



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Poznanski

Bernhard Poznanski

BORN: April 20, 1831. Poland.

DIED: 1890. New York City.

Harris "Harry" Poznanski

BORN: 1838. Poland.

DIED: New York City. October 2, 1901.

Reuben Poznanski

BORN: 1853. New York City.

DIED:

John Poznanski.

BORN: 1855. New York City.

DIED: Unknown

Louis Frank Poznanski

BORN: 1861. New York.

DIED: July 4, 1882. Leadville.

Louis Poznanski (son of Wolfe Poznanski)

BORN: March, 1882. Buena Vista, Colorado.

DIED: April 1, 1882. Buena Vista, Colorado.

Tax records verify that Harris Poznanski¹ was in Colorado as early as 1862.² Born in Poland in 1838, Harry likely made his way to New York City during 1858.³ In his younger years, he heard the call of western adventure and followed mining booms as an investor and merchant throughout the Rocky Mountain region. A resident of Leavenworth, Kansas in 1859,⁴ Harry then traveled to the gold mining camps of Colorado⁵ and Montana.⁶ By the time of his naturalization in New York City on October 10, 1878, it is somewhat clear that Harris was working as a "real estate dealer" in New York,⁷ Denver, and Pueblo, Colorado, splitting his time and interests between multiple cities by the end of the decade. This would also be true of his brother, Bernhard (b.1831),⁸ who can be found residing in the same locations throughout the west where the family operated their businesses.

Another brother, Morris (b.1824), was also central to the Leadville Pozanaski lineage. Although Morris never lived in Leadville, he did follow a similar investment plan with his brothers, who essentially made their fortune investing in retail and land ventures throughout the western United States. Listed as a sheet music publisher in the *1855 New York State Census*, Morris was the father of Yetta Poznanski Cohen and her brothers John,⁹ Reuben and Louis Frank Poznanski,¹⁰ all of whom would operate business ventures and live in Leadville during the early 1880s.

Beginning in Kansas during 1859, and later Denver starting in 1860,¹¹ Harry developed relationships with other Jewish businessmen who would also make their way to Leadville during the late 1870s. His first Colorado partnership, a profitable clothing store operation in Denver with future Leadvillian and brother-in-law Sam Cohen, opened its doors during the autumn of 1860.¹² In April of that year the pair took advantage of an opportunity to purchase the entire stock of the Sands & Bro. clothing store in Leavenworth,¹³ probably prompting his fellow Jewish-Polish clothiers¹⁴ to launch their own operations in Denver by 1862.¹⁵ A news item documents that Harry and future Leadville clothier Jake Sands¹⁶ shared a Central Overland coach from Leavenworth to Denver on April 29, 1861.¹⁷ During the early stages of 1863, Harry and Sam constructed one of Denver's earliest brick buildings, demonstrating their prosperity.¹⁸ Sam would eventually marry Harry and Bernhard's niece, Yetta, fifteen years his junior.¹⁹ By June of 1863, the store changed its moniker to "H. Poznanski & Brother,"²⁰ a reflection of Sam's change in marital status. By mid-December, the enterprise operated in four locations: two in Denver, one in Central City, Colorado and another in New York City. Advertising for Harris's dry goods stores proclaimed "City & Mountain Merchants" boasting "The Largest Stock of Clothing, Hats, Boots and Shoes," everything from the finest silk to woolen drawers.²¹



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During the early portion of 1865, Harry began selling off furnishings from his Denver home along with Oak Block,²² the brick building on Blake Street mentioned earlier. This appears to be what prompted Harry's transition into real estate investments, essentially turning the structure into a rooming house²³ before removing himself from the city to return "...to the east."²⁴ Other records indicate that the family likely left Denver by that summer.²⁵ Despite his physical absence, Harry continued to operate his stores in these locations.²⁶

Harry's return to Colorado appears to coincide with a partnership with future Leadvillian Sam Rich, while expanding his dry goods empire to Pueblo during the summer of 1873.²⁷

The Poznanski expansion into Pueblo was fruitful, and the business flourished until the partnership with Sam Rich dissolved on April 18, 1875. Rich's brief continuation of the operation floundered, culminating with his creditors' assumption of the business during bankruptcy proceedings in February of 1878.²⁸

The Poznanskis' post-Pueblo activity in Colorado was rather quiet until they resurfaced during 1880 in Leadville, where Harry once again partnered with his sister Yetta's²⁹ husband, Sam Cohen, in H. Poznanski & S. Cohen Dry Goods at 203 Harrison Avenue. Though his residence at this time is listed as New York City, Harry clearly split his time between the two cities and either lived at the store or with the Cohens when engaged locally. His nephews, Bernard and Louis, were operating a saloon next door at 205 Harrison where Bernard resided.³⁰ Bernhard **also** would serve as the vice president and honorary colonel for the Humphrey Hose Company,³¹ one of three volunteer fire departments functioning in Leadville at this time.³² The 1880 *United States Census* finds Louis as living at 109 West Chestnut Street.³³

The year 1880 was the most active period for the Leadville Poznanskis. Morris Poznanski's eldest son, John Poznanski, was a silverware salesman for the firm S.P. Holzman, a fine China dealer, of Denver.³⁴ John divided his time between Denver and representing that company's local interests in Leadville³⁵ from the home of Yetta and Sam Cohen.³⁶ He and brother Louis would attend the wedding of their cousin Rebecca Samuels³⁷ to Edward Nathan on September 4; Louis and John gifted the couple carving and chamber sets, respectively.³⁸ The following week Bernhard was called to testify at the arson trial of a man who had been accused of setting fire to the old McDaniels Theater.³⁹

The Poznanski saloon continued successfully into 1881,⁴⁰ as did Harry and Sam Cohen's clothing house. Reuben found lodging at the Humphrey Hose Company's firehouse where he was employed as a firefighter.⁴¹ He and John attended that year's Purim Masque Bal hosted by the Ladies Hebrew Benevolent Society at Turner Hall on March 15, dressed as "a colored gentleman".⁴² But like any profitable retail outfit, the occasional tally fell on the negative side of the ledger:

An Overcoat Fiend.

A rough looking specimen of humanity who gave his name [as] Tom Anglum, was arrested yesterday afternoon on the complaint of Mr. Poznanski, a Harrison avenue clothier, for stealing an overcoat from off a wire figure at the door of his store. Poznanski was inside the store selling a hat to a customer when the fellow deliberately walked up, took the coat from the dummy and put it on. A bystander who witnessed the transfer, at once informed the unsuspecting store keeper, who rushed to the door just in time to see the thief cross the



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street with the coat on his back. He had forgotten to remove the price tag, and he walked along quite unconscious of the large placard on his back hearing the legend "\$14.00." Poznanski gave pursuit and collared him, and Officers Harrington and Harris escorted him to the city jail. Mr. Ed. Nathan,⁴³ another clothier on the same thoroughfare, recognized the fellow as a suspicious character who had been lounging around the vicinity, and a hasty examination disclosed the fact that he also had been victimized to the extent of a new overcoat, also removed from a dummy at his door. Nathan's property could not be found, but the evidence against the thief is strong enough to retire him from circulation for a long term. He will be tried today.⁴⁴

The Poznanskis' commitment to the local volunteer fire department was substantial. Reuben, Bernhard and Louis all held positions there. During the Grand Hotel fire of June 14, 1881, Reuben was seriously injured while engaged in the struggle to end the conflagration. "...Reuben Poznanski was on the ladder leaning against the remaining front wall of the concert hall, dragging up a section of hose. With great difficulty he reached the top, and then, exhausted, was thrown off by a sudden gyration of the water. He struck the ground with terrific force, dislocating his shoulder and covering his head with cuts. He was [led] away in an almost fainting condition." It was also noted that all of the injured firemen recovered.⁴⁵ In August, the Humphrey Hose Company travelled to Colorado Springs where they won the first prize of \$100 in the state firefighters competition. The men were treated to a lavish celebration upon their return to Leadville which was hosted by their 'colonel' Bernhard Poznanski on August 9.⁴⁶ John had

removed to Denver before the winter of 1881.⁴⁷ It is unclear whether Harry dissolved his partnership with brother-in-law Sam Cohen, but neither was operating a storefront in Leadville by the spring of 1882.

The first third of 1882 passed uneventfully for the Poznanskis. Bernhard transformed his Harrison Avenue saloon into a clothing house where he worked with his nephew Louis and Reuben continued serving as a firefighter with the Humfrey Hose Company.⁴⁸ Another of Bernhard's and Harry's brothers, Wolfe (b. 1834 – d. 1919), had reportedly journeyed across the Great Plains with teams of oxen to Denver in 1860.⁴⁹ Wolfe, who operated a dry goods store about thirty miles south of Leadville in Buena Vista, Colorado from the 1870s until 1886,⁵⁰ had welcomed a son, Louis, during March of 1882. Unfortunately the child perished a month later, on April 1.⁵¹ He is interred in Leadville's historic Hebrew cemetery (Block B, Lot 5, Grave 3).⁵²

Louis Frank Poznanski, reportedly twenty-one, lived only a few months longer. He was accidentally killed when he fired an overpacked cannon during Leadville's Independence Day celebration of 1882:⁵³

*KILLED,
Louis Poznanski, of Battery B,
Suddenly
Hurled Into Eternity
This Morning.*

—
*While in the Blossom of Young
Manhood He Is Taken way to
His
Long Home.*

—
*Up to quarter past one this morning
the nation's birthday was a season of
rejoicing and from all parts of the
town came the customary tributes
known only to the Fourth day of July.*



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Guns, rockets, fire crackers and revolvers were discharged from all sections and it would seem as if the city was bombarded by an enemy rejoicing in victory. To add to these rejoicings at the advent of the 106th anniversary of American Independence the youngest and most promising military company of the city decided to add their share; consequently Battery B, represented by about thirty men, decided to give vent to their patriotism by firing a salute from the highest pinnacle of the highest city on the American continent. Capitol hill at the head of Harrison avenue was the designated point, and thither the young men drew their new six pounder. The first lieutenant of the command, Lieutenant W. K. Smith, had seen six years' hard service in a battery of the army, and to him was given the honor of firing the first two salutes. These were loaded by the veteran, and the report they made was heard all over the city. Seeing that it was simply a matter of loading, and supposing that not much skill was required the private members of the command decided they would fix the gun for the third and last round of the salute. Willing to please the boys the able captain and lieutenant [complied] with the entreaties pressed upon them and allowed the members to charge the cannon. Elated with the idea the powder was properly inserted and the wadding was rammed home most vigorously. Lieutenant Smith gave the command to stop, but the men said they wanted the gun to make a loud noise. The protest of the commandants was of no avail and the men continued

charging until the me lieutenant remarked that if he had a pistol he would make them stop. At last about two feet of wadding had been packed tight and everybody had sought places of safety. The only men who assumed an appearance of bravado were A. P. Thatcher and Louis Poznanski. The former walked up and loaded the gun and taking his cigar from his mouth touched it to the priming. He then retreated and had gone about ten feet when the gun went off. The predictions of the lieutenant were only too true, for a most terrific explosion took place and the wheels of the carriage alone remained to tell the tale that a cannon had been there. The gun had exploded. Pieces of the cornices of surrounding houses were knocked off and an atom of the gun was not to be found.

Louis Poznanski had stood down the hill about six feet from the gun and with the explosion he was seen to be hurled about ten feet and fall. In an instant his comrades ran to his side, but he had already passed beyond hope. His pulse beat but he was virtually dead. He was lifted tenderly into a carriage and taken to the undertaker's but before he reached there he was a mass of lifeless clay. A. P. Thatcher was also injured but was able to walk home, his damage consisting of a slight facial disfiguration from powder and the deafening of one ear from the concussion. When his friends left him they stated he was all right.



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Louis Posnanski was taken to the undertaker's and the coroner sent for. Dr. Bredin made an examination and found that the left chest had been struck and all the ribs mangled, while there was a terrible swelling over the heart. The most serious injuries were sustained around the groin, and the doctor stated that the poor fellow never knew what killed him.

*The deceased was but a couple of months passed twenty-one and was engaged as a clerk in the clothing store of B. Poznanski, his uncle. He is a native of New York city where his parents now live. He was formerly a member of the Humphrey hose and an active member of the battery. He was universally admired and his death will be sadly mourned by many.*⁵⁴

The news of Louis's lethal accident rapidly spread across the state.⁵⁵ The Denver-based *Rocky Mountain News* noted him to be "...one of the most daring members of the old volunteer fire department...".⁵⁶ Clearly Louis's bravado did play a consequential role in his demise.

During 1883 the partnership of Cohen and Poznanski resurfaced with the addition of Harry's brother Wolfe and Leadville clothier Henry Frankle,⁵⁷ when the combo filed for a mining patent in Leadville for the Last Chance Lode, a very large mining property.⁵⁸ On January 23, 1883, John married Jennie Appel⁵⁹ in a lavish affair at Denver's Standard Club.⁶⁰ Bernhard was still listed in the Leadville city directory, operating his clothing store at 214 Harrison Avenue,⁶¹ but would be called away to New York City in early February because his wife, Rose, had suddenly passed⁶² away, leaving him the absentee, widowed father of five. It is likely that Reuben and John still maintained a

Leadville presence at this time; John still worked as a traveling agent for Holzman's firm in Denver.⁶³ Other records indicate that Harry once again had a Leadville residence. Bernhard would return to Leadville after tending to Rose's death on March 3.⁶⁴

*EMIGRATED FROM
COLORADO
Two Business Men Who
Found It
Profitable to Go Away.*

*Bernhard Poznanski, clothing dealer of Leadville, was sought anxiously by Deputy United States Marshal Cantril the early part of the week. Cantril had an attachment against him, sworn out in the United States court by A. H. Greenberg of San Francisco, but on arriving at Poznanski's store he found it in possession of D. C. Klein, who claimed to be the possessor, and only about \$2000 worth of stock, which was attached. Poznanski's family are said to be in New York, but the whereabouts of himself and the balance of the stock is unknown...*⁶⁵

A item appearing in Denver's *Rocky Mountain News* on September 8, 1883 noted that Bernhard had not "fled" from Leadville, indicating that he had experienced troubles.⁶⁶ A statement from Bernhard that ran in the same paper a few days later sheds little light on the mystery:

*TO THE ROCKY
MOUNTAIN NEWS.*

In your issue of the seventh instant I find an article that represents me as avoiding the United States marshal, and as having left the country. The said article was no doubt inspired by



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some malicious person who desires to injure my credit and standing. Some weeks ago I sold out my stock and business to Mr. D. Kline of Denver, of which my friends and customers were duly notified in the newspapers and otherwise was a square business transaction. Since that sale I have been constantly in Leadville and intend to remain. I can be found at No. 223 Harrison avenue. So far as avoiding the United States marshal, I will go down to Denver and report at once if he will send me a railroad ticket.

B. PO[Z]NANSKI.

LEADVILLE, September 8, 1883.⁶⁷

Though the exact nature is unclear, the matter may have been settled in a judgment against Bernhard for \$6,726.00 during June of 1884.⁶⁸ Bernhard, who likely returned to his family home in Brooklyn after this incident, spent the remainder of his life there, passing away in 1890 from unknown causes.⁶⁹

Reuben left Leadville in the early part of 1884 for California.⁷⁰ He would eventually return to Kansas City. On June 14, 1893, he was in Colorado Springs, where he met and married Melcenia Shell,⁷¹ a widowed mother of two.⁷² The couple then made their way to Kansas City. The details about Reuben's relationship with Melcenia were highly publicized in their 1900 divorce case, in which Reuben accused, and proved, that his bride of two decades was a bigamist. In December of 1899, Melcenia's previous husband located the Poznanski couple. Her explanation to Reuben was that she thought her former husband was long dead and she made a mistake. Though there is no record of any criminal proceedings, both men filed for divorce in the Missouri courts.⁷³ Afterward, Reuben temporarily remained in Kansas City.⁷⁴ He disappears from North American records at this juncture, and may have left the United States for Europe, first settling in London, and eventually Poland.⁷⁵

Harry would spend the bulk of his life in New York City, where he died on October 2, 1901 at the age of sixty-three.⁷⁶ Probate records indicate that there may have been issues with the distribution of his substantial estate.⁷⁷



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- ⁴ Kansas State Historical Society; Topeka, Kansas; *1859 Kansas Territory Census*; Roll: *ks1859_1*; Line: 16
- ⁵ *Records of the Internal Revenue Service*. Record Group 58. The National Archives at Washington, DC.
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- ⁷ *Soundex Index to Petitions for Naturalization filed in Federal, State, and Local Courts located in New York City, 1792-1989*. New York, NY, USA: The National Archives at New York City.
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- ¹⁰ Year: 1870; Census Place: *New York Ward 20 District 13 (2nd Enum)*, New York, New York; Roll: *M593_1047*; Page: 616B
- ¹¹ *Poznanski & Cohen*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). October 20, 1860. P2.
- ¹² *Local Matters*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). October 20, 1860. P3.
- ¹³ *Governor's Reception*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). April 30, 1861. P3.
- ¹⁴ Matt Hulstine & Jeffrey P. Grant. "Sands". (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation). 2022.
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- ¹⁶ For more information on Jake Sands please visit: <http://jewishleadville.org/sands-sandelowsky.html> and <http://jewishleadville.org/sandstaboraffair.html>
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- ¹⁸ *The Commonwealth*. (Denver, CO: The Weekly Commonwealth). January 22, 1863. P4.
- ¹⁹ Matt Hulstine. "Cohen". (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation). 2016.
- ²⁰ *Poznanski's Column*. (Denver, CO: The Weekly Commonwealth). June 25, 1863. P3.
- ²¹ *Poznanski's Column*. (Denver, CO: The Daily Commonwealth). December 9, 1863. P3.
- ²² *Selling Out Cheap!* (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). January 3, 1865. P3.
- ²³ *For Rent!* (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). April 11, 1865. P3.
- ²⁴ *Selling Out Cheap*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). January 5, 1865. P3.
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- ²⁷ *New Dry Goods House*. (Pueblo, CO: The Colorado Weekly Chieftain). August 28, 1873. P4.
- ²⁸ *City and Vicinity*. (Pueblo, CO: Colorado Daily Chieftain). February 2, 1878. P4.
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- ³¹ Don L., and Jean Harvey Griswold,. *History of Leadville and Lake County, Colorado: From Mountain Solitude to Metropolis*. Vol. 1. Denver, CO: Colorado Historical Society, 1996. P668.
- ³² William Korn. "Palace of Fashion Fire". Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation. 2015. <http://jewishleadville.org/palaceoffashionfire.html>
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- ³⁴ TB Corbett and JH Ballenger. *Corbet, and Ballenger's Second Annual City Directory: Containing A Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City Of Leadville for 1881*. (Leadville, CO: Corbet and Ballenger Publishers.1881). Pp280, 442.
- ³⁵ *Personal Points*. (Leadville, CO: Carbonate Chronicle). June 24, 1881. P8.
- ³⁶ *Social And Personal Mention*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News. June 26, 1881). P2.
- ³⁷ For more information on the Samuels family, please visit: <http://jewishleadville.org/cohen.html>
- ³⁸ "Orange Blossoms". September 4, 1880. P3.
- ³⁹ *Fire Bugs*. (Leadville, CO: Carbonate Chronicle). September 11. 1880. P3.
- ⁴⁰ *License*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). January 1, 1881. P4.
- ⁴¹ Corbett and Ballenger. Leadville, CO; USA. 1881. P242.
- ⁴² *Judah's Festival in Honor of Esther and Mordecai*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News. March 16, 1881). P8.



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- ⁴³ For more information on Ed Nathan and his family, please visit: <http://jewishleadville.org/nathan.html>
- ⁴⁴ *An Overcoat Fiend*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). November 30, 1881. P1.
- ⁴⁵ Griswold. *Vol 1*. Denver, CO. 1996. Pp830-831.
- ⁴⁶ Griswold. *Vol 1*. Denver, CO. 1996. P907.
- ⁴⁷ *Society Circles*. (Denver, CO: the Rocky Mountain News). February 26, 1882. P2.
- ⁴⁸ *Our Fire Department*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). January 1, 1882. P6.
- ⁴⁹ *Wolf Poznanski*. (Denver, CO: The Denver Jewish News. September 3, 1919). P8.
- ⁵⁰ *Business Changes*. Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News. August 15, 1886. P4.
- ⁵¹ JewishGen, comp. *JewishGen Online Worldwide Burial Registry (JOWBR)* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2008.
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- ⁵³ *Firehouse Facts*. (Leadville, CO: Carbonate Chronicle). February 16, 1882. P7.
- ⁵⁴ *Killed*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). July 4, 1882. P1.
- ⁵⁵ *The Fatal Fourth*. (Gunnison, CO: The Gunnison Daily News). July 6, 1882. P1.
- ⁵⁶ *The State At Large*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). July 8, 1882. P3.
- ⁵⁷ For more information on the Frankle family, please visit: <http://jewishleadville.org/frankle.html>
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- ⁵⁹ *Colorado Marriages 1858-1939*. Denver, CO. USA. 2004. P16,707.
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- ⁶² *Talk*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). February 9, 1883. P4.
- ⁶³ JH Ballenger and Richards. *Ballenger & Richard's Eleventh Annual City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms etc. in The City of Denver for 1883*. (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Internet Archive. 2011). P534.
- ⁶⁴ *Social*. (Leadville, CO: Leadville Daily Herald). March 4, 1883. P6.
- ⁶⁵ *Emigrated From Colorado*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). September 7, 1883. P8.
- ⁶⁶ *Royalston's Return*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). September 8, 1883. P4.
- ⁶⁷ *In Justice to Poznanski*. (Denver, CO: The Rocky Mountain News). September 11, 1883. P2.
- ⁶⁸ United States Circuit Court. Leadville, CO: Carbonate Chronicle. June 8, 1884. P7.
- ⁶⁹ *Find a Grave*. [database and images]. "Memorial Page for Bennett Poznanski (unknown-1890), Find a Grave Memorial ID [130166550](#), citing Beth Olom Cemetery, New York, USA.
- ⁷⁰ *Firehouse Facts*. (Leadville, CO: Carbonate Chronicle). February 16, 1884. P8.
- ⁷¹ Ancestry.com. *Colorado, U.S., County Marriage Records and State Index, 1862-2006* [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2016.
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- ⁷⁴ Year: 1900; Census Place: *Kansas City Ward 6, Jackson, Missouri*; Roll: 862; Page: 4; Enumeration District: 0055.
- ⁷⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Washington D.C.; *Poland, Łódź Ghetto Register Books, 1939-1944*; Record Group: Rg-15.083; File: Rg-15_083m_0391-00000637.
- ⁷⁶ New York City Deaths, 1892-1902; *Deaths Reported in 1901 (M-Z). Borough of Manhattan*; Certificate #: 30094.
- ⁷⁷ *Record of Wills, 1665-1916; Index to Wills, 1662-1923 (New York County)*; Author: *New York. Surrogate's Court (New York County)*; Probate Place: *New York, New York*.



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