



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Pelton

Elias Pelton¹

Born: January 2, 1856

Died: January 4, 1942

Married to: Cecilia Pelton (Chicago, October 19, 1892)²

In Leadville: 1894-1919

Samuel Pelton³

Born: 1850

Died: November 10, 1905

Married to: Minnie Arkush (Pueblo, June 19, 1887)

In Leadville: 1879-1885, 1903-1905

Amelia (Minnie) Arkush Pelton⁴

Born: January 7, 1867

Died: February 24, 1949

Married to: Samuel Pelton (Pueblo, June 19, 1887)

In Leadville; 1903-1905

Cecilia Pelton (nee Rosenfeld)⁵

Born: November 9, 1867

Died: October 21, 1944

Married to: Elias Pelton

In Leadville late 1890s-1902

Edalina (Eveline) Pelton⁶

Born: 1894

Died: Unknown (living in Denver with her mother as of 1940 census)

Parents: Elias and Cecilia Pelton

In Leadville late 1890s-1902

Sylvia Pelton

Born: 1899

Died: Unknown (living in Denver with her mother as of 1940 census)

Parents: Elias and Cecilia Pelton

In Leadville late 1890s-1902

Herbert Pelton⁷

Born: April 6, 1901

Died: October 21, 1967

Parents: Elias and Cecilia Pelton

In Leadville 1901-1902

Naoma Pelton

Born: 1908

Died: Unknown (living in Denver with her mother as of 1940 census)

Parents: Elias and Cecilia Pelton

Harold Pelton⁸

Born: August 14, 1888

Died: September 24, 1945

Parents: Samuel and Minnie Pelton

In Leadville 1908-1909

Alfred Pelton⁹

Born: April 1, 1892

Died: December 17, 1953

Parents: Samuel and Minnie Pelton

Fred Pelton¹⁰

Born: November 1, 1893

Died: July 8, 1948

Parents: Samuel and Minnie Pelton

The Pelton brothers Samuel and Elias were important clothing and shoe merchants in Leadville. Their careers extended from Leadville's formative years of 1879 and 1880 until the waning years of 1918, albeit in separate businesses. Samuel was first mentioned in a Leadville newspaper on November 15, 1879. In the description of the newly completed Tabor Opera House, the *Leadville Daily Herald* elaborated, "...The ground floor is divided into two capacious store rooms, each measuring twenty-three feet front and eighty-two feet deep and separated by a ten-foot stair case which leads to the second floor, on which is situated the audience room of the opera house. One of the stores is occupied by Pelton and company as a clothing and gents furnishing goods store, and the other is used as a drug store by Miller & Co..."¹¹ A 1905 obituary in the *Herald Democrat* reported that Samuel arrived in Leadville during 1879 and spent "a few years" in the city before he moved to Georgetown. According to the obituary, Samuel spent time in other parts of the state, held his



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interests in Leadville, but did not return permanently until 1903. He was reported born in Poland and emigrated to the United States as “a young lad”.¹² Samuel partnered with another set of Jewish merchant brothers, Jacob, Charles and Bernard Sands to make Sands, Pelton & Co. There is no evidence to indicate younger brother Elias joined Samuel in this early venture in Leadville.¹³ The 1880 census counted both Samuel and Elias as dry goods clerks living in a large boarding house on the main street of Black Hawk.¹⁴ Samuel was listed in the Leadville city directory as a resident of Black Hawk in 1880, which confirms the accuracy of the data in the census.¹⁵ Given this evidence, the connection between Samuel and the Sands brothers can also be traced to Black Hawk; the Sands brothers lived in that city before they moved to Leadville in late 1879.

Curiously, neither Samuel or Elias appear in Leadville city directories for the next several years after 1880. When Samuel was again listed in a Leadville directory in 1883, he was listed as a resident of Denver.¹⁶ Samuel’s partners, the Sands brothers, constantly lived in Leadville and likely did most of the day to day management and administration of the clothing store. Regular advertisements like the one above appeared in Leadville newspapers until 1885. The arrangement is evidence of the quality and reliability of rail transport during Leadville’s early years. Other successful part time Leadville merchants such as Herman Powell and, later, David May often took the sleeper car to Denver during this period. Samuel clearly was able to conduct his part of the business with frequent visits from Denver, Black Hawk or other cities in which he resided. Samuel lived between Georgetown and Denver during the middle and later 1880s.

During 1884 and 1885 Sands, Pelton & Co. were mentioned in the operation of a successful mine in Clear Creek county.¹⁷ That spring, the company appears in a Leadville newspaper, *‘Sands, Pelton & Co. are said to have struck a fine and large body of*

*ore by tunnel, but for reasons unknown, do not make much noise about it... Their mine is located in Hummel basin.’*¹⁸ The location of “Hummel basin” was not determined by this researcher but is likely a reference to the operation in Clear Creek County. Samuel’s role in the mining aspect of the company is unknown, as the Sands brothers were known to make varied investments with money earned in the clothing business. The final year in which Sands, Pelton & Co. appear in the Leadville city directory is 1884. In 1885, the store at 312 Harrison is simply listed as “Charles Sands” clothing company.¹⁹ In January, Charles’ store appeared in a front-page advertisement as “successor to Sands, Pelton & Co”.²⁰ After 1885, there is no evidence of Samuel or Elias living or conducting business in Leadville until 1893.

During their absence from Leadville, Samuel and Elias lived in Denver and operated a clothing store there. Samuel married Minnie Arkush in Pueblo during 1887 and he joined that prominent Jewish merchant family.²¹

The Pelton brothers turned their attention back to Leadville in 1894 and took over a dwindling, but formerly thriving Jewish owned shoe store. From 1888 until 1893, the Famous Shoe store operated by fellow German Jews Herman Powell and Richard Metz, moved, opened, closed, and hosted “closing out sales”, none of which resulted in an actual closure; the store continued to appear in directories and advertised prolifically. The Famous moved to Fred Butler’s former store at 407 Harrison Avenue in late summer of 1890.²² In 1892, the building partially burned and was ordered torn down by the fire marshal.²³ Clearly, the Famous shoe store was experiencing difficulties. Several more closing sales later, the Famous finally disappeared from advertisements in local Leadville newspapers in the spring of 1892 shortly after the fire.²⁴ The Leadville city directory of 1893 is not available, but it is likely the store finally closed in the Carbonate city that year and was not listed. To add to the trials and tribulations during 1893, Richard Metz—a principle



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partner in the store- committed suicide in Denver.²⁵ Despite the difficulties, other stores did not permanently close, and branches operated in Aspen, Denver, and Colorado Springs during the middle 1890s.²⁶ No advertisements in Leadville papers appeared. In January 1894, stockholders of the Famous met in Aspen, and Elias Pelton was listed as the secretary.²⁷ In May of that year the Famous in Leadville re-opened under the management of Elias.²⁸ Perhaps most importantly, the new incarnation of the Famous shoe store opened in the same storefront which Samuel had done business a decade earlier as Sands & Pelton; the Tabor Opera House.

While Elias was listed as the initial proprietor of the revived shoe store, Samuel was also listed as a resident of Leadville in 1894. The brothers both lived at 218 West 3rd Street, and although financial woes had plagued the brothers earlier in the 1890s, they probably moved to Leadville to re-open old business opportunities.²⁹ Statewide newspapers reveal the Pelton brothers were caught up in legal and financial issues while Denver. According to one notice from 1890, the Pelton brother's store on Larimer street was seized by the Sheriff after nearly \$100,000 in unpaid debt had accumulated. According to the notice, Samuel was sick with typhoid fever and forgot the debt had passed the due date. The notice further mentioned that the Pelton Brothers store in Denver was one of the largest wholesale clothing dealers between Chicago and San Francisco.³⁰ Perhaps as a result of these financial issues, Samuel did not permanently relocate to Leadville and again disappeared from the Leadville city directory in 1895.³¹ A vague and intriguing article appeared in the Denver Swedish language newspaper *Svensk-Amerikanska Western* in September 1893. The article, translated with the help of Google translate, explains that Samuel was suspected of intentionally setting a fire in a bakery, which the article claimed he owned. The Denver city directory confirms that Samuel indeed lived at the location of The Denver Baking Co. on 24th Street in 1893. The proprietor was an unidentified

individual listed in the directory as "M. Pelton".³² Further information about this event, the identity of M. Pelton, or any repercussions of the fire were not found by this researcher. In 1895 a fire was set with coal oil on a mattress in the basement of a Famous branch store in Colorado Springs.³³

Between 1895 and 1898, the Famous operated with success in the Tabor Opera House block (then the Weston Opera House). Regular advertisements appear in Leadville newspapers and Elias continued to live at 218 West 3rd Street.³⁴ In 1898, the business moved a few doors north to 318 Harrison Avenue; the same unit David May had occupied during his most successful years in Leadville early in the previous decade.³⁵ Elias often traveled to Denver during the years he operated the Famous in Leadville. In November of 1899, a man named John Flynn stole an overcoat from the newly setup Famous Clothing storefront at 318 Harrison Avenue. A clerk named Ben Sternfield noticed the coat was missing on the afternoon of November 1. After he checked with a nearby pawn shop under the ownership of Nathan Cohn, he tracked the thief down on State Street. During his trial on December 18, Flynn stated that he had been a gambler for most of his life, but had forgot where he had deposited his winnings, which led him to desperate thievery. Judge Rucker decided Flynn was not of sound mind and lessened the charge to petty larceny from grand larceny. Flynn was sentenced to 10 days at Lake County jail.³⁶

Elias married Cecilia Rosenfeld in Chicago shortly before he re-opened the Famous branch store in Leadville in 1892. It is unclear if Cecilia was present in Leadville from the first years Elias began doing business in the city in 1894 and 1895. It is clear, however, that Cecilia and two of the children lived in Leadville during 1900. The Federal census that year counted Elias and Cecilia, children Edelina and Sylvia, (6 and 1 years old respectively) and servant Mary Riley, as residents of 125 West 4th Street.³⁷ The following year, Elias posted a wanted notice for a "girl" to do general housework in a



small family at the same address.³⁸ Increased notices in 1903 reveal Elias often traveled to Denver from Leadville to visit his family, indicating that the Cecilia and children had decided to relocate by that year.³⁹ A notice in March 1903 revealed that Cecilia was also quite ill at the time; perhaps another reason the family was relocated to the finer climate of the Front Range.⁴⁰ Additionally, the same mention reported that Samuel had come up to visit old friends in Leadville during the spring of 1903. In fact, the following year Samuel was again listed as a resident of Leadville.⁴¹ As further evidence of the departure of his family, beginning in 1903, Elias no longer was listed as a resident of 125 West 4th Street. Instead he was solely listed as proprietor of the store at 318 Harrison Avenue. Elias may have moved into apartments above the store, common practice at the time for merchants without a family in the city.⁴² The same month Cecilia was reported to be ill in Denver, Elias was naturalized as a United States citizen in Leadville.⁴³

Business continued to remain brisk during this time, as daily advertisements for the Famous appeared in Leadville newspapers throughout 1901 and 1902. In early 1903, Elias bought out the stock of fellow merchant Fred Rust, who had decided to retire. The stock was valued at over \$4,000; clearly Elias had capitol to work with at this time.⁴⁴

Elias was not the only one who traveled between Leadville and Denver. A hotel arrival notice for the Vendome listed Mrs. E. Pelton- and now three children- as visitors to the city in July of 1905.⁴⁵ Advertisements for the Famous were prolific through 1905 and 1906, which indicate business was still good for Elias, and according to the 1906 Leadville city directory, he moved his residence to 112 West 6th Street.⁴⁶ In November 1905, Samuel left for Denver with what he considered an “attack of bronchitis”. By November 9th he had died in Denver only shortly after he wrote to Elias, explaining he felt better and was ready to return to Leadville.⁴⁷

On January 1, 1906 Elias sent the following statement to the *Herald Democrat*:

“E. Pelton. The Famous Shoe and Clothing Co.- I have been here since 1894 and I freely say that 1905 has been the best year I have ever known in Leadville. I consider the outlook for 1906 splendid and am making my preparations in accord with this belief.

The mining interests, which of course constitute the prosperity of the city, are sitting up and taking notice in a most astonishing fashion and I think the coming year will see us there with both feet firmly planted.”⁴⁸

Elias’ optimism would prove to be unfounded by the following year, as a recession in 1907 closed many mines and re-oriented the positive outlook in Leadville of the early 20th Century. Beginning in mid-1906, a significant drop in large print advertising for the Famous is evident, and by 1907 advertisements become scarce. A single full page advertisement appeared on June 4th 1907, which listed a new manger and a new logo as well as stated that the entire stock had been transferred to “The New York Salvage Company”. This may have been an advertising gimmick, but the gregariousness of the advertisement could indicate financial issues.⁴⁹ The few other mentions in Leadville newspapers during 1907 consist of wanted ads for up to 25 new sales ladies and shoe men.⁵⁰ Throughout 1908, a number of sales at the Famous store regularly appear in Leadville newspapers, including one which read, “*We need to raise a large amount of money in a short time, therefore will offer our immense stock of Men’s furnishings at a great reduction.*” The urgency seems to indicate a tactic of salesmanship more than desperation, but the economic situation was still not recovered by late 1908.⁵¹ By 1909, the large advertisements for the Famous again began to return to Leadville newspapers, such as the one to the right which encompassed all of page 8 and 9 in an issue of the *Herald Democrat* during May of



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1909.⁵² Clearly, the New York Salvage Co. of 1908 had evolved into the Great Western Salvage Company by 1909. The exact nature of this business is unknown, but Leadville city directories reveal that the Famous was consistently managed by Elias during this time, and perhaps the “Salvage Company” was also a tact of advertising.⁵³ In 1908, Elias moved his residence the Vendome Hotel.⁵⁴ During 1908 and 1909, Samuel’s son Harold appeared as a clerk for the Famous, and lived with his uncle Elias at the Vendome Hotel.⁵⁵ The 1910 censused counted Elias as one of 23 all male residents who were “roomers” at the hotel that year. In addition to the owner and his wife, there were 3 female servants. The men who lived in the hotel were both single and married. None of the married men were listed as living with their wives.⁵⁶ The fact that so many married men lived in Leadville without their wives, suggests that like Elias, many men chose to have a household with wives in a large city such as Denver, and work and live part-time in Leadville. Train service was reliable and regular, and these businessmen and workers may have traveled as often as once a week to Front Range cities.

Advertisements were equally gregarious throughout 1909 and by the end of the year Elias was still on the lookout for more salesladies.⁵⁷ Clearly prosperity had returned to Leadville’s clothing market. The year 1910 remained the same, and Elias continued to advertise the Famous prolifically. In March, however, an unusual but relatively harmless event visited the store. A horse escaped from the carriage he was pulling along Harrison Avenue, and ran on a rampage down the sidewalk of the east side of the street. The horse eventually crashed through a storefront window of the Famous but was not injured, and no merchandise was damaged.⁵⁸

In 1911 a significant change in advertising tactics occurred. A March 10th advertisement in the *Herald Democrat* announced, “*Forced to the Wall. Famous Shoe and Clothing Company. Which was forced to the wall by the creditors opened its doors*

Wednesday and the buying public took advantage of this Mighty Slaughter sale...” The “forced to the wall sales” ads proclaimed savings of 75 cents on the dollar, and thousand-foot holes of bankruptcy. Alarming large text and long-winded explanations of overstock filled full page advertisements throughout 1911. By the early spring, the store was owned Crown Brokerage Company.⁵⁹ By December 1911, the Famous announced it had officially “quit the business”.⁶⁰ This would again prove to be an exaggeration and probably another extended sale tactic, as the store continued to appear in advertisements well into the late spring and early summer of 1912.⁶¹ The final advertisement in Leadville newspapers for the Famous ran in a late May issue of the *Herald Democrat*.⁶² Elias simply removed the name Famous and placed his own name on the store, all the while referring to the new “Elias Pelton Store” as successor to the Famous. In true sales fashion, he opened the “new” store with another sale a week later, under the auspice of overstock. Elias continued to refer to the Famous in advertisements for another 3 years- well into 1915- when he moved from the store at 318-320 Harrison after doing business there for 21 years.⁶³ Clearly the Famous brand name had staying power and Elias knew it.

In May of 1915, Elias moved his store to 617 Harrison Avenue, a two-story wood frame structure on the 600 block of Harrison, a building also known as the Moulton block.⁶⁴ The store down the street from his residence at the Vendome Hotel as pictured above. Elias continued to operate a clothing business out of 617 Harrison until at least 1919. The 1920 United States Census listed Elias, his wife Cecilia and children Evaline, Sylvia, Herbert and Naoma as residents of Lafayette Street in Denver. By this time, Leadville was on the verge of an economic downturn far longer and widespread than that of 1896 and 1907, which Elias had endured. Elias continued to work as a merchant in Denver lived until 1942. He and Cecilia were buried in Denver’s Emanuel Hebrew Cemetery.



¹Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/175773270>

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⁵Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/175773294>

⁶ Year: 1940; Census Place: Denver, Denver, Colorado; Roll: m-t0627-00489; Page: 9B; Enumeration District: 16-188

⁷ Ancestry.com. Texas, Death Certificates, 1903-1982 [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2013.

⁸ Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/3742344>

⁹ Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122173479>

¹⁰ Ancestry.com. U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2012. Original data: Find A Grave. <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/85486061>

¹¹ "The Opera House" Leadville Weekly Herald, November 15, 1879 p. 3

¹² "Death of Samuel Pelton, Pioneer Business Man" Herald Democrat, November 9, 1905 p. 2

¹³ For more information of Jacob, Charlie and Bernard Sands see <http://jewishleadville.org/sands-sandelowsky.html>

¹⁴ Year: 1880; Census Place: Black Hawk, Gilpin, Colorado; Roll: 90; Page: 32A; Enumeration District: 050

¹⁵ 1880 Leadville City Directory p. 291

¹⁶ 1883 Leadville City Directory p. 220

¹⁷ "Clear Creek" Buena Vista Democrat, February 28, 1884 p. 1

¹⁸ "Mines" Carbonate Chronicle, March 8, 1884 p. 2

¹⁹ 1885 Leadville City Directory p. 257

²⁰ "Charles Sands" Leadville Daily Herald, January 16, 1885 p. 1

²¹ "Pelton-Arkush" Colorado Daily Chieftain, June 21, 1887 p. 4

A relative of Minnie Arkush managed Leopold Guldman's clothing store in Leadville during 1888.

²² "Removal Notice" Herald Democrat, September 26, 1890 p. 8

²³ "Building Condemned" Herald Democrat, May 29, 1892 p. 7

²⁴ "Going! Going! Going!" Herald Democrat, July 1, 1892 p. 3

²⁵ "They Knew Metz in Leadville" Colorado Daily Chieftain, February 10, 1893 p. 1

²⁶ "Fine Clothing for Men" Aspen Daily Times, April 21, 1893 p. 8

²⁷ "Stock Holders Meeting" Aspen Daily Times, January 19, 1894 p. 5

²⁸ "Ready for Business!" Herald Democrat, May 6, 1894 p. 5

²⁹ 1894 Leadville City Directory p. 206-207

³⁰ "Clothing Store Attached" Aspen Daily Times, October 29, 1890 p. 1

³¹ 1895 Leadville City Directory p. 218

³² 1893 Denver City Directory p. 853

³³ "An Incendiary Fire" Colorado Daily Chieftain, February 24, 1895 p. 3

³⁴ 1895-1898 Leadville City Directories

³⁵ "Crowds" Herald Democrat, October 25, 1898 p. 5

³⁶ "The District Court" Carbonate Chronicle, December 18, 1899 p. 7



³⁷ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQM8-LJW> : accessed 26 January 2019), Elias Pelton, Precinct 4-5, 11 Leadville city Ward 2, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 46, sheet 9A, family 159, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972.); FHL microfilm 1,240,125.

³⁸ "Wanted" Herald Democrat, February 12, 1901 p. 7

³⁹ "Personal Mention" Herald Democrat, May 24, 1903 p. 10

"Personal Mention" Herald Democrat, November 29, 1903 p. 9

⁴⁰ "Personal Mention" Herald Democrat, March 18, 1903 p. 2

⁴¹ 1904 Leadville City Directory p. 256

⁴² 1903 Leadville City Directory p. 255

⁴³ National Archives at Denver; Broomfield, Colorado; Naturalization Records, Colorado, 1876-1990; ARC Title: Naturalization Cards, 1880 - 1906; NAI Number: 1307044; Record Group Title: Records of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1787 - 2004; Record Group Number: 85

⁴⁴ "Manager Pelton of the 'Famous' Buys the Remainder of Rust's Stock" Herald Democrat, January 16, 1903 p. 6

⁴⁵ "Hotel Arrivals" Herald Democrat, July 31, 1905 p. 6

⁴⁶ 1906 Leadville City Directory p. 267

⁴⁷ "Death of Samuel Pelton Pioneer Business Man" Herald Democrat, November 9, 1905 p.2

⁴⁸ "Leadville Business Men Are Hopeful" Herald Democrat, January 1, 1906 p. 20

⁴⁹ "We Will Undersell" Herald Democrat, June 4, 1907 p. 9

⁵⁰ "Wanted Wanted" Herald Democrat, March 5, 1907 p. 8

⁵¹ "Great Dissolution" Herald Democrat, November 6, 1908 p. 6

⁵² "Good People" Herald Democrat, May 9, 1909 p. 9

⁵³ 1908- 1909 Leadville City Directory

⁵⁴ 1908-1918 Leadville City Directories

⁵⁵ 1908-1909 Leadville City Directories

⁵⁶ "United States Census, 1910," database with images, FamilySearch (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MK4H-YDP> : accessed 27 January 2019), E Pelton in household of Edgar C Greene, Leadville Ward 3, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 71, sheet 12A, family 306, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1982), roll 121; FHL microfilm 1,374,134.

⁵⁷ "Help" Herald Democrat, October 3, 1909 p. 4

⁵⁸ "Horse Crashed Into Window" Herald Democrat, March 8, 1910 p. 5

⁵⁹ "Talk About a Successful Sale" Herald Democrat, April 7, 1911 p. 3

⁶⁰ "Quitting Business" Herald Democrat, December 11, 1911 p. 3

⁶¹ "Mr. Man Buy Now" Herald Democrat, May 14, 1912 p. 3

⁶² "3 time 33 1/3 cents is A Dollar!" Herald Democrat, May 19, 1912 p. 3

⁶³ "Removal Sale Extraordinary" Herald Democrat, May 14, 1915 p. 3

⁶⁴ "Big Public Sale" Herald Democrat, February 3, 1916 p. 7



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