



# Temple Israel FOUNDATION

## Biographical Information

### Mayer

Born: Approximately 1854, Germany  
Death: Unknown  
Immigrated: Unknown  
Occupation: Pawnbroker  
Spouse: Tillie Mayer, Approximately 1860, Germany  
Children: Adie, Maurice, and infant Charles  
Extended family: Maurice, Meta, and Michael

Samuel Mayer's arrival in the city occurred in approximately 1882. This is when he is first listed in the city's business directory as a pawnbroker employed at 125 Harrison Avenue and living at 221 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>1</sup> Though Samuel's prior whereabouts are not entirely known there are some clues to when and where Mayer immigrated to in the United States. Mayer came to the city with a wife, Tillie Mayer, and at least one child, a daughter, Adie.<sup>2</sup> Both Samuel and his wife were born in Germany, but the date of their immigration and marriage are unknown. However, a clue concerning the family's immigration from Germany to Leadville is found in the 1885 city census, which lists Adie's place of birth as Texas in 1880. Adie's birth allows for supposition that the family made their arrival through Galveston's port.<sup>3</sup>

The city's census also lists their son Maurice as being born in Colorado but his age of 5 makes it uncertain whether or not he was born in Leadville or just before the family's arrival.<sup>4</sup> A third child, Charles, was born in 1885, but only lived for four months. Charles died on August 28<sup>th</sup>, 1885, and is buried in the Leadville Hebrew Cemetery.<sup>5</sup> The Mayer presence in Leadville was not relegated to simply immediate family. In Leadville's 1882 city

directory an aunt and uncle, Maurice and Meta, ages 51 and 35 respectively, had also made the move from Germany to live with the young family at their East 4<sup>th</sup> Street residence.<sup>6</sup>

Samuel Mayer had a full life while living in Leadville and was deeply involved in the city's business, social, and religious communities. In terms of business, Samuel Mayer opened a New York loan office at 125 Harrison Avenue and operated a successful pawnbroker business from this address.<sup>7</sup> In 1884, Mayer switched business niches and partnered with family member Mike Mayer to open S & M. Mayer at 204 Harrison Avenue.<sup>8</sup> S & M. Mayer is listed as a watchmaker and jewelry shop in the 1884 City Directory.<sup>9</sup> S. & M. Mayer was in business for two years before Samuel and Michael went their separate ways. The city's 1887 city directory shows the pair at different addresses with Samuel at 218 Harrison Avenue and Michael employed as a clerk at an undisclosed location while living at 219 East 8<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>10</sup> By 1889, Samuel Mayer's presence in the city has all but disappeared. There is one S. Mayer listed in the 1889 City Directory, yet the connection to Samuel is unclear.<sup>11</sup> The family does not appear in the 1890 city census, which leaves 1889 as the last year that convincingly shows the Mayer family as residents of Leadville.

Politically, Mayer identified as a Republican and actively participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Republican Club.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Mayer was also part of the Blaine and Logan Republican club, which sought to mobilize German-Americans within the 1884 Presidential election.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, Mayer's efforts

<sup>1</sup> City Directory, 1882.

<sup>2</sup> Census

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hebrew Cemetery of Leadville (Leadville, Lake County, Colorado), Charles Mayer, Headstone, 2016

<sup>6</sup> 1885 U.S. census, Lake County, Colorado, Leadville, pg. 3, Charles Mayer, Tillie Mayer, Maurice Mayer, Meta Mayer, Adie Mayer, and Maurice Mayer.

<sup>7</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, March 3, 1882, pg. 4.

<sup>8</sup> City Directory, 1884

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> City Directory, 1887.

<sup>11</sup> City Directory, 1889.

<sup>12</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, March 6, 1883, pg. 1.

<sup>13</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, October 10, 1884, pg. 4.



# Temple Israel FOUNDATION

## Biographical Information

### Mayer

at voter organization did not succeed and Grover Cleveland narrowly defeated Blaine for the Presidential office.

Mayer was a founding member of the Temple Israel and was one of the earliest of Leadville's Jewish citizens to show an interest in erecting a place of worship for the Jewish community. Mayer wasn't just heavily involved with the founding of Temple Israel, but served on the congregation's board.<sup>14</sup> At the start of 1884, "[t]he prominent Israelites of Leadville who are interested in the erection of a place of worship, held a meeting Tuesday evening to discuss the question and to mature plans for the consummation of the project."<sup>15</sup> Mayer was among those counted at the initial planning meeting and he continued to be instrumental in the creation and operation of Temple Israel. Not half a year later, Mayer was responsible for erecting the edifice of the building as part of the building committee,<sup>16</sup> performed as a bass in the choir,<sup>17</sup> and in the congregation's initial election of board members was elected to the office of treasurer.<sup>18</sup>

Samuel Mayer and his wife Tillie were thoroughly involved in the congregation's social life and participated in Purim Balls,<sup>19</sup> weddings, social picnics and more. The family was well-known throughout the city and Mayer even engaged in an entertaining and lively bet with "Colonel" Pap Wyman over the outcome of the 1884 Presidential election.<sup>20</sup> The *Leadville Daily Herald* described the bet as,

"a novel bet...[where] it was agreed between the gentleman, that in case of Cleveland's election Mayer would wheel Pap to the courthouse and back to Pap's

house, and in case of Blaine's election Pap was to furnish the mode of power to convey Mr. Mayer to the courthouse and return."<sup>21</sup>

A few short months later when the outcome of the Presidential election favored Cleveland, the *Leadville Daily Herald* gleefully recounted the earlier events that first led to the bet between "Uncle Sam" Mayer and "Pap" Wyman.<sup>22</sup>

"Uncle Sam Mayer was sitting in his store one balmy afternoon in last July, reading the latest intelligence from the Democratic national convention, then in session at Chicago, when his ears were assailed by whoop that almost split his tympanums."<sup>23</sup>

The *Leadville Daily Herald* continued that upon inspection of what was making the loud whooping sounds, Mayer found

"Colonel Wyman's 240 pounds of humanity ascended from terra firma to space, Colonel Wyman's eyes rolled in a frenzied manner, Colonel's lips parted and Colonel Wyman's lungs emitted a yell that would have made a Ute turn green with envy... Uncle Mayer gazed at the strange spectacle until he felt assured that Colonel Wyman was stricken with some new-fangled disorder of apoplexy."<sup>24</sup>

Mayer then tackled his friend to the ground to ascertain what illness Wyman might be afflicted with. However, the cause of Wyman's peculiar actions was not due to sickness, but from the nomination of Grover Cleveland. Upon discovering the cause the two friends set about creating the unusual bet and it was one that resulted in a "wheelbarrow procession"<sup>25</sup> of Mayer carting

<sup>14</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, August 8 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>15</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, January 17, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, August 8, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>17</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, September 20, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>18</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, September 23, 1884, pg. 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, March 12, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, November 8, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Leadville Daily Herald*, November 22, 1884, pg. 4.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*



# Temple Israel FOUNDATION

## *Biographical Information*

### **Mayer**

---

Wyman through town. More than a thousand spectators turned out to view what as truly a procession that was replete with a band of brass and percussion, “torch bearers”, and “fish-horn performers”.<sup>26</sup> Not once, but twice during the procession’s route the wheelbarrow tipped and “the portly occupant of the wheelbarrow cast to Mother Earth.”<sup>27</sup> “Pap” then elected to walk in front of the wheelbarrow so as not to “make Uncle Mayer’s punishment any more severe than could be possibly helped.”<sup>28</sup> After the merriment of the wheelbarrow procession, which ended at Wyman’s saloon, Tammany Hall, where “hilarity reigned until a late hour.”<sup>29</sup>

Though Samuel Mayer was a well-liked and popular businessman and citizen, his time in Leadville was short. By 1889, Mayer and his family had left the city and their subsequent whereabouts are unknown.

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.