



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information

Mankuss

Born: Austria, Approximately 1856
Death: Unknown
Occupation: Tailor and Mine Owner
Spouse: Dora Castelon
Born: Germany, Approximately 1862
Children: Fannie, Grace Theresa, Isidor, Ruth, Essie, and infant H.

Moritz Mankuss was born in Austria in approximately 1854. Mankuss immigrated to the United States in 1883 and made the journey to Leadville in 1884.¹ Mankuss did not arrive in Leadville as a single man as prior to his arrival in the city he married Dora Castelon in 1883. She was of German origin.² Dora arrived in the United States in 1880, three years before Moritz.³ The couple is listed by the 1885 census as residing at 112 Harrison Avenue.⁴ Like so many other Jewish pioneers, Mankuss began to work as a tailor and he made his debut appearance in the city's 1884 business directory as a tailor employed at 110 Harrison Avenue.⁵

The first complete listing for the Mankuss family occurs in the 1900 Leadville census which shows the Mankuss family as living at 107 West 7th Street and consisting of parents Moritz and Dora with their four children, Fannie, Grace Theresa, Essie, and Isidor, ages 14, 10, 6, and 4, respectively.⁶ Although, this is the first census in which the entire family appears, the city's periodicals indicate that by 1885, the entire Mankuss family resided in Leadville. Infant H. Mankuss died at 6 months old on August 8, 1888, and was buried in the Hebrew Cemetery.⁷

¹ 1885 U.S. census, Lake County, Colorado, Leadville, pg. 76, dwelling 755, M. Mankuss. Boarders are listed as J.B. Hyman, (PUT IN NAMES)

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ City Directory, Lake County, 1884.

⁶ Cite 1900 census.

⁷ Hebrew Cemetery of Leadville (Leadville, Lake County, Colorado), H. Mankuss, Headstone, 2016

In 1887, Moritz partnered with another Jewish resident, Ausios Meyer Zieler, to form their own tailoring and clothier shop, Mankuss & Zieler, at 120 Harrison Avenue.⁸ Mankuss & Zieler proved to be a short-lived venture and the two businessmen split from one another a year later. That year has Mankuss operating a solo enterprise as a tailor at 107 West 2nd Street.⁹ Mankuss remained at this address until 1894 when he relocated to 123 Harrison Avenue. Mankuss' six years on West 2nd Street and his subsequent tenancy on Harrison Avenue were not quiet years as the tailor had more than his fair share of robberies and interactions with "sneak thieves."¹⁰

In 1886, the first of many reported incidents resulted in Mankuss apprehending a customer who had failed to pay for a pair of pants and forcing the delinquent denizen to relinquish the stolen goods, in this case: pants. The *Herald Democrat* reports that upon seeing the thief Mankuss "shrieked, "Peel off those pants...[t]ake 'em off...or I'll have you in jail in a second."¹¹ Realizing that Mankuss would not relent, nor quiet, the thief was "intimidated, and seeing the fog horn stealing to the fellows mouth, reentered the shop and proceeded to shed the trowsers."¹² Mankuss' adventures with the seedier elements of Leadville continued later that year with an arrest warrant issued for him on the dubious claims of theft from a man that was, himself, accused of stealing from Mankuss.

The *Leadville Daily/Evening Chronicle* reported:

"Otto Ludwig went to some German friends and complained that he had taken a draft for \$225.40 to M. Mankuss, on Harrison Avenue, and asked him to go to the bank and get it cashed as he, Mankuss, being a

⁸ City Directory, 1887.

⁹ City Directory, 1888.

¹⁰ *Herald Democrat*, January 17, 1900, pg. 6.

¹¹ *Herald Democrat*, July 17th, 1886, pg. 2.

¹² Ibid.



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business man, was better known than the owner of the draft and would have less difficulty in completing the transaction.”¹³

After carrying out the asked favor, Mankuss then according to Ludwig’s account, “failed to materialize before the anxious gaze of Ludwig.”¹⁴ And that is when a warrant was prepared and issued for Mankuss’ arrest. However, he could not be located and was rumored to have “procur[ed] an express wagon drove to Malta where he took the train for the east.”¹⁵ Yet, despite all the excitement, a conflicting account provided by Mankuss’ wife, Dora, revealed that Mankuss’ disappearance was purely by change and entirely benign. When confronted by reports that her husband had fled for the east Dora Mankuss explained, “He did not run away...but will be back in a couple of days.”¹⁶

Furthermore, Dora went on to clarify that Mortiz had not stolen from Ludwig but had instead been the one wronged and cheated out of hard earned cash. Rather than Mankuss, it was Ludwig who had

“borrowed \$200 from Mankuss, giving him an obligation therefor but never liquidated the indebtness.” Dora then stated, because of this, when Ludwig “came to Mankuss with a draft of about \$224 and asked him to get it cashed at the bank, as they knew him better. This Mankus did and tendered Ludwig \$24, the difference between the proceeds and what he owed him. However, Ludwig refused to receive anything but the whole amount, and at once swore out the warrant for his arrest.”¹⁷

Under these new circumstances the case against Mankuss was dropped and the money all but

forgotten with the *Herald Democrat* stating, “[i]t would appear that he[Mankuss] was a sufferer, possibly from his own foolishness, but there might be a question as to this manner of collecting an indebtedness, although nothing criminal is shown in it.”¹⁸

Mankuss also made it a point to take the safeguarding of his shop from “sneak thieves”¹⁹ into his own hands. One such example, from 1900, demonstrates this the *Herald Democrat* reported that,

“Yesterday afternoon two men appeared at he store M. Mankuss, 107 W 2nd, and one stated that he wished to be measured for a pair of pantaloons. While Mr. Mankuss was busy with him he noticed he had a coat with the rack it had been hung up by, concealed under his own. He was asked where he had got it and stated that he had bought it and the rack too. Just then Mr. Mankuss noticed that the other fellow had disappeared and that one of his own coats was gone also. He at once gave the alarm and caught the fellow with his coat just outside. Harry Isaacs and M. Abraham came to the aid of Mr. Mankuss and in spite of a stubborn fight on the part of the two thieves, held them until an officer arrived and placed them under arrest.”²⁰

Though Mankuss was a well-liked and respected businessman, his tailoring shop continued to endure such altercations with thieves and stolen merchandise. During this tumultuous time of business, Mankuss turned his attention to the Empire Mining district south of town and began to buy up mining claims in the early 1890’s in the hopes of striking it rich.

¹³ *Leadville Daily/Evening Chronicle*, September 1, 1886, pg. 4.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Herald Democrat*, January 17, 1900, pg. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*



It wasn't until 1895 that Mankuss began to receive some acknowledgement for his mining endeavors, although the attention that he did receive was mixed with a fair amount of skepticism and contriteness. The *Herald Democrat* remarked that Mankuss "is poor at present but the day is not far off when he expects to be comfortably fixed." Furthermore, Mankuss is reported as stating "Leadville people do not take enough interest in their own camp, and do not assist a worthy man when he offers them excellent returns."²¹

Despite Mankuss' claims of "excellent returns" the *Herald Democrat* recounts an interaction between Mankuss and a friend in which his friend remarked, "Mankuss, you show me the mineral in any of your claims and I will willingly lend you \$50 dollars."²² This back and forth between Mankuss and his "friend" highlights how the Leadville community viewed Mankuss' interest in mining. The *Herald Democrat* titled an article on Mankuss as *Wants To Be a Bonanza King* and explained that Mankuss was "going into mining very extensively this season, and expects before long to be numbered among the bonanza kings of the Gold Belt."²³ Mankuss put his faith specifically in the Two Bit Mine and the Helen Gould Mine. These areas that Mankuss invested in were not seen as particularly prosperous and for that reason the public openly mocked him.

However, Mankuss never lost his faith in the ground and slowly but surely the Two Bit Mine and the Helen Gould Mine returned a profit. A following article in the *Herald Democrat* explained, "They made lots of sport of the poor tailor because he tied his faith to the two bit, but you see he was right after all."²⁴ After much hardship, Mankuss struck a copper vein at the Helen Gould in 1902. Mankuss commented that, "he is certain that he has a first class lead opened up."²⁵ It was in that same

year that Mankuss also struck a variety of high grade ore at the Two Bit Mine. So great was Mankuss' copper vein in the East Tennessee Gulch that, "there is quite a rush of prospectors who are trying to find something of the same order."²⁶ In short order, Mankuss' interest in mining was no longer a laughing matter but a smart and industrious undertaking. The following year, the *Herald Democrat* stated, "[i]n Two Bit gulch work has been prosecuted the entire year by M. Mankuss, manager and owner of twelve of the fifteen claims that have been developed and development work will be continued as the indications are very good."²⁷ Mankuss worked to thoroughly develop both the Two Bit Mine, and the Ellen Gould Mining claims, respectively with his business partner, Geo Gottwin.

The pair continued to prospect and mine together within the East Tennessee Park area and their partnership lasted until 1908 when Geo Gottwin was found dead by Mankuss. The *Herald Democrat* reported, that Gottwin had been, "[d]ead for two weeks and with his body nearly covered with a foot of snow, Geo Gottwin, prospector, was found by M. Mankuss, whose mining partner he was on the Helen Gould group of claims..."²⁸

Originally, Gottwin's death was thought to be a homicide with an apparent bullet wound in his shoulder determined as the cause of the death. The *Herald Democrat* wrote, "[a] bullet hole through his left shoulder told the tale of his death. As no weapon was found near, Gottwin was evidently killed by some hand other than his own."²⁹ Mankuss explained that he had been taking provisions to Gottwin in preparation of a hard winter, but it was when Mankuss arrived that he realized something was amiss:

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ *Herald Democrat*, April 5, 1895, pg. 8.

²⁴ *Herald Democrat*, September 21, 1902, pg. 1.

²⁵ *Herald Democrat*, March 6, 1902, pg. 9.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ *Herald Democrat*, January 1, 1903.

²⁸ *Herald Democrat*, December 3, 1908, pg. 1.

²⁹ Ibid.



“When he arrived at the cabin he found it deserted. No fire had been in the stove for some time, he observed. He went to the workings on the mining property, but found them covered with snow indicating that no hand had touched them for over a week.”³⁰

Alarmed at the state of the mining property, Mankuss immediately set out looking for Gottwin. The search for Gottwin was short, as Mankuss made a grisly discovery only a few feet from the abandoned cabin.

“A few feet from the spring the found the man’s body, supine and almost completely covered in snow. Only the face and feet were exposed. The corpse was frozen stiff, and had not started to decompose. Mr. Mankuss examined the corpse and found that the coat had been punctured just under the left shoulder by a bullet, evidently. He did not attempt to trace the course of the ball, but left the body lying on the ground, where he found it, and came to town notifying the coroner.”³¹

Speculation began immediately on why and who would have killed Gottwin, though there were no suspects to be thought of. Gottwin was a well-liked man in town with no known enemies. However, the excitement and supposition on who might have attacked Gottwin was short-lived after the city’s coroner examined the body and found that the cause of death was not so sinister as homicide. The killer in this instance was heart failure. The supposed gunshot was determined to have “been made by contact with a snag or sharp stone as [Gottwin] fell.”³² After the loss of Gottwin, Mankuss continued on in his mining ventures as a solo entrepreneur. It is unknown when Mankuss ceased

to operate the Two Bit Mine and the Helen Gould Mine.

Although Mankuss became a successful mine owner, he did not give up his first profession of a tailor and continued to simultaneously run his tailoring and clothier business until at least 1918.³³ In 1907, Mankuss’ good fortune carried over from his mining enterprise to his tailoring and clothier shop. That year, he narrowly escaped losing his shop to a fire that swept through Harrison Avenue. The *Herald Democrat* reported, “[l]ess than a week ago he removed his tailoring establishment from 207 Harrison Avenue...to 217 on the avenue which is just beyond the burned district.”³⁴

While the elder Mankuss was pursuing a profitable merchant and mining career the younger members of the Mankuss family were busy in their own pursuits. Isidor Mankuss, the family’s only son, enjoyed taking part in the Turnverein Society,³⁵ a gymnastic and dance club, and also dedicated himself to joining the World War I efforts, by joining the Navy. At first, Isidor’s attempts to join the U.S. Navy were thwarted as he was turned away multiple times for being underweight and suffering from hammer toe.³⁶ Like his father, Isidor remained committed to his dreams and eventually was accepted into the U.S. Navy as an Apprentice Seaman.³⁷ Isidore returned from his stint in the Navy and eventually moved to San Diego, California.³⁸ It was in California that Isidor met his wife, Hannah Tolken, at the ripe old age of 46. The couple were married in Orange, California on July

³³ This date is the last available City Directory for Leadville. After 1918, only businesses with telephones were recorded and Mankuss does not appear in these records, nor does he advertise in the city’s newspapers.

³⁴ *Herald Democrat*, October 2, 1907, pg. 1.

³⁵ *Herald Democrat*, May 13, 1917, pg. 2.

³⁶ *Herald Democrat*, May 24, 1917, pg. 5.

³⁷ *Carbonate Chronicle*, December 31, 1917, pg. 9.

³⁸ "United States Census, 1930", database with images, *FamilySearch*(<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XC6K-P93 : 25 November 2015>), Harry J Mankuss in entry for Michael P Madsen, 1930.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.



22, 1942.³⁹ A few short months later in December, Isidor received his World War II draft card and returned to serve in the Navy. Isidor returned from this war as well and died November 1, 1954. He was fifty-eight years old at the time of his death.⁴⁰ Hannah Mankuss remained in California and passed away on December 9, 1981. Both Isidore and Hannah were buried at the Los Angeles National Cemetery.⁴¹

The Mankuss family daughters each engaged in a variety of Leadville's local clubs, such as the Mozart Club,⁴² the Lilly of the Valley girls group,⁴³ the T.J.C. club(?),⁴⁴ and the Juvenile Actress Club.⁴⁵ The Mankuss girls were well-known and liked throughout the city and the oldest of them, Fannie, was married in 1904. Fannie married Samuel Berenson on March 20, 1904. The couple married at Temple Israel⁴⁶ with a small ceremony before retiring to the Mankuss family home for an enjoyable wedding supper. "The happy couple left on the midnight train for Salida...the groom is a

promising young business man from Salida."⁴⁷ Fannie made the move to Salida permanent following her marriage but regularly visited her family throughout the following years.

The next Mankuss daughter to be married was Grace. In 1911, she married Leo Gottlieb in a simple ceremony at the Mankuss family home located at 223 Harrison Avenue.⁴⁸ The newlyweds left for a honeymoon in Denver and eventually moved to Boise, Idaho. This is also the same year that Dora opened her own confectionary. The establishment is listed in the 1911 city directories and is shown as operating from the family's home address of 221 Harrison Avenue.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the next time a Mankuss daughter was mentioned in the Leadville press it wasn't due to a happy circumstance such as a wedding. Instead, Essie, the youngest daughter, garnered her mention through an altercation, which resulted in another clerk slapping her. The incident occurred in 1913, when Elsie was just 16 and working as a clerk at Hart-Zaitz Mercantile.⁵⁰ Essie reported being slapped by Mira Steger on her way home from work. Essie won her case and was awarded twenty-one dollars for the trouble.⁵¹ Essie next appears in the city's papers through her avid traveling to visit her married sisters Fannie and Grace. Fannie remained in Salida while Grace relocated to briefly to Idaho⁵² before permanently moving Walla Walla, Washington.⁵³ It was while Essie was visiting Grace in Washington that she met her soon-to-be husband, Max Ziedner.⁵⁴ The newlyweds enjoyed a honeymoon to Spokane, Washington before returning to permanently reside in Walla Walla where Ziedner was "engaged in a large clothing

³⁹ "California, County Marriages, 1850-1952," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K8F2-LH4> : 28 November 2014), Harry Isadore Mankuss and Hannah Tolkan, 22 Jul 1942; citing Orange, California, United States, county courthouses, California; FHL microfilm 2,051, 276.

⁴⁰ "California Death Index, 1940-1997," database, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:VP7R-WR4> : 26 November 2014), Isadore Harry Mankuss, 01 Nov 1954; Department of Public Health Services, Sacramento.

⁴¹ Los Angeles National Cemetery (Los Angeles, Los Angeles County, California), Isadore Harry Mankuss and Hannah Mankuss, Headstone, 2016

⁴² *Herald Democrat*, July 4, 1915, pg. 2.

⁴³ *Herald Democrat*, January 24, 1915, pg. 2.

⁴⁴ *Herald Democrat*, November 1, 1914, pg. 2.

⁴⁵ *Herald Democrat*, July 28, 1895, pg. 5.

⁴⁶ The original article from 1904 cites the couple as being married at a Temple Emmanuel in Leadville, however there was no Temple Emmanuel in the city at that time. It is believed to be a minor miscommunication of places as there was a Temple Emmanuel in Denver at the time.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Herald Democrat*, August 28, 1911, pg. 5.

⁴⁹ City Directory, Leadville, 1911.

⁵⁰ *Herald Democrat*, May 8, 1913, pg. 5.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Herald Democrat*, June 3, 1913, pg. 5.

⁵³ *Herald Democrat*, June 29, 1915, pg. 3.

⁵⁴ *Herald Democrat*, November 7, 1915, pg. 2.



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business...the heir to considerable estate.”⁵⁵ Sadly, Essie’s happiness in Walla Walla was short-lived and both she and her husband Max died of influenza in 1918.⁵⁶ The *Herald Democrat* wrote that her marriage, “had been followed by unusual happiness in the new home she and her husband established...”⁵⁷

The 1920 census is the last one which lists the Mankuss family as living in Leadville. At this time the only remaining members of the family were Moritz, Dora, and their youngest daughter Ruth residing at 300 Harrison Avenue.⁵⁸ On May 13, 1928, Moritz Mankuss passed away. There is no recorded obituary for Moritz and he was interred in the Hebrew Cemetery.⁵⁹ The subsequent

whereabouts of his wife, Dora, are unknown and, other than Isidore, the surviving children (Fannie, Grace, and Ruth) are also lost to us.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Herald Democrat*, December 15, 1918, pg. 3.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ 1920 U.S. census, Lake County, Colorado, Leadville, pg. 74, Moritz Mankuss, Dora Mankuss, and Ruth Mankuss.

⁵⁹ Hebrew Cemetery of Leadville (Leadville, Lake County, Colorado), Moritz Mankuss, Headstone, 2016

The Mankuss family moved around periodically during their residency in Leadville. The following lists their addresses with the respective years of occupation.

1897-107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1897, pg. 201.

1898- 107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1898, pg. 197.

1899- 107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1899, pg. 216.

1900- 107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1900, pg. 236.

1901-107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1901, pg. 242.

1902- 107 W 2nd Street, *City Directory*, 1902, pg. 235.

1903- 113 E. 3rd Street, *City Directory*, 1903, pg. 223.

1905- 204 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1905, pg. 222.

1906- 204 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1906, pg. 231.

1907- 204 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1907, pg. 234.

1908- 204 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1908, pg. 201.

1909- 214 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1909, pg. 195.

1910- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1910, pg. 188.

1911- 223 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1911, pg. 189.

1912- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1912, pg. 186.

1913- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1913, pg. 185.

1914- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1914, pg. 187.

1915- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1915, pg. 185.

1916- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1916, pg. 193.

1917- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1917, pg. 190.

1918- 221 Harrison Avenue, *City Directory*, 1918, pg. 185.