



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Preis

Joseph M. Preis

Occupation: Clerk, clothing merchant

Born: January 1870

Birthplace: Germany

Died: N/A

Joseph M. Preis was an aspiring apprentice and later a successful merchant in the Jewish community of Leadville and across the United States. Born in Germany in January 1870, Joseph immigrated to the United States in 1885 at the age of 15.¹ He settled in Leadville by 1886 with the express purpose of working alongside and learning from local Jewish business owners, especially his uncle² the prominent Jewish clothing merchant³ David May.⁴ Although he started his career clerking at various Jewish businesses in Leadville, Joseph would gradually become a respected and popular merchant in his own right in Denver and New York.

Joseph's first job in Leadville was as a clerk for the Monheimer Bros. general store,⁵ owned by brothers Joseph and Marcus Monheimer.⁶ Joseph resided with his uncle for the better part of his residency in Leadville, commencing in 1886 at the latter's home at 203 West 5th Street.⁷ From 1887⁸ to 1888,⁹ Joseph worked for May as a clerk at his clothing business at 318 Harrison Avenue. By 1889, the final year Leadville's city directories recorded his presence in the town, Joseph worked for Shaw, Cash & Co. and resided at 215 West 7th Street,¹⁰ the same address as Hattie Leon,¹¹ daughter of Solomon Leon,¹² and Sigmund Simon,¹³ proprietor of the Clipper Saloon.¹⁴ By early 1888, David May had departed Leadville and shifted his attention to his business interests in Denver,¹⁵ leaving Joseph on his own until he joined his uncle.

Joseph avoided the spotlight of Leadville's local newspapers for the majority of his tenure in the city. The *Leadville Evening Chronicle* listed him as an attendee of Temple Israel's 1889 Purim Ball (misspelled as Price) as a single gentleman.¹⁶ He appeared twice more under guest listings in the *Leadville Evening Chronicle* in 1889: at a party held by St. George Episcopal Church's Bible class, located across the street from Temple Israel;¹⁷ and at a Simchat Torah celebration hosted by Samuel and Hannah Flaks.¹⁸ According to the *Herald Democrat*, Joseph left Leadville by 1890 and moved to Denver where he again worked under David's tutelage at May Shoe and Clothing House.¹⁹ While in Denver, he became a well-known merchant²⁰ and founded the Preis Clothing Company on the northwest corner of Stout Street by 1899.²¹ In 1900, Joseph was living in the household of his elder brother and fellow clothing merchant Julius and his wife Miriam in Denver.²² Julius arrived in the United States in 1882, three years prior to Joseph, but apparently never resided in Leadville.

By 1904, Joseph and Julius had moved from Colorado to New York City where they went into business together under the name Preis Brothers.²³ Joseph became engaged to Helen Hirschbein in September 1906; the couple married on January 2, 1907. David May's son²⁴ and Joseph's cousin Tom May²⁵ attended the ceremony. Joseph and Helen remained in New York and had two sons, John and George.²⁶

As of January 2021, the last publicly available census, the 1940 census, recorded Joseph and Helen living in Manhattan at the respective ages of 70 and 56.²⁷ The burial site for Joseph and his family are unknown.



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¹ "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQMM-T1K>; accessed January 28, 2021), Joseph Preis in household of Julius Preis, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 87, sheet 1B, family 19, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972); FHL microfilm 1,240,119.

² Jeanne Abrams, "David May (1848-1927)," *Immigrant Entrepreneurship 1720 to the Present*, accessed January 28, 2021, <https://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entries/david-may/#edn21>.

³ *Local Items* (Denver, CO: *The Jewish Outlook*), October 4, 1907, P8.

⁴ For more on the May family, see: Trevor Mark, *May* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2018: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/may.html>.

⁵ T. B. Corbett and J. H. Ballenger, *Corbett & Ballenger's Seventh Annual Leadville City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc. in the City of Leadville, for 1886* (Leadville, CO: Corbett & Ballenger Publishers, 1886), P213.

⁶ For more on the Monheimer family, see: Quinn Whittington, *Monheimer* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2018: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/monheimer.html>.

⁷ Corbett and Ballenger, 1886, P213

⁸ T. B. Corbett and J. H. Ballenger, *Corbett & Ballenger's Eighth Annual Leadville City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc. in the City of Leadville, for 1887* (Leadville, CO: Corbett & Ballenger, Publishers, 1887), P220.

⁹ J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards' Ninth Annual Leadville City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc. in the City of Leadville, for 1888* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1888), P215.

¹⁰ J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards' Tenth Annual Leadville City Directory: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc. in the City of Leadville, for 1889* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1889), P207.

¹¹ Ballenger and Richards, 1889, P163.

¹² For more on the Leon family, see: Jeffrey P. Grant, *Leon* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2019: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/leon.html>.

¹³ For more on the Simon family, see: Jeffrey P. Grant, *Simon* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2019: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/simon.html>.

¹⁴ Ballenger and Richards, 1889, P226.

¹⁵ Trevor Mark, *May* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2018: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/may.html>.

¹⁶ *The Purim Ball* (Leadville, CO: *Leadville Evening Chronicle*), March 16, 1889, P3.

¹⁷ *A Pleasant Social* (Leadville, CO: *Leadville Evening Chronicle*), July 12, 1889, P3.

¹⁸ *Simchath Tora Party* (Leadville, CO: *Leadville Evening Chronicle*), October 21, 1889, P3.

¹⁹ *Personal Mention* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), July 9, 1890, P5.

²⁰ *Social Items* (Denver, CO: *The Jewish Outlook*), November 11, 1904, P8.

²¹ J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Twenty-Seventh Annual Denver City Directory for 1899: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Denver, CO: Ballenger & Richards, 1899), P925.

²² "United States Census, 1900," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MQMM-T1J>; accessed January 28, 2021), Julius Preis, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 87, sheet 1B, family 19, NARA microfilm publication T623 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1972); FHL microfilm 1,240,119.

²³ *Social Items*, November 11, 1904, P8.

²⁴ *Local Items* (Denver, CO: *The Jewish Outlook*), December 28, 1906, P8. The article erroneously refers to Tom as the nephew of Joseph Preis.



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²⁵ *Local Items*, October 4, 1907, P8. This article correctly identifies Tom as Joseph's cousin.

²⁶ "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X4KG-RPZ>: accessed January 28, 2021), Joseph Preis, Manhattan, New York City, New York, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 390, sheet 14A, line 23, family 401, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 1553; FHL microfilm 2,341,288.

²⁷ "United States Census, 1940," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K7MC-38C>: accessed January 28, 2021), Joseph Preis, New York City, New York County, New York, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 31-774, sheet 11A, line 33, family 274, NARA microfilm publication T627 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012), roll 2642.



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"United States Census, 1940." Database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:K7MC-38C>; accessed January 28, 2021). Joseph Preis, New York City, New York County, New York, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) 31-774, sheet 11A, line 33, family 274, NARA microfilm publication T627. Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2012. Roll 2642.

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