

Commodore Louis D. Shoenberg (Beaumont)

Louis Beaumont (aka Shoenberg) was widely known during his long life (1857 to 1942) as an astute businessman who amassed a fortune and then donated his riches to fund dozens of educational and health care causes and institutions. The Shoenberg Farm in Westminster, Colorado, stands as a memorial to one of his earliest philanthropic projects.



Louis Dudley Shoenberg was born in Ohio and moved to Leadville, Colorado, in the 1870s, where he became business partners with David May.¹ After accumulating wealth in Leadville and in the May clothing store partnership, he devoted much of his life to philanthropic pursuits. The involvement with National Jewish Hospital (NJH) appears to have started with the Shoenberg family's construction of the Joseph E. Shoenberg Building in 1912 on the present-day NJH campus at East 14th Avenue and Jackson Street in Denver, and the construction of the Dudley C. Shoenberg Memorial Farm by Louis Shoenberg at West 72nd Avenue and Sheridan Boulevard in present-day Westminster. The farm was originally eight miles from Denver and covered 70 acres.

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It was equipped with brick buildings and stocked with horses, cattle and poultry. It furnished eggs, hitherto an extremely large expense, butter churned at the farm, and poultry to the hospital along with fresh vegetables in summer.²

The NJH administrator, Seraphine Pisko, realized after several years that the operation of the farm was cost-prohibitive. Shoenberg offered to buy another farm closer to the hospital, but Mrs. Pisko convinced him of the more urgent need for a nurses' home on the hospital campus.³ During World War I, Shoenberg had changed his name to Beaumont, the French translation of the German Shoenberg ("beautiful mountain").⁴ He was also nicknamed Commodore because of his fondness for boating. Thus, the nurses' home was built in 1922 by Commodore Louis Beaumont and still stands today on the NJH campus.

Both Louis Beaumont and Nathan Dauby were partners in the May Company and actively involved in the leadership of NJH throughout their lives. After Beaumont's death in 1942, Dauby directed the Louis D. Beaumont Fund, which gave millions of dollars to worthy institutions. When Beaumont died, he was described in the Denver press as "multimillionaire, merchant, prince, philanthropist, aviation enthusiast and cofounder of the May Department Stores company."⁵ His fortune continued to be distributed for philanthropic causes throughout the 20th century. Another NJH facility, the Beaumont Therapy and Learning Center, which cost \$1.1 million, was completed in 1977 with a \$600,000 grant from the Louis D. Beaumont Foundation.⁶



A 1938 photo, taken during a visit to the hospital by Commodore Louis D. Beaumont, honorary president. Left to right: Samuel Schaefer, executive secretary; Dr. Saling Simon, member of the Board of Managers; Commodore Beaumont; Dr. Charles Kaufman, medical director; Dr. Robert Levy, chairman of the Medical Advisory Board; Dr. Harry Corper, research director.

¹ For a summary of David May's history in Leadville, Colorado, see http://www.prinzmetal.net/david_may_i.htm. The Shoenbergs were involved in a variety of business ventures. For example, Louis and his brother Joseph organized a beer company in 1882. Rocky Mountain News, *Millions in Stock* p. 3, col. 3 (March 4, 1882).

² Fitzharris and Abrams, *A Place to Heal: The History of National Jewish Medical and Research Center* 16 (1997). See also Wilbur Fisk Stone (ed.), *History of Colorado* Vol. I, 681-87 (Denver 1913)

³ In the early years of the 20th Century, turnover rates for nursing staff at hospitals throughout the country were extremely high. By the 1920s, many hospitals were erecting new, modern nurses' quarters in an attempt to attract high-quality staff, and Mrs. Pisko probably had this goal in mind when she persuaded Commodore Beaumont to direct his donation towards this project. In addition, she procured permission to sell the existing farm, as its considerable distance from the hospital grounds made it increasingly impractical to maintain. Plans were drawn up and critiques, a building committee selected, and a site chosen. The building was erected in 1922, and today its stands as the oldest building on campus.

Id. 29-30,

⁴ Commodore Louis D. Beaumont, widely known in Denver, where he lived for many years, has been signally honored by the French government. He recently was presented with a replica in bronze of the statue of Wilbur Wright by the French ministry of aviation.

The presentation took place at Le Mons, France. The gift was in recognition of the services of Commodore Beaumont in aviation and with philanthropic organizations in France.

Denver Post, *Louis D. Beaumont, Widely Known Here, Honored by France* p. 2 (Aug. 8, 1922). Beaumont was also presented with the medal of the Legion of Honor by the French government for his benefactions in behalf of French orphans of World War I. Denver Post, *Last Survivor of May Stores Founders Dies* (Oct. 1, 1942)

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ The projects funded by Beaumont were diverse indeed. For example, an Antibes Juan-les-Pins villa once owned by Beaumont and his young wife is maintained and open to the public as a result of his funding.

<http://www.antibes-juanlespins.com/eng/culture/autreslieux/eilenroc/index.html>.