

Social Life in Leadville

Entertainment & Community

There are no known records that indicate the size of audiences within Leadville's synagogues, however about one hundred and seventy congregants attended Temple Israel's dedication on September 19, 1884. Numbers for Kneseth Israel, the orthodox synagogue, were much smaller. Leadville Jews were active in both secular and Jewish organizations. Some were very active in groups such as the *Knights of Pythias*, *Elks*, *Masons*, *Oddfellows*, and the *Ancient Order of United Workmen*.

Leadville's Jewish organizations were eleemosynary. Among the earliest was the *Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Association (Society)* that had roughly forty members and provided financial assistance to local residents without regard for religious affiliation. The roster of names for the active women in this group included members of prominent local families such as Kahn, Schloss, Samuels, Miller, and Schayer. The association held regular charity functions that were popular secular events for Leadvillians such as the annual *Purim Masque Ball* and the *Strawberry & Ice Cream Festival*. According to a report that appeared in the March 23, 1883, edition of the *Leadville Daily Herald*, Jews were not the only attendees of that year's Purim festivities: "...a great many of who were not Israelites." were also present,"...for it was a masquerade and the fun was great."



The sign held by Miss Friedlander reads "This Way To The Kosher Picnic;" the word "Kosher" is written in Hebrew. Courtesy, Beck Archive of Rocky Mountain Jewish History, Special Collections, University of Denver Libraries.

On July 27, 1895, secretary for the *National Council of Jewish Women*, Sadie American, delivered an address at Temple Israel. The following day this photograph was taken on the outskirts of Leadville commemorating a Kosher picnic held in her honor and features many members of *Congregation Israel*.

From left to right on the wagon: Ben Brown (the driver), Minnetta Camilla Baer, Amelia (Cohn) Friedlander, Alfred Hoffman, Tillie Kahn, Amelia (Smith) American (mother of Sadie), Earnest Oliver Baer and Reinhold Rosendorf.

From left to right on the ground: Sadie (Herman) Sands (Wife of Jake Sands), Dr. Sol Kahn, Sol Garrett, Martha Kaliski, Mathilda Baer (mother of Minnetta and Earnest), Sadie American, Carrie (Kahn) Mayer, and Grace Diamond.

Other Jewish organizations that were at the forefront of Leadville's social scene included the Hebrew school which was established in 1882 and hosted annual picnics. The B'nai B'rith Rocky Mountain Lodge no. 322 only operated for about two years and dissolved in 1881. Another B'nai B'rith chapter was attempted in the early 1900s but failed to materialize. The Hebrew Benevolent Association cared for Leadville's sick and orphaned, provided aid and comfort to the needy, and heled with burial expenses.



Jewish entrepreneurs like Ben Loeb and Mike Goldsmith, among many others, contributed a variety of entertainment to Leadville's nightlife. Everything from gambling, gin and girls were available at Loeb's Concert Hall on Harrison Avenue (pictured left) and Goldsmith's Globe Theatre (pictured on the right) hosted concerts, lectures, plays and sporting exhibitions. The Shoenberg Opera House functioned as Leadville's first synagogue before Temple Israel was erected in 1884.



Interior photo of the parlor in the home belonging to Adolph and Mathilda Baer located at 315 West 8th Street circa 1884

Leadville was a sophisticated city with all of the modern conveniences one would expect to find during the 1880s to include central heat, indoor plumbing and electric light as evidenced in the photo on the left. The Baer's, one of Leadville's more affluent Jewish families, could afford Edison's new incandescent light bulbs which cost about \$1.00 each in 1881.

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