



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Strauss

Herman Strauss
Born: 1844
Birthplace: Germany
Immigration Year: 1859
Occupation: Merchant
Death: 1927

Herman Strauss was a popular public figure and businessman in Leadville during the 1890s through the early 1900s. Strauss was born in Germany in 1844 and immigrated to the United States in 1859.¹ He began his long career as a merchant and clothier while he was still in his early twenties. Prior to his venture out West, Strauss instituted his first businesses in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.² The date of Strauss's arrival in Colorado is unknown; however, he took up residence in Denver before he made plans to open a business in Leadville. Like many others, Strauss was most likely drawn to Leadville for the high business potential and prosperity at the of the mineral rush.

Strauss first appears in Leadville city records in the early 1890s. It was around this time that Strauss established the Strauss Shoe and Clothing Company located at 317 Harrison Avenue.³ The business was well-received by the community at large. By 1892, Strauss had engaged business partners and was focused on expanding his influence in Leadville. He was involved in different enterprises including the Manhattan Clothing House and the Model Clothing House.⁴ Strauss also invested in mining properties. It was noted that he invested in the Famous Consolidated Gold Mining Company.⁵

Strauss quickly distinguished himself and gained a favorable reputation in Leadville. In 1892 Strauss was described as a "big hearted, generous, like-minded gentleman, who has not only a splendid record in the business world, but an enviable reputation for good deeds."⁶

Nonetheless, Strauss' philanthropic character did not deter some of the more fool hearty criminals. In 1892, a thief smashed out one of the glass windows of the Strauss Shoe and Clothing Company. It was reported that it was one of Leadville's most daring robberies up until that point.⁷ The burglar was keen on snagging a gold watch that Strauss kept secured in a glass display box as a raffle prize. However, the thief struggled to steal the watch and instead managed to leave the store with one of Strauss' suits. The man tried to evade prosecution by washing up at Pap Dee's Salon on State Street after cutting himself severely with broken glass. The burglar was later identified by the police and registered in the county jail.⁸

Despite these unfavorable occurrences, Strauss engaged in multiple civic activities and his favorable reputation followed him most places he went. Strauss organized a baseball club in Leadville. He coined the club as the "Strauss Baseball Club". It was said that Strauss personally selected some of the best ball players in Leadville.⁹

In 1893 Strauss was determined to throw a Fourth of July Celebration that made a lasting impression on locals and guests. Strauss later exclaimed that "things looked black in '93, but we had a grand blow out."¹⁰ Strauss organized a large party at the Vendome Hotel that included many prominent citizens of Colorado.



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Even though the silver panic of 1893 distressed Leadville on a grand scale, Strauss was reported to have faith that his businesses would pull through. In October of the same year, Strauss left town on a business trip. When he returned to Leadville he was relieved to say that “Leadville was good enough for him.”¹¹ An incident in 1894 almost forced Strauss to move the Strauss Shoe and Clothing Company from its original spot on Harrison Avenue. With hardly any notice, the owner of the building spitefully informed Strauss his rent would increase to the rate he paid before the crash of 1893.¹² Strauss was almost forced to move out of the building. Yet it appears that Strauss was in his rights as a business owner and tenant. Strauss was able to keep his original spot on Harrison Avenue ultimately by striking a trade with the building owner.¹³

It pleased Strauss to share his success with the community during turbulent times. Strauss clothed the Leadville Fire Department with entirely new coats and boots.¹⁴ Strauss was also involved with the local Jewish community in Leadville. Strauss was an active member of the Temple Israel congregation, and delivered an address at the Temple on the day of Yom Kippur.¹⁵ When a cholera epidemic struck the state, Strauss was asked to be a member of the sanitary committee. The chair appointed 25 men who were “reputable citizens to see that the sanitary ordinances were enforced.”¹⁶

Strauss maintained his activities throughout the next 5 years. During this time, he became the director of the Board of Trade Committee in Leadville. In 1898 Strauss faced legal troubles regarding his investment in the Famous Consolidated Gold Mining Company. Strauss, among other investors, had engaged in a deal to lease the property without consent of the owner.¹⁷

Strauss announced that he would withdraw the Strauss Shoe and Clothing Company from Leadville in 1899.¹⁸ Strauss officially left Leadville and moved the Strauss Shoe and Clothing Company to Pueblo in 1900. A newspaper wrote that “Leadville loses and Pueblo gains a man who has been and will be an able and watchful guardian of the interests of the community of which he does business.”¹⁹ It is most likely that Strauss pulled his business from Leadville in order to pursue more lucrative opportunities in Pueblo after Leadville’s economic downturn.

Strauss continued to work on his businesses and continued his philanthropy following his departure from Leadville. Strauss was noted in the *Colorado Magazine* for sponsoring a home for orphaned children with a Jewish committee.²⁰ Herman Strauss passed away in 1927 of unknown causes. He was laid to rest at the Congregation Emanuel Cemetery in Denver, Colorado.²¹



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¹ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQM8-YWP> : accessed 21 December 2017), Herman Strauss in household of Mary A Hoeffler, Precinct 4-5, 11 Leadville city Ward 2, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 46, sheet 9B, family 175, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,125.

² "What's in a Name?". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. November 26, 1893.

³ "Assignee's Notice". Leadville Daily/Evening Chronicle. Leadville, CO; USA. August 3, 1893.

⁴ "A Big Rush". Herald Democrat. Leadville; CO; USA. November 6, 1892.

⁵ "Enjoining a Sale of a Famous Stock". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. July 14, 1898.

⁶ "What's in a Name?". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. November 26, 1893.

⁷ "A Bold, Bad Burglar". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. July 22, 1892.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Enjoining a Sale of a Famous Stock". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. July 14, 1898.

¹⁰ "Get the Red Fire". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. May 5, 1900.

¹¹ "Personal Mention". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. October 31, 1893.

¹² "Jealous of His Fair Fame". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. July 29, 1894.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "For the Fire Laddies". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. December 29, 1894.

¹⁵ "The Day of Forgiveness". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. October 9, 1894.

¹⁶ "Cholera Precautions". Carbonate Chronicle. Leadville, CO; USA. May 16, 1885.

¹⁷ "Enjoining a Sale of a Famous Stock". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. July 14, 1898.

¹⁸ "To Leave Leadville". Herald Democrat. Leadville. CO; USA. October 4, 1899.

¹⁹ "Around the City". Herald Democrat. Leadville, CO; USA. October 23, 1900.

²⁰ Noel, Thomas. "The Immigrant Saloon in Denver." *Colorado Magazine*, 1977. P14.

²¹ "Find A Grave Index," database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV22-6L2L> : 13 December 2015), Herman Strauss, ; Burial, Denver, Denver, Colorado, United States of America, Congregation Emanuel Cemetery; citing record ID 75704460, Find a Grave, <http://www.findagrave.com>.