



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Poznanski

Like many Jewish newcomers to Leadville, the Poznanski family contributed briefly and stereotypically to the City's bustling merchant heritage. In 1880 there were at least two Poznanskis in town. Bernard ran the Horseshoe Saloon at 205 Harrison Avenue where he also maintained his residence. Louis, Bernard's nephew, worked for him as a barkeeper. A twenty year old bachelor, Louis shared his lodgings at 109 West Chestnut Street with Samuel Arnstein. Since both of the young men had been born in New York (Louis' father had immigrated from Poland and his mother from England) and reported themselves to the census taker as cigar merchants, it is likely that they had known each other back East and may have been in business together. A third Poznanski, Harris, was in a partnership with Samuel Cohen in the clothing business at 203 Harrison Avenue immediately adjacent to Bernard's saloon. Harris' interest must have been purely financial as he maintained his home in New York City. It seems certain that the three Poznanskis were relatives, Harris being Louis' father and Bernard's brother, and it is possible that Cohen might also have had a family connection. Bernard must have had a good reputation in certain circles as he was nominated, on August 6, to be the vice president of the newly formed Humphrey's Hose Company. The volunteer fire companies of the era were somewhat prestigious organizations, albeit notorious for their drunkenness, and the vice presidency carried with it the honorary title of "Colonel".

By 1881, another Poznanski, Ruben, had joined the clan in Leadville. He lived at Humphrey's Hose House (northwest corner of 4th and Poplar Streets), indicating his membership, but his occupation is unknown. Ruben derived a short burst of fame as a consequence of the injuries he acquired fighting an arson at the Coliseum building, a concert hall, on June 20th. In the course of events he was thrown from his ladder by the shock of the hose he was manhandling and "struck the ground with a terrific force, dislocating his shoulder and covering his head his head with cuts. He was led away in an almost fainting condition". Ruben, and several other injured firefighters, recovered. Humphrey's Hose seems to have been a competent unit, the evidence being its achievements in August at a Colorado Springs tournament where it earned a first place in the "dry test run" and a second in the "wet test race". The prizes amounted to \$150 in gold which must have helped to fuel the reception that the Company received upon its return to Leadville and the Horseshoe Saloon. Bernard had moved his lodgings from the bar to a house at 214 West 7th Street by this time and Louis filled Bernard's bed in back of the saloon and upgraded his position therein from barkeep to clerk.

The next year revealed an interesting change as the city directory has Bernard in the clothing business at the saloon's old address and no listing for Harris. It appears that the clothing business devolved upon Bernard and he moved it next door replacing the saloon. Louis remained as clerk and lodger, but only until July 3rd when he died in a most spectacular fashion. As part of the celebrations, Battery B (of the Colorado National Guard?) hauled its new six pounder to the top of Capital Hill at the head of Harrison Avenue and two salutes were fired under the command of Lieutenant W. K. Smith. Then, despite the strident warnings of the Lieutenant, several members of the battery overstuffed the cannon for the third and final salute. The resulting explosion cost Louis, only six feet distant, his life. Louis was buried in the Hebrew Cemetery, (Block B, Lot 4, Grave 2). The Leadville Weekly Herald noted that "He was formerly a member of the Humphrey hose and an active member of the battery. He was universally admired and his death will be sadly mourned by many." Another Poznanski, a one month old child also named Louis, "infant son of Mr. Poznanski of Buena Vista", had passed the preceding April 1st and is likewise interred in the Cemetery (Block B, Lot 5, Grave 3).

1883 was the last year that a Poznanski is found in the city directory with only Bernard mentioned. Still in the clothing business at 205 Harrison Avenue, he had moved to a different home at 214 East 3rd Street in a neighborhood of lesser stature than West 7th.