



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Sheeline

Alexander Scheeline

Born: February 8, 1833 (Thalmässing, Germany)¹

Died: August 31, 1924

Married to: Julia Scheeline (née Goldschmidt)

In Leadville: speculative 1860s

Julia Scheeline ²(Goldschmidt)

Born: March 4, 1837 (Bavaria)

Died: January 17, 1904

Married to: Alexander Scheeline

In Leadville: speculative 1860s

Simon Scheeline

Born: 1861 (Pennsylvania)

Died: 1937

In Leadville: Speculative 1860s

Isaiah Scheeline

Born: 1878 (Pennsylvania)

Died: 1945

Joseph Scheeline

Born: 1863

Died: 1941

In Leadville: Speculative 1860s

Hanadina Scheeline

Born: 1874

Died: 1955

Alexander Scheeline (also spelled: Sheeline, Schuline, Schulline) was a clothing merchant who immigrated to the United States from Bavaria in 1853. He and his family had an active life in the United States as a whole, and especially the West during the late and post-Civil War period.

According to an obituary written following his death in Altoona, Pennsylvania, in September 1921, Alexander was born in February of 1833 in Thalmässing, Bavaria.³ This is congruent with information recorded in a passport application filled out and signed by Alexander in 1913.⁴ Oral history provided by Alexander Sheeline's great grandson will be explored in this research to document any

gaps in official documentation. The story of Alexander Sheeline likely mirrors that of many wandering Jewish merchants in the late 19th Century American West, and oral history is often the only window into an otherwise obscure and sparingly documented period.

Alexander arrived in New York on January 10, 1853 at the age of 19 accompanied by a relation (brother or cousin) named Solomon, aged 17 years.⁵ At the time of immigration, Alexander's family name was recorded as "Schulein". His early years in America prior to the Civil War were spent around New York and Pennsylvania. As the Civil War loomed, Alexander relocated to Texas for unknown reasons, but probably as a result of business opportunities in the growing southern state. According to his later obituary, in 1860 Alexander was a resident of Galveston, Texas. The obituary claimed he was at odds with the political establishment during the 1860 presidential election and constituted one of the only votes for "Northern Democrat" Stephen Douglas in Galveston (separatist John Breckinridge took the Texas before it seceded later that spring). Probably as a result of the growing dangers unfolding for a German-born Yankee in the Confederacy, at the outbreak of the Civil War he "ran the blockade and returned to the north". In 1861, Alexander registered as part of compulsory military service and recorded a residence place of Middle Woodbury, Pennsylvania.⁶ His activity during the Civil War is unknown, but it is likely he was married shortly before or during the early stages of the conflict. His obituary of 1921 recorded that Alexander married Julia Goldschmidt around 1860. Family oral history recalled their meeting in 1857:

"...Alexander and his friend in Woodbury, Bedford County, went to Philadelphia to meet the Goldschmidt sisters. Supposedly, this was 1857, but descendants of the sister, Rebecca Goldschmidt Bechhoeffer, confirm that as the



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*sisters walked down the gangplank, one of the pair from Woodbury said, "which one d'ya want?" The reply, "I like the look of the one on the left." To which the reply was, "that's good, 'cause I kinda like the one on the right!"*⁷

The couple resided in Bedford County or perhaps moved West during the early Civil War period. If Alexander stayed in the East, he was involved in mandatory war efforts, but no evidence was found of this. Descendant Alexander Sheeline wrote:

*"The story goes that Alexander and Julia Scheeline (or perhaps the name was still Schulein at the time) lived in Leadville in the early 1860s, then helped found a shul in Idaho Falls [sic Idaho City], then came back to Leadville and stayed there until their store burned down in 1869, after which they returned to the eastern US. If my Library foray is correct, Leadville wasn't founded until after the Civil War, so they could only have been in town in the late 1860s. The Altoona Mirror (my hometown newspaper) reports that my great grandparents had lived in Leadville and that two great uncles (Joseph and Simon) remembered deep snows in the mountains (believable for Joe, born in 1860, plausible but a stretch for Simon, born 1864). Thinking critically about the stories, it's clear that Great Granddad was somewhere out west during the Civil War because he didn't want to serve in the army (after all, he'd left Bavaria in 1853 for the same reason!)."*⁸

During the period between 1861 and 1865, Alexander's movements are not well documented. Given the oral history of Alexander's great-grandson, it is plausible that the family were in Leadville between 1860 and 1864, prior to their arrival to Idaho City. Indeed, no documentary evidence can contradict it. Geographically, it is important to note that a place with the name "Leadville" was not extant during this period, however. While a notable population was attracted to the immediate vicinity by alluvial gold discoveries in 1860, the "camp" was not known as Leadville until well after the Civil War period. Leadville was chosen as the official name for the camp in 1877. Between 1860 and 1877 the area was known collectively and in state and national newspapers as "California District", "California Gulch", "Lake County" and confusingly, often it was referred to as simply, "California". Specifically, the settlement as a collection of buildings and tents was known as "Oro City" or "Oro" and sometimes variants of "Upper Arkansas". This settlement existed along California Gulch congruent with modern Chestnut and Front Streets and a short distance south of the modern city of Leadville. Alexander's great-grandson elaborates:

"...When Dad told the Leadville story to me, he said that the sequence of events was settling in Leadville during the Civil War, then a move to Idaho City, then back to Leadville where the store burned down in 1868 or 1869..."

The Idaho element of this history can be substantiated with newspaper evidence. The 1921 obituary recorded that Alexander and Julia, presumably with several children, relocated to Idaho City, Idaho in 1864. In December of 1865 according the Idaho City's newspaper *Idaho World*, Alexander (A. Scheeline) was a participant in the one-year anniversary party of Masonic Lodge No. 35.⁹ As early as April of 1865, a business called



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“Newhouse & Scheeline” was advertised in the *Idaho World* newspaper.¹⁰ In addition, it is clear that Alexander was influential in local economics; he had the unique position of being part of a committee arranged in January of 1866 to propose a way to stabilize the value of gold dust in day to day transactions.¹¹ Alexander was documented as leaving Idaho City in August of 1866. The *Idaho World* of August 11, 1866 stated,

“ALL PERSONS indebted to the undersigned are requested to call and settle the same immediately, as we intend to leave Idaho City within three weeks. By doing so costs will be saved.”

*Aug. 4th, ‘66ft. NEWHOUSE & SHEELINE”*¹²

Further substantiation of this move and evidence of their destination was published on the same day in the *Idaho World* with a more personal touch,

*“GOING- One by one our old settlers are leaving us. Among the merchants who are preparing to leave us is Mr. A. Scheeline, who intends to settle in Salt Lake City. His notice to the public should be attended to by all indebted to the firm of Newhouse and Scheeline.”*¹³

Evidence of the family’s presence in Salt Lake or greater Utah was not found by this researcher. Indeed, evidence of the family does not appear in any records until later in the decade. Between 1866 and 1868, it is possible that the family re-located to Leadville briefly as family tradition suggests, but no newspaper, census, or official documentation can substantiate this. However, a voter registration book from 1868 clarified the location of Alexander in 1868,

*“Alexander Scheline- aged 35, Merchant, Native of Bavaria, resident of Gibsonville, California, naturalized in Texas, April 29, 1859, registered to vote in Sierra County, California on July 31, 1868.”*¹⁴

Given the parallels to Alexander’s early days in Texas, his age, place of origin, and occupation, it is highly likely this is the Alexander Scheeline of this study. Gibsonville is a now ghost town in Sierra Nevada east of modern Chico, California. The only remains of the city today are a cemetery. Further documentation of his presence here was not found, however. It is undetermined if the family joined him there. In 1870, a unique document from the California State Hospital records an incident with a young woman with a nearly identical profile to that of Julia Sheeline. The handwritten document begins with,

“Julia Scheeline, Age 32 years, nation of Bavaria, married, has two children, the youngest 7 years old, was last from Pennsylvania, has been in California six years...”

The report continues that after becoming depressed due to the “loss of her children”, she was institutionalized following several episodes of self-harm and refusal to eat. According to the report she was most distraught from the loss of an infant “four days ago”. She was housed in Stockton State Hospital in Stockton between May 31st, 1870 and June 15th 1870, when she was discharged.¹⁵ The report indicated that she had been in California since 1864; if true, this would rule out her accompaniment with Alexander to Idaho City in the middle 1860s. It would be unlikely that she would have settled alone with the children in California, but such arrangements were not unheard of during this era. Errors on the part



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of the recorder at the hospital must be considered, and it is possible the 6-year claim of residence in California is erroneous. Precise detail of the Sheeline's stay in California during the late 1860s may never be precisely known.

By the enumeration of the national census in July of 1870, the Sheelines had moved to Philadelphia. It is reasonable to conclude that very soon after Julia was released from the hospital in California during June of 1870s, the family left for the east. According to the census, Alexander was 37 years old, listed as a merchant, and Julia was 33, listed as a housewife, both natives of Bavaria. Their children were listed as Joseph and Simon, 8 and 7 respectively, born in Pennsylvania.¹⁶

The family later moved to Altoona, Pennsylvania. While precise knowledge of their movements in the west during the formative years of Idaho City, Gibsonville, California, and potentially Leadville, Alexander was clearly an adventurous and enterprising, as well as hearty merchant. To add to the story, the family were clearly documented at least once as being in tow with him during these tumultuous and unpredictable years on the frontier. From the evidence gathered it is plausible, but not provable, that Alexander and the family were present in Leadville for two separate undocumented periods between 1863 (following the birth of Joseph who was born in Pennsylvania) and 1865, in addition to the period between 1866 and 1868.



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¹ Ancestry.com. U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007.

² Find A Grave, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 18 March 2020), memorial page for Julia Scheeline (4 Mar 1837–17 Jan 1904), Find A Grave Memorial no. 65236667, citing Mount Sinai Cemetery, Altoona, Blair County, Pennsylvania, USA ; Maintained by Zella (contributor 46524425) .

³ “Pioneer City Merchant Has Passed Away” Altoona Tribune, September 1, 1921 pp. 1-2

⁴ Ancestry.com. U.S. Passport Applications, 1795-1925 [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2007.

⁵ Year: 1853; Arrival: New York, New York; Microfilm Serial: M237, 1820-1897; Microfilm Roll: Roll 122; Line: 3; List Number: 19

⁶ Ancestry.com. U.S., Civil War Draft Registrations Records, 1863-1865 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

⁷ Alexander Scheeline to Bill Korn, "Question Re: 19Th Century Jewish Leadville", email, 2020.

⁸ Alexander Scheeline to Bill Korn, "Question Re: 19Th Century Jewish Leadville", email, 2020.

⁹ “Masonic Installation and Ball!” Idaho World, December 2, 1865, p. 2

¹⁰ “Town Gossip” Idaho World, April 29, 1865, p. 2

¹¹ “To the Public” Idaho World, January 13, 1866, p. 2

¹² “Notice” Idaho World, August 11, 1866, p. 3

¹³ “Going” Idaho World, August 11, 1866, p. 3

¹⁴ Ancestry.com. California, Voter Registers, 1866-1898 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2011.

¹⁵ Ancestry.com. California, State Hospital Records, 1856-1923 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2014. Stockton Hospital Commitment Registers, 1856–1934. MF8:10. 34 volumes. Dept. of Mental Hygiene—Hospitals. California State Archives, Sacramento, California.

¹⁶ Ancestry.com. 1870 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2009. Images reproduced by FamilySearch.



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