

Abe Goldbaum and the General

An Incident of the Old West

Harsh words and a drawn pistol in a crowded hotel did not frighten Abe Goldbaum. A son of the old untamed West, he was prepared to meet any challenge. His parents were among the first settlers to arrive in Tucson, Arizona, about 1856. There, in the Southwest, their seven children were born and reared. The elder Goldbaum did business in Tucson and in Benson. In 1886 he was killed in an Indian raid, and the business which he had established passed into the hands of his sons.

During a business trip to Mexico, Abe Goldbaum had a brief encounter with General Charles P. Eagan, of the United States Army, who made some uncomplimentary remarks about Goldbaum and the Jews of Tucson. General Eagan had previously been involved in the commissary meat scandal of the Spanish-American War.

The incident of the conflict between Goldbaum and Eagan is described in a typescript which was prepared probably by a reporter. It may well have been published in a contemporary Arizona newspaper. The story is reprinted here from a copy received by the American Jewish Archives through the courtesy of Dr. Moses Joel Eisenberg, Chestnut Hill, Mass.

Hermosillo [Mexico], June 19th, 1902.

During the dinner hour at the Hotel Cambuston on Friday, June 19th, there occurred an episode that for a short time threatened to result very seriously. Mr. Abe Goldbaum and his partner (of the firm of Monteverde and Goldbaum) were seated at one of the tables with four or five other guests of the hotel when Gen. Charles P. Eagan (of embalmed beef fame) and his son-in-law, a Mr. Cole, entered and seated themselves at an adjoining table but a few feet distant from Mr. Goldbaum and his friends.

The dining room was filled with guests of the hotel at the time, and everything was passing quietly when the attention of the guests was

directed to a conversation which was being carried on between Gen. Eagan and his son-in-law in a loud and somewhat boisterous manner, which evidently was designed to call the attention of the guests at the different tables. Gen. Eagan indulged in extremely insulting remarks, being somewhat under the influence of liquor, making particular reference to Jews from Tucson, and as nearly as can be recollected by those who heard the remarks, Gen. Eagan said "he (evidently referring to some person, the subject of conversation between Gen. Eagan and his son-in-law) is as worthless as a Tucson Jew without credit" [and] "I have no more use for him than I have for that Tucson Jew who has no credit." This remark, and several similar in character, was repeated by Gen. (who always kept looking at Goldbaum) Eagan several times in a loud voice so as to be distinctly heard by all the guests of the hotel seated at the several tables. Among the guests were several Jews who could not fail to hear the above remarks.

Your correspondent learns that Mr. Goldbaum has been for the last year associated with Mr. W. C. Greene and his associates who own the Cananea mines, and, as is well-known, Mr. Greene for some time past has been in litigation with Gen. Eagan and his associates on account of certain coal properties in the State of Sonora [Mexico]. As a result of this litigation a very bitter feeling has been engendered between the rival parties. On account of these differences Mr. Goldbaum and his friends naturally assumed that Gen. Eagan's insulting remarks were directed towards him. It is claimed by those who witnessed the entire controversy that [neither] Mr. Goldbaum nor any of his friends had done anything whatever to provoke insult.

When Gen. Eagan, at the conclusion of his dinner, arose from his table he passed in front of Mr. Goldbaum who was seated in the hall, making again the above remark, when Goldbaum called him a liar and demanded an apology for the alleged personal insult. Whereupon the General assumed a threatening attitude when [and] for a few moments a general mix-up was threatened. At this juncture Eagan's son-in-law, who had gone to the General's room, rushed out and slipped a six-shooter into the General's hand. Mr. Goldbaum was at the time unarmed, but stood his ground, threatening to use his fists if the General advanced towards him.

The moment the revolver was placed in Gen. Eagan's hand he rushed towards Goldbaum with it, when quick as a flash Goldbaum darted under the General's hand and wrested it from his hand, thus disarming Gen.

Eagan in the twinkling of an eye. At this point Mr. Luis Cambuston, proprietor of the hotel, approached Goldbaum from the rear. Whereupon Goldbaum passed the revolver to Cambuston, saying at the time that "Eagan had drawn the gun on me and I took it from him." Cambuston immediately threw open the breach and threw the cartridges on the floor. The combatants were both now unarmed.

By this time all the guests of the hotel were thoroughly excited. Goldbaum insisted that Gen. Eagan apologize to him for the insulting remarks concerning the Jews. Gen. Eagan insisted that he did not know Goldbaum (notwithstanding the fact that he has seen Goldbaum almost continuously for the past year, and knew that he [Goldbaum] was in the employ of Mr. Greene during the trial of the coal cases above referred to) and did not even know who he was. Goldbaum explain[ed] that he was of Hebrew extraction and that his home, until recently, had been in Tucson and that he had a brother engaged in the mercantile business in that city. And he also told the General that he had, until recently, acted as Mr. Bernard's private secretary, who was Mr. Greene's personal representative in the state. Several guests of the hotel intervened at this juncture for the purpose of restoring order, and the parties were finally separated.

Gen. Eagan, of course, is liable under the laws of Mexico for carrying or attempting to use concealed weapons, and it is possible the public authorities may take the matter up.

There is no doubt but what Mr. Goldbaum has the sympathy of the community on his side, and that the assault provoked by Gen. Eagan was uncalled for and, to say the least, ungentlemanly on the part of an American officer.

COHEN AND ISAACS OF RICHMOND DEAL
WITH EDMUND RANDOLPH

Gentlemen:

Please send by the bearer 25 lbs. of soap, 5 lbs. of brown sugar, 4½ gallons of molasses, 1 lb. of best hyson tea, 1 lb. of common tea, and place it to account of — and 4 bbls. of allum salt.

Your obedient servant,
EDM[UND] RANDOLPH

Messrs. [Cohen & Isaacs

May 8th, 1787.