiv Herald Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) May 24, 1888, page 4.

xv Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) June 12, 1888, page 5.

xvi Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) March 5, 1895, page 4.

xvii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) August 18, 1888, page 3.

xviii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) September 28, 1888, page 2.

xix Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) October 20, 1888.

xx Aspen Democrat-Times (Aspen, Pitkin County) January 20, 1912, page 4.

xxi Herald Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) January 29, 1912, page 5.

xxii Carbonate Weekly Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) February 5, 1912, page 2.

Business Addresses	Year
114 Harrison Avenue	1883-84
106 Harrison Avenue	1885
116 Harrison Avenue	1886-89
116 W 2nd	1890-91
126 W 2nd	1892-98
122 W 2nd	1899-1904
120 W 2nd	1905-11
Residence Addresses	Year
206 E 9th	1884
322 W 6th	1890
117 W 3rd	1892
126 W 2nd	1897
201 ½ Harrison Avenue	1900
414 W 2nd	1901
419 Elm	1911



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Loeb *(continued)*

David Loeb

Birth: 1834, Treier Germany

Death: 1891, Kansas City, Missouri

Spouse: Henrietta Loeb, née Waldauer

Occupation: Furniture Store Owner

Residence: 139 W 7th, 1878-1884

David Loeb was born in 1834 in Treier, Germany, and immigrated to the United States in the mid 19th century. He met and married Henrietta in Missouri, from there he moved to Kansas where he helped found B'nai Jehuda Temple in Overland Park, Kansas, with a small group of Jewish pioneers in 1870. *i* The B'nai Jehuda Temple was a reform congregation and is still in operation to this day. The couple moved to Kansas City, Missouri, where they had three children, two sons and a daughter, Milford, Sidney, and Florence.

From Kansas City the family relocated to Leadville in 1878, where David set up shop as a "gents' furnishing goods" seller. *ii* The Loeb family welcomed a daughter during their time in Leadville with the birth of Blanche. Within the next two years Loeb had moved from the simple seller of "gents' furnishing goods" to the manager and owner of Gates & Kelly at 207 West 2nd Street. David employed his brother-in-law Louis Waldauer at his business as a clerk and the two worked together until Loeb moved his family back to Kansas City, Missouri in 1884. The move to Kansas City was permanent and the family remained there for good and even grew their family by one with the birth of their last child, Arthur.

i <http://www.geni.com/people/David-Loeb/6000000030533213929>, date accessed Jul 27, 2015.

ii City Directory, Leadville, 1879-1884.



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Loeb (continued)

Lena Loeb

Birth: 1870, Florida

Residence: 141 E Chestnut St., 1878-1884

Occupation: Performer

Parents: Bernhard and Regina Loeb

Bernhard and Regina Loeb both immigrated to the United States from Southwestern Germany in the mid-19th century, yet the two did not journey from Germany together. Instead, the pair met and married in Kansas. The Loeb's were an orthodox Jewish family who were very much on the move, and they resided in Kansas, Ohio, and Florida, before finally settling in Colorado. Lena Loeb, the youngest daughter of five siblings, was born during the Loeb family's stay in Florida. Their very next move was to Colorado and the family came to Leadville in 1878 and resided at 141 E. Chestnut Street. During this time Lena's father worked as a saloon keeper and also within the city's mining industry. Lena's older brothers William B. and Charles worked as a cigar manufacturer and clerk, respectively, for Sam Mayer at 106 N. Chestnut Street. *i* The family was perfectly unassuming during their six years of residence in Leadville and celebrated the birth of their youngest child; a boy, Leopold.

However, it was shortly after their departure from the area that the Loeb's, and Lena in particular, became anything but ordinary. It was after Leadville, when the family relocated to Denver that Lena Loeb began to display the extraordinary and unexplained characteristic of immense strength. In 1886, the residents of Leadville had taken note of Loeb's rising fame, with the Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle reporting that, "[a] new star is rising from the horizon of the mysterious and the unknown person of a Miss Lena Loeb... a Jewess of rather slight build, and at this time, although but sixteen years of age, has shown within a few weeks the possession of some inward force..." *ii*

With her brother William working as her agent Lena became famous throughout the state for her feats of strength and was known as the "electric wonder" *iii* and went on to perform well into the late nineteenth century with numerous appearances at the Tabor Opera House and at Ben Loeb's Novelty Theater on Harrison. Though Lena left Leadville behind, the city was always eager to welcome her back for a performance showcasing her "wonderful power" in which "[s]trong men are handled with perfect ease and men weighing over 200 pounds will be lifted on a chair by merely placing her hands upon the arms of the chair." *iv*

i 1879 City Directory, Leadville, Colorado.

ii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) 1886, page 4.

iii Leadville Daily and Evening Chronicle (Leadville, Lake County) February 20, 1888, page 3.

iv Herald Democrat (Leadville, Lake County) February 22, 1888, page 3.



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Loeb *(continued)*

Other Loeb's Needing Additional Documentation

Charles Loeb

Records indicate that in 1885, there was a Charles Loeb living at 601 Harrison Avenue. He was a barkeep and originally from New York. Charles was 59 years old at the time of the 1885 census.

Matilda Loeb

Records indicate that in 1880, there was a Matilda Loeb living at 300 West 5th Street. Matilda was originally from Tennessee and is listed as the head of her household with the profession of housekeeper. Matilda was 65 years old at the time of the 1885 census.

Other known Loeb's in Leadville that lack documentation:

- Archie Loeb
- Charles Loeb
- Benjamin Loeb
- Henry Loeb
- Jake Loeb
- Lucia Loeb
- Michael Loeb
- William Loeb