



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Monheimer

Jews were an important element of Leadville's merchant class and the Monheimer brothers are prototypic examples, active in all aspects of Leadville's civic life. Joseph H. (b. 1845) and Marcus H. (b. 1850) were immigrants from Germany sometime before 1867 who initially settled in New York City. Whilst there they assumed the joys of married lives. Joseph married R. (b. 1848) in New York City and the union produced Marcus Jerome (b. 1868), R. (male, b. 1872), and Sam (b. 1880) before leaving the City. Marcus, in turn, married Theresa (b. 1851), of German extraction as was R., in New York City and their first three children, Estella (b. 1875), Louis (b. 1878), and Blanche (b. 1879) were born there.

Marcus was the first of the pair to move his family to Leadville, in 1880. He was immediately active in the community as evidenced by his membership in the Turn Verein Society, a social and athletic organization of German origin, and his appointments to both the Committee of Arrangements and the Building Committee of the Society. By 1881 Monheimer Bros. was in business at 321 Harrison Avenue, the southwest corner of the intersection with 4th Street. Joseph is recorded as being a partner of the enterprise, although still living in New York City, and the building that the store occupied was known as the Monheimer Block (an indicator of ownership and, therefore, adequate capital). They specialized in the sale of dry goods, carpets, and notions. Business must have been good as Marcus was one of the incorporators, on March 25, of the Leadville Electric Light Company along with such local luminaries as Charles Boettcher, David May, and Judge Marcus J. Waldheimer. Nonetheless, the highlight of the year for the family, at home at 418 Pine Street (on the southwest corner of 5th Street), must have been the birth to Theresa of Alfred on May 8th.

Joseph arrived to join his younger brother by early 1882 and settled his wife and three children at 132 West 4th Street. Quickly in the whirl of events, Joseph provided prizes to the best dressed lady and most comical costume at the March 6th masquerade ball celebrating Purim under the auspices of the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Association. He was also amongst the speechmakers hosting a banquet in favor of the Honorable Edwin Harrison, an early Leadville pioneer and namesake to the Avenue and a hook and ladder company. Joseph also appears to have been quite prominent in Leadville's business world by October as he was selected to be the

assignee for the bankruptcy of Max and Sol Herman's clothing store, Herman Brothers. According to the Chronicle, the selection was "certainly a very judicious one, for he has the confidence of the entire community" and "he would be more apt to inspire confidence among our numerous creditors and the commercial community generally than anyone else". Perhaps as a sign of his continuing success, Joseph "removed to his elegant new residence, No. 124 West Ninth Street" in November.

The esteem in which the Monheimers were held was reflected in March of the following year during the aftermath of the Palace of Fashion arson trial. At the festivities commemorating Judge Waldheimer's very successful defense of the five Jews accused, Joseph is referred to as one of "The Merchant Princes of Leadville" and amongst other comments the senior Monheimer remarked that "It has been an unjust persecution by some of the people of Leadville. It was a black-mailing scheme, but I rejoice at the result of the trial and say that the dry goods tonight are at par". 1883 also finds a reference to Joseph in conjunction with the Memorial Day parade wherein he appears as a colonel, presumably honorary, on the staff of Governor Grant in the Colorado National Guard. The Monheimers fulfilled their sporting urges by sponsoring a baseball team that summer and it is recorded that they lost a very amateurish affair to the Daniels, Fisher & Smith nine by a score of 27 to 20 on July 22nd. Politics were also an important part of civic life and again Joseph was prominent. Although he lost the November 6 election to Republican Alex De Lappe, Joseph, the chairman of the Democratic City Central Committee, was selected as a county commissioner a week later on November 14, with strong editorial support from the Chronicle and the Democrat, to replace August Riche who had been removed because of absenteeism and "his liking for alcoholic drinks". An immediate appointment, with Commissioner Frank DeMainville, to be the committee in charge of the poor house followed. Thanksgiving celebrations that year included a Grand Army of the Republic concert at City Hall which featured Joseph's son Marcus Jerome as the King of the Fairies in a production of "An Hour in Fairy Land". December 11th was the date of a fair at the City Hall, for the benefit of the Church of the Sacred Heart, which included a ladies hat donated for sale by Monheimer Bros. and a concert with another song by Jerome and a chorus of children. The year ended on a splendid note as the Hebrew Benevolent Association used the City Hall on the evening



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of December 27 to host the ball in commemoration of the Feast of the Dedication (Chanukah). Joseph was chairman of the Reception Committee and Marcus was chairman of the Floor Committee. It must have been a busy evening in Old Leadville as John L. Sullivan, the great pugilist, was displaying his art at an exhibition in another local venue (the following two nights of his three day tour found John L. too drunk to perform). And in 1883 Florence became the fifth child born to Theresa and Marcus.

Jerome joined the business as a clerk in 1884, expanding the family's engagement in the firm, and the Monheimers must have been grateful for the help as they were very active in all aspects of Leadville society. In February, Joseph's appointment to the Lake County Commission was challenged in a court suit and had to be confirmed, after a quick trip to Denver on Joseph's part, by Governor Grant on March 7. This proved fortuitous as on March 25th Joseph was instrumental in the appointment of David May to the recently vacated treasurer's office. Marcus H. was one of signatories on the requisite \$125,000 bond. June then found Joseph attending the Democratic State Convention in Pueblo as part of Lake County's delegation. On the social side, the annual Purim Bal Masque, sponsored by the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society was well attended by Monheimers including "Max" (Marcus H.?) as part of an elephant with Lee Schiff, Estella as Queen Elizabeth I, and Joseph as Socrates! The thespian Jerome was also pursuing his stage career as Colonel Calverly in a production of "Patience" at the Tabor Opera House presented on April 19 and on May 16 he sang "One of the Finest" during a concert at the Armory Hall. With the advent of Memorial Day, Joseph reprised his role as Colonel in the procession to the Grand Army of the Republic section of Evergreen Cemetery. Over four thousand people attended. Then, on June 12th, the Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society presented a strawberry and ice cream festival. The highlight of the evening was the vote (at 10 cents per vote) for a beautiful fan to be given to the most popular lady present. Theresa Monheimer prevailed over Mrs. Sol Herman, 880 to 534, and \$141.40 went to charitable purposes. Meanwhile, Marcus H.'s sagacity as a businessman was affirmed in the course of a July 7th interview with the Democrat during which he opined on the brightness of Leadville's future despite the current slowness, the benefits of fewer but bigger stores, and mentioned the conservative approach to his upcoming

annual buying trip to New York. The trip must have been less modest than anticipated as the brothers opened a branch store at 425 Harrison Avenue (the Union Block) in October. Manned by T. B. Dean and M. J. Monheimer, the new outlet was known as the Bee-Hive and was reported as being "elegantly fitted throughout" and having "the most extensive stock". The Monheimer name appeared one more time in print during 1884 when on October 16th it was noted that little Sammy had attended Katherine Wood's third birthday party and presented her with a card.

1884 was an important year in the life of Leadville's Jewish community which had outgrown all of its previous structures. On January 13 "a meeting of leading Jewish citizens was held, which resulted in the organization of a temple association and the election of the following officers: President J. H. Monheimer; vice-president, David May; treasurer, Sam Berry; secretary, M. Kahn". President Monheimer must have made a good impression in the post as during the July 20th third annual picnic of the Leadville Hebrew Sunday School picnic his tent was thought to be the most amply equipped. Certainly the most significant event of the year for Leadville's Jews was the September 19 (Rosh Hashanah of that year) dedication of the new Temple Israel Building. It must have been a moment of great satisfaction for the Monheimers and they were an important part of the celebration with Joseph, as President, receiving the keys to the Temple from the building committee and offering an appropriate few words. Two days later Joseph made his annual report to the Congregation Israel wherein he noted both the successful completion of the building and a slight shortfall in the treasury. After Yom Kippur services on the 30th, Joseph, along with the balance of the executive committee, formally thanked the visiting Rabbi Morris Sachs for his efforts in dedicating the Temple and released him back to his obligations in Cincinnati.

Early in the next year, 1885, Joseph teamed with David May to purchase, in February, lots at the northwest corner of Harrison Avenue and Fourth Street with the purpose of providing a new building for the Carbonate Bank. "On March 1, a contract for the erection of a brick building on the site was let" and the Bank occupied its new offices late that summer. "Of the Monheimer brothers, Joseph and Marcus, a newsman wrote: ...[They] are the owners



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of some of the finest real estate in the city of which is their great store building. their Union Block, and their Carbonate Block, all in the heart of the city.” At the same time, the Monheimers closed their satellite store, the Bee-Hive, so that the space could be rented to Miss M. J. Frantz’s Ladies’ Bazaar which opened there on April 1st after vacating the site of the new Carbonate Bank building at 401 Harrison Avenue. Social life continued apace with a farewell reception and luncheon for Mrs. Moses Shoenberg on January 9th at the May home attended by Mrs. J. H. Monheimer. On February 6th both Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Monheimer were present at “a recherche dinner party...given at the residence of Hon. David May in honor of Baron St. Lindoner of Berlin”. Marcus busied himself on the committee, with Ike Baer and Ben Davies, that organized the Jewish picnic on July 26th at the grounds of the international race track. The Carbonate Chronicle recorded an elaborate all day event with “basket upon basket...laden with all the goodies the market afforded”, a variety of sporting events, and music until dark. With coming of the Jewish New Year and the first anniversary of his presidency, Joseph reviewed the signal accomplishments of the congregation during the preceding year and then, on September 13th, relinquished his position to Isaac Baer. Marcus was elected as a trustee by the congregation for the ensuing year.

By the middle part of the decade, there was some indication of softness in the Leadville markets. Prices for metals had begun to decline, in large part because of overproduction throughout the West. Leadville, in particular, had moved from the boom phase of its trajectory and into the steady sort of production associated with company towns and this engendered a slow and constant decline in population. Some evidence of this can be found in the increasing withdrawal of the Jewish merchants from their financial commitments. The Shoenbergs had left in 1885 and the Monheimers had closed the Bee-Hive. Then, on April 7, 1886, the year old Carbonate Block was sold by May and Monheimer for \$30,000. This was a very large sum for the period and indicative of the sellers’ fine timing and business sense. A contemporary interview with Joseph about his store’s prospects reflects the flatness of sales and a dependence on trade from outlying areas such as Red Cliff, 25 miles to the north. Still, business proceeded and a Hirsch Monheimer, residing at the 124 West 9th Street house, joined the firm in 1886. Nonetheless, this was the last

year in which the Monheimer Bros. business and Hirsch appear in the city directory. It was also the last year for Flora who died on October 22. Marcus and Theresa buried their youngest child in the Hebrew Cemetery.

1887 began with the January sale of the Union Block, 425-427 Harrison Avenue, to May, Sam Meyer, and Adolph Baer for the very handsome amount of \$40,000. Joseph was becoming very liquid, but he was still active in civic affairs and his stature was reinforced in April when he was appointed executor for the estate of Mollie May (also Mickie or Mickey and not related to David). Ms. May was, perhaps, Leadville’s most notorious demimonde and had earned a remarkably lurid reputation. With her passing, Joseph acted with dispatch and by the end of September had sold the house of happiness at 129 West 5th Street to the high bidder, Annie Furguson, for \$3,600. During the interim, the building had been “occupied by Jenni Lester and a school of nymphs who stimulate their wives with wine”. Oddly, given the previous divestments, in June Joseph joined David May in purchasing, for \$25,500, from Senator Horace A. W. Tabor the building at 318-320 Harrison Avenue which sheltered May’s clothing store. Still pursuing his civic concerns, Joseph served as head of a grand jury which that July demanded of the City Council enhanced law enforcement after the untimely demise of Frank Coleman, “a notorious crook and garroter (who opened) fire on the officers and (was) furnished with peaceful lodgings in tranquil Evergreen (Cemetery)”.

These activities notwithstanding, the end of the Monheimer sojourn in Leadville had come nigh. That September Joseph “Cheap Joe” Shoenberg rented the Monheimers’ store for a close out sale and then moved to Denver later in the year. Yom Kippur of 1887 fell on September 28 and “on September 30th, J. H. Monheimer was the honored guest at a farewell banquet, where his services as county commissioner, his integrity and participation in community affairs, his leadership in business circles and his dedication in helping build Temple Israel were all noted and praised. The large number of businessmen and the majority of city and county officials in attendance at the banquet wished Monheimer well in his decision to return to his former home in New York City. He left Leadville with his family on October 2nd. The 1887 city directory holds the last listing for the Monheimer brothers with both living at 124 West 4th Street and having no business affiliation.



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*The following information has been supplied by Peggy
Markson
(great granddaughter of Marcus H. and Theresa
Monheimer)*

Sometime before 1920 Alfred Monheimer moved to New York where he met my grandmother, Helen Winston Weinstein (1904-1983), and married her in 1922. They had two children: Marc Henry (January 18, 1931-) and Shirley Rose. Alfred was head buyer for the May Co. in New York until 1935 when he retired and moved to Beverly Hills, California. He passed away in August, 1958.

(1926-) Marc married Geraldine Berger of Oakland, California on November 20, 1952 and has two children: Paul Winston (1956-) and Ellen Ruth (1958-). Paul married Pamela Benjamin of Chicago, Illinois on November 14, 1994, and has one daughter: Noa (1996-). Ellen married Andrew Kirk in 1998 and divorced. Marc and Geraldine divorced in 1974 and Marc then married Louise Stoll (née Frankel) of Berkeley, California on December 22, 1978.

Shirley married Edwin Richard Markson (1924-1994) on April 8, 1951, and had four children: David Scott (1953-); Peggy Ellen (1954-); Jan Louise (1956-1996); and Stacey Ann Hope (1961-). David has 2 children: Joshua William (1986-); and Erin Rose (1989-). Stacey married Vincent Charles Winninghoff III and has Kyle Richard (1987-), Amanda Hope (1990-), Tanner Drew (1993-), and Riley Seth (1995-).

Louis Monheimer worked for Famous Barr, clothiers, and lived in both St. Louis and Texas. He had one child: Louise.

Blanche married Alfred Yankauer and died in 1946.