



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Strousse

Samuel (Solomon) Strousse¹

Born: March 28, 1847

Died: June 28, 1927

Married to: Flora Strousse

Samuel (later Solomon) Strousse settled in Colorado Territory in the early 1870s. His arrival pre-dated the large scale development of Leadville and allowed for nearly a decade of experience in the clothing business. Due to his established position on the Front Range, Samuel had a jump start to capture the bonanza economic development which surrounded the first several years of growth in Leadville. As this study will reveal, for a short time in the early 1880 and 1881, Samuel's store was counted among the best patronized and most successful of Leadville's burgeoning clothing businesses. Advertisements for his store often appeared alongside those of his German-Jewish contemporaries David May, Joseph Shoenberg, and Jacob Monheimer.

The unique spelling of the family name easily differentiates Samuel from individuals with other variations of the German name (e.g. Strause, Strauß or Strauss). The Strousse name lives on today in "Strousse Park" a small public park donated by Samuel located on Rose Street in Georgetown; a testament to his influence and success in that city.²

Samuel arrived in Colorado in 1870 and opened a store in the booming Clear Creek county mining camp of Georgetown. The first appearance of the "Strousse & Sprague" mercantile was a Georgetown newspaper advertisement from early June of 1870.³ By 1873, the store had achieved moderate success. Increased newspaper advertisements boasted: "New York Store. Clothing! Notions! Hats! Caps!"⁴ He and a partner named Sprague also sold rugs, oilcloth, boots and shoes. Throughout the 1870s, Samuel advertised prolifically in Clear Creek County publications and appears infrequently in social columns. Howard, Samuel's first child, was born in April of 1874.⁵ During the summer of 1874,

Sprague left the partnership and Samuel continued to do brisk business as simply S. Strousse or Strousse and Co.; he retained these names for the next 35 years.⁶ In August of 1875, the Strousse family traveled east; the first leg by stagecoach to the new railhead at Denver.⁷ Some of his advertisements bordered on the eccentric, as evidenced by the "Citizens!" announcement to the right. By 1878, the growing store boasted two in-house dress makers.⁸ Most of his appearances in the newspapers are related to advertisements, and his social life- if any- is not well documented in Georgetown or otherwise. Georgetown did not have a well documented Jewish community and the Strousses were likely one of only two Jewish families in the city. A poem written as a jest to local characters and merchants in an 1879 Georgetown newspaper gives some playful but brief indication of Samuel's attitude and work ethic:

*"Strousse his business always shoving,
In a hurry..."*

Samuel expanded his store to a location to Silver Plume in the later 1870s and by 1880, to Leadville.⁹ He was a veteran of the clothing business by the time he opened these branch stores. The planning stages of his idea for the branch store in the Carbonate city corresponded with the one year anniversary of the incorporation of the city of Leadville in February of 1879. Like any good business man, Samuel looked to Leadville only one year into the boom in that city.¹⁰ However, his store did not officially open in Leadville until sometime between November 1879 and January 1880.¹¹ Although he never lived in Leadville, Samuel's presence in the city was manifest in a prominent store on the ground floor of the three story Wyman block (pictured here). Starting in 1879 he traveled to and from Leadville regularly as he kept up with his bustling business on the corner of State Street and Harrison Avenue. Strousse & Co.'s most prolific years in terms of advertising space in newspapers mirrored the most prosperous years for Leadville, 1880-1881. Strousse & Co. is one of four



stores profiled in a January 1, 1881 edition of the *Leadville Weekly Democrat*:

“S. Stousse. [See illustration in the Wyman Block]

Mr. Sam’l Strousse occupies the first floor of the Wyman block, on the corner of Harrison avenue and Second street. Mr. S’s large stock consists of a full and complete line of dry goods and clothing, carpets, hats, caps, ladies’ and gents’ furnishing goods, etc. Mr. Strousse deals largely in theatrical goods of kinds, [sic] and does a large business in every department of his establishment. Although having a great deal of competition in his line, Mr. Strousse has built up for himself a fine trade and is well deserving of his success.”

The other three clothing dealers who appeared in the profile with Samuel were fellow Jewish firms of May & Shoenberg, Sands & Pelton, and the Marx brothers. These four dealers were presumably the largest and most successful of the clothing retailers in Leadville during 1880 and reinforce the fact that Jews dominated the clothing trade at the time.¹²

Another notice in the same edition referenced Leadville’s clothing businesses during 1880 revealed that all achieved combined sales of \$1,750,000 for the year.¹³ Samuel presumably left Leadville in 1881 as he does not appear in newspapers or directories in 1882 or the following years. Perhaps he operated the business remotely under another name or partnership, though this cannot be confirmed. Only two notices reveal short visits to Leadville in 1882 and 1890. Both indicate that Samuel was looking after business affairs on these trips.¹⁴ Due to lack of advertisements and absence from the directories, the nature of these business in Leadville is unknown. The Strousse family appeared in Georgetown for the 1910 census.¹⁵ By 1920, Samuel and his wife Flora relocated to Manhattan, where they lived in retirement with his middle daughter Lena’s family, who employed a chambermaid and three servants.¹⁶ Samuel went by his birth name of Solomon later in his life. Solomon Strousse died in Manhattan in 1927; fortunate to have witnessed and done business the frenetic days of the early ‘80s, when Leadville was young and lively.

¹ "New York, New York City Municipal Deaths, 1795-1949," database, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:2W5V-67M : 10 February 2018>), Solomon Strousse, 28 Jun 1927; citing Death, Manhattan, New York, New York, United States, New York Municipal Archives, New York; FHL microfilm 2,048,621.

² Uchill, Ida. *Pioneers, Peddlers, and Tsadikim*. Denver, CO: Sage Books Publishing By Alan Swallow, 1957. p. 107

³ "Advertisements" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume IV, Number 3, June 9, 1870 p. 4

⁴ "Advertisements" *Daily Colorado Miner*, October 2, 1873 p. 1

⁵ "Weekly Miner" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume VII, Number 51, May 2, 1874 p. 3

⁶ "Dissolution Notice" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume VIII, Number 4, June 6, 1874 p. 3

⁷ "Personal" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume IX, Number 15, August 21, 1875 p. 3

⁸ "Sam Strousse" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, October 26, 1878 p. 3

⁹ "Personal" *Georgetown Courier*, November 20, 1879 p. 3

¹⁰ "The Courier" *Georgetown Courier*, February 21, 1879 p. 3

¹¹ "Personal" *Georgetown Courier*, November 20, 1879 p. 3

"Personal" *Georgetown Courier*, January 22, 1880 p. 3

¹² "Wholesale and Retail Clothing Establishment" *Leadville Weekly Democrat*, Volume 2, January 1, 1881 p. 15

¹³ "Clothing Houses" *Leadville Weekly Democrat*, Volume 2, January 1, 1881 p. 12

¹⁴ "Personals" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume XVI, Number 17, September 9, 1882 p. 3

"Local Mention" *Colorado Miner (Weekly)*, Volume 1, Number 7, November 22, 1890 p. 4

¹⁵ 1910 United States Federal Census accessed via familysearch.org

¹⁶ 1920 United States Federal Census accessed via familysearch.org



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Photos:

Store interior, Georgetown, Colorado. Unknown Photographer, Randall Collection. *Western History Collection*, Denver Public Library, Denver, Colorado
<http://digital.denverlibrary.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p15330coll22/id/2302/rec/272>

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STABLE URL: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/strousse.html>