



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Rothenberg

Charles Rothenberg

Born: Austria, May 21 1862

Died: Aurora, Colorado. January 7, 1949

US Immigration: 1884

Catherine "Katie" Rothenberg

Born: Germany, July 10, 1869

Died: Aurora, Colorado. January 29, 1923

US Immigration: 1885

Benjamin "Bennie" Rothenberg

Born: Leadville, Colorado April 4, 1892

Died: Los Angeles August 26, 1960

Eva Rothenberg

Born: Leadville, August, 1898

Died: ?

Known residences in Leadville:

1893-1894, 407 W 4th Street

1894-1896, 116 W 9th Street

1896-1899, 202 W 5th Street

1899-1901, 141 W Elm Street

1901-1902, 202 W 5th Street

Charles Rothenberg was born in Austria in 1862. From there he immigrated to the United States in 1884 where he would meet and marry Katie, who was born in Germany in 1869.¹ Few records have been found that tell the story of Charles and Katie prior to their arrival in Leadville in 1893², but what can be determined is that the couple met sometime after Katie's immigration to the United States in 1885 and, prior to 1898, had given birth to four children. Only two, Bennie and Eva,³ survived to become Leadville residents along with their parents who arrived there in 1892.⁴

Charles was a tailor by trade and upon arriving in Leadville he went to work at Ed Jackson's clothing store at 219 Harrison Avenue where he remained for the entire ten years that the family made their home in Leadville.⁵

The family's time in Leadville was for the most part typical; Bennie was noted to be a good student and made the honor rolls while attending Leadville's Central School.⁶ There are few mentions of the family in the newspapers which would support the idea that the family tended to keep quietly to themselves. The exception was Katie who would find herself at the center of a controversial incident and the unflattering moniker as *The Witch Of Leadville* which was applied by newspapers statewide in 1899.⁷

According to reports, Katie was recounted as a "beautiful Jewess" who tinkered with what was described as "oriental mysticism" and miners would on occasion avail themselves of her services in an effort to get the upper hand in their speculative endeavors. One of these speculators, Martin Roberts, requested that Katie provide him with output information on one of his claims, which she did with some accuracy. Roberts later returned with the intent on wagering \$100 with Katie that she could not make a second favorable prediction. Martin then went home and described the events to his wife, who was skeptical of Katie's 'abilities' and the following day went to the Rothenberg home to accuse Katie of fraud.⁸

Mrs. Roberts then described that Katie became quite angry at her accusation and as a result threatened to demonstrate her abilities by casting spells on the Roberts' family that would render Martin insane and leave their child a "cripple".⁹



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Rothenberg

Coincidentally, Martin Roberts began to suffer from debilitating headaches that were causing him to behave irrationally. Apparently, the Roberts sought medical opinions on his condition with no resolution. At some point, Martin had learned that, according to legend, a witch's spell could be removed by drawing blood from her mouth while reciting a specific undisclosed incantation.

In a moment of what Martin referred to as his "lucidity", he broke into the Rothenberg home, found Katie in a rocking chair with baby Eva in her lap, and began beating the woman in the face. This resulted in a bloody lip along with Martin's declaration that the spell Katie cast on him was now broken. According to Martin, his health was restored rapidly after the incident despite his prompt arrest and trial for assault.¹⁰

Martin's defense was consistent with his story; Katie was a witch who had placed him under a vindictive spell and then claimed that Katie had victimized "dozens" of people in similar fashion. Some of these witnesses had claimed to see Katie in Evergreen Cemetery during the midnight hour, rope in hand and flames shooting from her eyes as she attempted to raise the dead.

Fortunately both the judge and prosecutor Samuel W. Jones, former Colorado Attorney General¹¹ now practicing in Leadville,¹² saw past the *witchcraft defense* and were able to convict Roberts of assault for which he was fined \$30.¹³

There aren't many records that follow the family after the incident, which occurred in the latter part of 1899. The event may have had an impact on the family's departure from Leadville sometime in 1901¹⁴ when they moved on to the Denver area.¹⁵



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Rothenberg

¹ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQM8-27H> : accessed 10 October 2017), Katie Rothenberg in household of Charles Rothenberg, Precinct 1-3 Leadville city Ward 1, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 44, sheet 2B, family 40, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,125.

² JH Ballenger and Richards. "Ballenger & Richard's Fourteenth 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 1894". *Corbet and Ballenger and Richards Publishers*. 1894. P 221.

³ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQM8-27H> : accessed 10 October 2017), Katie Rothenberg in household of Charles Rothenberg, Precinct 1-3 Leadville city Ward 1, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 44, sheet 2B, family 40, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,125.

⁴ JH Ballenger and Richards. "Ballenger & Richard's Fourteenth 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 1894". *Corbet and Ballenger and Richards Publishers*. 1894. P 221.

⁵ JH Ballenger and Richards. "Ballenger & Richard's Twentieth 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 1901". *Corbet and Ballenger and Richards Publishers*. 1901. P239.

⁶ "Roll Of Honor: Leadville Public Schools". *Carbonate Chronicle*. Leadville, CO; USA. January 22, 1900. P 3.

⁷ Chris Woodyard., "The Witch of Leadville." Haunted Ohio Books. February 17, 2016.

⁸ Sidney Flower, LL.D. , ed. *Suggestive Therapeutics* Vol. 7. Chicago, IL; USA. Psychic Publishing Co.1899. P 280.

⁹ "A Witch In Colorado". *Colorado Transcript*. Golden, CO. October 18, 1899. P7.

¹⁰ Sidney Flower. "A Witch In Colorado". 1899. P 280-81.

¹¹ "Colorado Attorney General". (2017, August 19). Retrieved October 10, 2017, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colorado_Attorney_General .

¹² JH Ballenger and Richards. "Ballenger & Richard's Eighteenth 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 1899". *Corbet and Ballenger and Richards Publishers*. 1899.

¹³ "Is There A Witch In Colorado?". *Aspen Daily Times*. Aspen CO. P 3.

¹⁴ JH Ballenger and Richards. "Ballenger & Richard's Twentieth 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 1901". *Corbet and Ballenger and Richards Publishers*. 1901. P 239.

¹⁵ "Find A Grave Index," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV22-68ZW> : 13 December 2015), Katie Rothenberg, 1923; Burial, Aurora, Arapahoe, Colorado, United States of America, Mount Nebo Memorial Park; citing record ID 77041705, *Find a Grave*, <http://www.findagrave.com>.

¹⁶ IMAGE: Woodyard, Chris. "The Witch of Leadville." Haunted Ohio Books. February 17, 2016. <http://hauntedohiobooks.com/news/the-witch-of-leadville/>.



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Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Rothenberg

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Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Rothenberg

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