



Temple Israel FOUNDATION

Biographical Information Sheet

Wisotski

Reuben Wisotski (Witsoskey)

Born: 1845

Died: Unknown

Married to: Unknown

In Leadville: 1880, 1882

Reuben Wisotski first appeared as a Leadville resident in both the 1880 city directory and in the 1880 United States census. In the census, his name was written as “Ro Witsoskey”. This spelling variant of his name did not appear in any other records and can be attributed to such inconsistencies as language variation, enumerator error, the subject’s ability to speak or spell in English, and other related circumstances. In the 1880 city directory he was listed as “Rueben Wisotski”, a clerk at the store of Poznanski & Cohen at 203 Harrison Avenue.¹ This spelling of Wisotski, with a slight variation in the form of a “y” instead of an “i” at the end, is the most consistent way of spelling his name. These variants are repeated in a brief newspaper article of the American Israelite in 1882 as well as the 1882 Leadville City directory and will thus be used to refer to the subject of this study.²

Reuben’s residence building at 203 Harrison Avenue was built in the summer of 1879 by the successful Irish businesswoman, Sarah Ray. The corner of State and Harrison where the building was located served as a prime commercial location. A contemporary newspaper article cited that the property totaled \$12,000 in rent per year during 1880. In addition to its prominent location, the structure was likely one of Leadville’s first brick-built stores- a very real asset in any fire-prone frontier city.³ In 1880 the building’s storefront was occupied by Reuben’s employer, the clothing store of Poznanski & Cohen⁴, an attorney, and a paint shop. Like all commercial structures on Harrison Avenue, the second story provided interchangeable rooms as apartments and offices and sometimes live-in offices. In addition to Reuben, two other men lived at 203 Harrison according to the census enumeration. These included, S. Cohen (Sam), the

proprietor of Poznanski & Cohen, in addition to M. Reahoffen (Meyer Rehoefer in the city directory), another clerk in the store and a native of Bavaria.⁵ All three men were between 35 and 40 years of age; Cohen and Reuben were listed as married, and Reahoffen was listed as single. Reuben’s wife was not enumerated as a resident of Leadville and her name and details are unknown. Reuben and his parents were listed as born in Russia. Given the time period, Russia could refer to any number of areas within the Russian sphere of influence, including the Baltic states, Poland or elsewhere in eastern Europe.⁶ The year Reuben immigrated was not recorded in the census.

For unknown reasons, Reuben was not listed as a resident of Leadville in the 1881 city directory. The clothing store of Cohen & Poznanski continued to operate at 203 Harrison Avenue and only one clerk named Max Cahnimer was listed in the directory.⁷ Whether Reuben was not present in Leadville or if he was simply missed by the enumerator of the directory in 1881 may never be known.

In 1882, Reuben was again listed as a resident of Leadville.⁸ In the directory, his profession appeared as “clerk” with no specific place of employment listed. His residence was 212 West 6th Street, a structure which did not appear in the 1883 Sanborn fire insurance map- whether the structure was a single-family dwelling house or boarding house cannot be determined. That summer, he appeared as an attendee of the Berith Milah of the child of Sam Mayer and a donor of \$1 to the Cleveland Jewish Orphan Asylum.⁹ No further evidence of Reuben was uncovered in local or national newspapers, or city directories after 1882. Given the variants of his name which this researcher as demonstrated, his name may have changed or been written differently after 1882, and nearly untraceable without specifics on any changes. Due to lack of evidence, Reuben’s later life, other family members, and further details were not found.



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¹ 1880 Leadville City Directory p. 383

² 1882 Leadville City Directory p. 298 and “Local and Domestic” The American Israelite, July 14, 1882 p. 14

³ “Mrs. Sarah Ray’s Building” Leadville Weekly Democrat, Volume 2, January 1, 1881 p. 13

⁴ For more information on the Poznanski brothers and Sam Cohen respectively see, <http://jewishleadville.org/poznanski.html> and <http://jewishleadville.org/cohen.html>

⁵ 1880 Leadville City Directory p. 304

⁶ Year: 1880; Census Place: Leadville, Lake, Colorado; Roll: 91; Page: 355C; Enumeration District: 075

Source Information Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Tenth Census of the United States, 1880. (NARA microfilm publication T9, 1,454 rolls). Records of the Bureau of the Census, Record Group 29. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁷ 1881 Leadville City Directory p. 90

⁸ 1882 Leadville City Directory p. 298

⁹ “Local and Domestic” The American Israelite, July 14, 1882 p. 14



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Newspapers:

Leadville Weekly Democrat (Leadville, Lake County, Colorado)

American Israelite (Cincinnati, Cayuga County, Ohio)

Maps/ Photos:

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Leadville, Lake County, Colorado. Sanborn Map Company, Sep, 1883. Map. https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01031_001/.

"Mrs. Sarah Ray's Block", Unknown Photographer, 1881, Leadville Weekly Democrat p. 20

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