

Moische (Morris) Aaron Laidman and His U.S. Family

Moische (Morris) Aaron Laidman¹ was the youngest son of Beryl/Berko and Sara, the Laidman family's earliest-known relatives born in Lithuania. Although various facts are known about Moische and his family, essential details are yet to be discovered about his attempted entry into the United States and return to Lithuania in 1912, as well as how three of his four children later emigrated from Lithuania.

Moische was born ca 1865 or ca 1872. These alternate dates are based, respectively, on a 1915 Lithuanian eviction list that put his age at 50² and a 1912 U.S. immigration application in which he stated he was 40 years old.

He was probably born in the Suwalki gubernia in southwest Lithuania, where he is known to have lived the last part of his life in the heavily Jewish settlement of Lazdijai.

Records indicate Moische died 22 April 1922 in Lazdijai. He was identified as "Moses" – one of several similar variations of his name that appear in Lithuanian records. For details, see Leidmans in Lithuania (ca 1810-1941).³

Moische was married to Bodana Epstein according to the Lithuanian birth record of a child. She is also named in two Laidman family trees created in the 1990s.

A year following Moische's death, Bodana was reported in the 1923 Lithuania census as a widow living in Lazdijai in the household of her son Ziselis. Later in 1923, a marriage record indicates she remarried to her second husband, Abelis Zeffas (Zeff). She also might have married for a third time in 1927.⁴

Children. Lithuanian census and other records for the years 1915 to 1930 connect the couple to seven children. Of these, only their youngest daughter, Zlata (b 1916), has been matched to one

¹ Moische Aaron Laidman, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GZPD-D6Y.

² Search results for Leidman, Revision Lists, All Lithuania Database, LatvikSIG, accessed via JewishGen.org

³ Leidmans in Lithuania (ca 1810-1841), Laidman Family History Series No. 6, <http://hallahan.info/Families>.

⁴ Bodana Epstein, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GZPD-VX1. See also: Search results for Leidman, Lithuanian Marriages, All Lithuania Database, LatvikSIG, accessed via JewishGen.org.

of Moische's four children who later resided in the United States. Records for these three older children (born between 1897/1898 and 1902) are possibly missing or destroyed or have not yet been abstracted so they can appear online.

Sore – Sarah Ethel Leidman [Perlman] (b 1893 or 1897).⁵ Moische's oldest daughter initially lived in Cleveland, where she worked as a clothing finisher. She was married in 1919 to an ice cream maker born in Jerusalem. She and her husband, Joseph Abraham, had one son, Jerome "Jerry" Abraham,⁶ before moving to Chicago in the early 1920s. In 1927 she married Abraham Pearlman (spelled in records with an "a") and bore a son, Aaron M. Perlman⁷ in 1928. The couple resided in Chicago until at least the 1940 census, when she was recorded as working as a sewing machine operator in a commercial clothing manufacturer. Abe was a laborer for a WPA school project. The family then moved to Jacksonville, Florida, in time to be counted in the 1945 Florida state census. Their son played basketball for the University of Florida and graduated from the University of Miami medical school in 1957 before practicing internal medicine and cardiology for 55 years in south Florida. Sarah lived as widow for 20 years until her death in 1988. In 1982 she wrote a one-page letter to cousin Lynn Laidman Palin -- the only known first-hand written account of family history (see excerpts below).

Froma Marie - Mary Leidman [Leonard] (b ca 1902)⁸ The first evidence documenting Mary's life is the 1930 federal census, in which she appears residing in Jacksonville, Florida, as the wife of Leo B. Leonard, along with their three small children – Ruth, Mildred and Aaron Leonard.⁹ She was listed as a homemaker, while her husband was manager of a sign shop. It is probable the couple married in 1922 or 1923 in Cleveland or Chicago and moved to Jacksonville before 1926, when Leo was listed in a Jacksonville city directory as a salesman. By 1929 Leo had established a sign business in which he was president (probably in charge of sales) and his brother-in-law Benjamin A. Laidman (see below) was vice president-manager (probably in charge of production). Mary died unexpectedly in 1932 at age 30 due to complications from surgery. As the coroner's informant, her husband Leo identified Mary's father as Morris Aaron Laidman – the only record that identifies Moische with a family member. Leo told the coroner he did not know the name of wife Mary's mother.

⁵ Sore – Sarah Ethel Leidman (Perlman), FamilySearch.org, ID No.G8NJ-NV2.

⁶ Joseph Abraham, FamilySearch.org, ID No. G6WF-Z4; Jerome "Jerry" Abraham, ID No. G7WF-47.

⁷ Abraham Perlman, FamilySearch.org ID No. G7WF-FQN; Aaron M. Perlman, ID No. G6WF-NLY.

⁸ Froma Marie Leidman, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GD13-N4H. See death certificate in Sources section.

⁹ Access details via Froma Marie Leidman's entry in FamilySearch.org or directly: Leo B. Leonard, ID No. GD1W-TNY; Ruth Leonard, ID No. G6WV-BN7; Mildred Leonard, ID No. G6WV-PGP; Aaron Morris Leonard, ID No. G6WV-PP4.

Benjamin A. Laidman (b 15 Nov 1901) ¹⁰ Moische's son initially lived in Cleveland, where he worked as a sign painter and was listed in city directories in 1919 and 1923 as residing at 2757 East 51st Street. The 1923 entry listed him as a sign artist for Acme Sign Co. He applied for citizenship in Cleveland in 1922 and became a naturalized citizen in 1926 in Chicago, where he resided at 2215 W. Monroe Street. Benjamin might have followed his sister Mary and her husband Leo B. Leonard to Jacksonville, Florida. In the 1930 census Benjamin resided in the Leonard household. An entry in the 1939 Polk's city directory implied he was co-owner of A-jax Sign Co. By 1940, he remained single and was a resident in the Hotel Virginia. The 1942 Jacksonville city Directory and his 1942 World War II draft registration card show him working at A-jax Sign Company. He continued to be listed as being on the staff in 1947-48 edition. At some time between 1948 and 1956, Benjamin left the business and became a repair technician ("service man") in the local office for Underwood Corporation, a manufacturer of typewriters and other office equipment. It is unknown whether he continued working or was retired prior to his death in 1970 at age 69. There is no record of a marriage or of children

Zlata - Sylvia Leidman [Wexler] (b 9 Sept 1916) ¹¹ In 1933, at age 17, Zlata Leidman left Lazdijai and sailed alone on the *SS Bremen* from Bremen, Germany, to New York to assume care for her sister Mary's children following Mary's death in 1932. She was still residing as a sister in Leo Leonard's household in the 1940 census. Later, she went to work for Leonard as office manager of his A-jax Sign Company. The Polk city directories listed her as treasurer in 1947-48 and as office manager in 1956. Sylvia later worked for the State of Florida's Worker's Compensation Office for almost 40 years prior to her retirement. She married husband Jacob Martin Wexler in the 1960s. The couple had no children and resided together until his death in 1977; she passed away three decades later in 2007. During the 1980s sisters Sarah and Sylvia lived together for some period of time.

As noted above, all four siblings eventually moved to Florida and spent more of their lives there

In all, Lithuanian and U.S. records suggest Moische fathered 10 children.

Various Lithuanian public records for the period from 1915 to 1934 suggest that the couple's other six children remained in the country and can be accounted for through documented life events. Only Zlata (Sylvia) appears in any available abstracted Lithuanian records – most of which are dated after the departures of Sore (Sarah), Froma Marie (Mary) and Benjamin for America. The following table summarizes Moische and Bodana's 10 children:

¹⁰ Benjamin Laidman, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GDVX-XSZ.

¹¹ Zlata - Sylvia Leidman, FamilySearch.org, ID No. G8NV-MQM.

Children of Moische and Bodana Leidman	
Lithuanian: Estimated birth years in parentheses and last known documented life event. ¹² U.S.: Westernized given name; documented dates of birth in Lithuania and dates of deaths in the United States; name of spouse, as applicable. .	
Known Lithuanian Children (Leidman) Eta (b ca 1899) – counted in 1923 census Ziselis (b ca 1900) – married 1927, father of child born in 1928 Perlia/Perla (b ca 1903) – counted in 1923 census ¹³ Serel (b ca 1903) – marriage recorded in 1923 Rivka (b ca 1909) – received 1927 internal passport ¹⁰ David (b ca 1910) – conscripted into army in 1934 ¹⁰ Zlata (b ca 1916) = <i>Sylvia (immigrated 1933)</i>	Known U.S. Children (Laidman) Sarah Ethel (28 Feb 1893-12 Sept 1988; husbands Joseph Abraham, Abe Perlman) Benjamin (15 Nov 1901-30 Dec 1970; no known spouse) Froma Marie “Mary” (ca 1902-26 October 1932; husband Leo B. Leonard) Sylvia (9 Sept 1916-12 Nov 2007; husband Jacob Martin Wexler) = <i>Zlata</i>

Moische’s Blocked Admission to United States.

Although his intent was unknown, U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Records indicate Moische Laidman attempted to immigrate to the United States. He undoubtedly aimed to rendezvous with family members in Cleveland, possibly in hopes of establishing himself and later sending for this family.

Moische entered the U.S. at the St. Albans, Vermont, Canadian Border Crossing (located south of Montreal) in 1912. He had departed Liverpool England on 15 August 1912 and traveled alone in 3rd class aboard the *SS Virginian*, operated by the Allan Line and disembarked at the port of Quebec in Canada.

His U.S. immigration card indicated he was a 40-year-old male blacksmith by occupation whose place of birth and most recent residence was Lazdijai. He listed “wife B. Laidmann” in Lazdijai as the nearest relative in the country from where he had come. He stood 5’2” with dark complexion, black hair, brown eyes, and no disguising marks. He indicated Cleveland as his destination and the relative or friend he would join there as “bro in l” A, Yashowsky, #22 53 Cherry Street – the same building where family members had resided in the 1900 census.

¹² Search results for Leidman, All Lithuania Database, LitvakSIG, accessed via JewishGen.org.

¹³ Perl, Rivka and David are known victims of the Holocaust in the 1941. See Leidmans in Lithuania (ca 1810-1841), Laidman Family History Series No. 6, access via [http:// hallahan.info/Families](http://hallahan.info/Families).

A roadblock to Moische's immigration plans was identified even before he disembarked from the ship in Quebec. The passenger manifest for the *SS Virginian* bears a rubber stamp "DETAINED" next to his name. His U.S. immigration card then indicates his case had been referred to a Board (Bureau) of Special Investigation. The back of his immigration card states the reason for being rejected was "v defective" — possibly a *visa* problem. Notations under the Remarks and Endorsements section read "Aug 30/12 appealed from excluding Decision. BSI ordered deported. Bureau Telegram Aug 29/1912. See Montreal File 10886/57." ¹⁴ ("Defective" and "excluding" continue to be terms used in connection with immigration documents that are incomplete or problematic and block entry to the country. ¹⁵)

No details are unknown about how, where or for how long Moische was detained -- or how he might have returned to Lithuania. In particular, it is unclear whether he had the resources to book passage back to the Lazdijai, but appears to have done so and did not return to the United States. ¹⁶

Moische was included in the 1915 list of Jews who were evicted from their homes in Lazdijai by Russian officials in advance of the impending invasion by Germans troops at the beginning of World War I (see Leidmans in Lithuania³). No other abstracted records have been identified beyond the 1922 record of his death.

Immigration by Moische's Children

Details are not fully known about how Moische's three older children immigrated to the United States. However, they did not accompany Moische when he attempted to immigrate in 1912.

Sore (Sarah) had already immigrated to the United States in 1910 aboard the *SS Main*, departing Bremen and arriving in New York on 16 June 1910.

Following his return, Moische might have encouraged his other older children to embark on the journey themselves, especially if his wife Bodana had no interest in doing so.

Froma Marie (Mary) reported in the 1930 census that she immigrated in 1913 and had become a naturalized citizen (year unknown). Meanwhile, brother Benjamin's 1926 naturalization record stated he had immigrated on 25 July 1913.

¹⁴ See exhibits in Memories section for Moische Aaron Laidman entry, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GZPD-D6Y.

¹⁵ See U.S. Immigration Service, <https://www.uscis.gov/records/genealogy/genealogy-notebook/researching-deportation-records>

¹⁶ Another Moische Laidman disembarked from the *SS Teutonic* in December 1913 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, but was listed as a 20-year-old Russian male en route to Memphis. See Sources section for Moische Aaron Laidman entry, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GZPD-D6Y.

Their similar 1913 arrival dates suggest that Froma Marie and Benjamin might have traveled together. It is likely that they followed the same route used by their father or by their other relatives earlier. However, no evidence of their passage (or the travels of their relatives) has been located.

Cleveland was the most likely destination for all three children. Records from Cleveland provide clear evidence that at least Sarah and Benjamin resided there in the 1910s and early 1920s.

In her 1982 letter Sarah makes no reference to other family members. However, she clearly had made early contact with family members who were already living in Cleveland. She recalled,

The Laidman family was a very big one. They all had a lot of children and they were living in Cleveland, Detroit and near Cleveland, in the small towns.¹⁷ When I came to the United States I didn't know any of them. They were almost all born in the United States and we could not communicate with each other [probably a reference to cousins who were her own age]. They did not understand Jewish [Yiddish], and I did not understand English, so we just did not talk to each other.

Sarah noted in her 1982 letter that her aunt Frume Leah had two sons and a daughter who were born in Boston. Meanwhile, Aunt Roche Gittel [sister of Frume Leah and Moische] lived in Detroit and had two daughters and four sons. She added, "Cousin Fannie Rose was my first cousin. Her father [Ruben "Robert" Laidman] and my father were brothers. Also cousin Thelma's father [Charles Laidman] was my first cousin."

In the only other reference to her father in her letter, Sarah explained,

In Lithuania, my father had a lot of relatives. He had a brother there [Chaim¹⁸] who had two sons and that is all I know about them. The Nazi's killed them all. One of my father's cousins owned an entire little town near Lazdijai. I do not remember his name. He had farms, a windmill and his home was like a palace. HE USED to ride in a coach with four horses, when he came to our town. In those days, Jewish people could not own land but as a little boy, the Russians kidnapped his father and made him serve in their Army and when he came out, he was allowed to own land. (This was a common practice in those days in Russia and I believed at the time, it was part of Russia.)¹⁹

¹⁷ This was a possible reference to Ruben "Robert" Laidman, whose family moved from Cleveland and were recorded as residing in Galion, Ohio, southwest of Cleveland, at the time of the 1910 census. The family returned to Cleveland soon thereafter. See Robert and Rose Laidman, Laidman Family History Series, No. 2, <http://hallahan.info/Families>.

¹⁸ Chaim Laidman, FamilySearch.org, ID No. GD22-WZF. See also Leidmans in Lithuania (ca 1825-1941), Laidman Family History Series No. 6, <http://hallahan.info/Families>.

¹⁹ Letter from Sarah Perelman to Lynn Laidman Palin, May 27, 1982; reproduced in Memories section of entry for Sore – Sarah Leidman, FamilySearch.org, ID. No GD22-WZF.