

**THE MYSTERY OF SYLVIA (BARDITCH) GOLDBERG:
A MLYNOV FAMILY STORY**

v. 10

From the desk of Howard I. Schwartz, PhD

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A note about the researcher/author: Howard I. Schwartz, PhD, is the grandson of Paul Schwartz and Pauline (Shulman) Schwartz, first cousins from Mlynov. Paul and Pauline's mothers were sisters and part of the large Demb family of nine children in Mlynov. Paul's mother Yetta Demb married Chaim Schwartz and Pauline's mother Pearl Malka Demb married to Tsodik Shulman. The Demb patriarchs were Israel Jacob Demb and Rivkah (Gruber) Demb, Howard's great-grandparents on his father's side of the family.

After Howard's parents, Leon Schwartz and Joan (Schinker) Schwartz, passed away, Howard began researching his family roots, an effort which almost naturally expanded into an interest in the story of Mlynov in general, since almost every family married every other family in the small town of Mlynov.

Howard has been publishing the results of his research and interviews on a website about Mlynov and the adjoining town of Mervits, hosted by JewishGen (<https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Mlyniv/>)

Introduction

If you get interested in Mlynov, as I had over the last seven years, the name Sylvia Goldberg is impossible to ignore. There are a number of photos of Sylvia and her family throughout the Mlynov-Muravica Memorial book and she is author of one of the essays in Yiddish in the book. She is also the only woman among the Book Committee of Eight who put together Memorial book.

I started researching the Goldberg family in fact in part to find out more about who Sylvia Goldberg was. As I dug into the Goldberg family story, which I am documenting elsewhere, I learned that George (Gershon/Joe) Goldberg, youngest son of Labish Goldberg, married Sylvia Goldberg on August 26, 1927. I started researching Sylvia's background and learned from her naturalization records and passenger manifest that her name was "Silka Borodacz" when she arrived in America, evolved to Sylvia Barditch, and finally Sylvia Goldberg when she and George married.

I was surprised, however, when I discovered that Sylvia Goldberg was not born in nor lived in Mlynov. Her photo appears multiple times in the Memorial book with her family. Had she simply adopted her husband's home town of Mlynov as her own? What was her connection?

According to several records, Sylvia was born in "Luck" (Lutsk, Ukraine today), a town that is 36 km from Mlynov or 36 minutes driving today. The reason for Sylvia's involvement in the Mlynov story emerged as I dug into her background.



Figure 1 Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book, p. 494. Caption reads: Sylvia Goldberg (Silka Barditch)

Sylvia is with her husband, George (Gershon Joe) Goldberg.



Figure 2 Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book, p. 500. Original Caption reads: Batia (Bessie), (Itcik) Starost's sister, (left), and Henia Arelas (Aleph Katz's mother); right, Sylvia Goldberg.

Bassa Barditch (left) was Sylvia Goldberg's mother. Her family name was Teitelbaum and her brother was Usha (Harry) Teitelbaum who immigrated to Baltimore. Itcik Starost was Sylvia's grandfather (father of Bassa). I recently learned that the young girl in front is Sylvia's niece Marilyn Israel, who I have now spoken with.

They are standing with Henia Arelas (center) who is the mother of the Yiddish poet Aleph Katz, whose family migrated to New York before 1915.

The Arrival of Silka Borodacz

Sylvia ("Silka Borodacz") arrived in New York on October 11, 1921 traveling from Le Havre on the SS France. She was with her grandmother, "Dwoira," three siblings, Peretz (Paul), Sura (Shirley) and Benjamin, and Paul's wife, Anna. Their manifest indicates that Sylvia and her siblings were all born in "Luck" and still had relatives there and they were headed to the home of her father, Isadore Borodacz, who was living at "28 Anna Polis Ave." The street name was in fact "Annapolis" but had been probably butchered by the Yiddish pronunciation of the immigrants.

| ADMITTED | NAME | RELATIONSHIP | AGE | SEX | EDUCATION | OTHER | HEBREW | Y |
|----------|----------|--------------------|-----|-----|-----------|-----------|--------|---------|
| ADMITTED | BOFODACZ | Dwoira grandmother | 65 | F | N | None | Yes | Hebrew |
| ADMITTED | " | Peretz | 26 | M | M | Druggist | " | Russian |
| ADMITTED | " | Chana wife | 24 | F | M | Housewife | " | " |
| ADMITTED | " | Silke sister | 20 | F | S | Milliner | " | " |
| ADMITTED | " | Sura sister | 18 | F | S | " | " | " |
| ADMITTED | " | Benjamin son | 16 | M | S | Student | " | " |

Figure 3 The 1921 SS France manifest of Silke Borodacz, her paternal grandmother, and her siblings Peretz (Paul) and Paul's wife Chana (Anna), Sura (Shirley) and brother Benjamin.

Sylvia's father, Isadore's Borodacz, called "Jechiel Borodacz" on his passenger manifest, had himself arrived in New York a decade earlier on July 12, 1910, traveling

on SS Nieuw Amsterdam from Rotterdam to NY. Sylvia was about 8 when he left for the US and wouldn't be reunited with him again til she was about 20.

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|---------|---------|-------------|-----------|---------|------------|
| 1 | Ukraine | Ukraine | Ukraine | IN HOSPITAL | WIRCHARGE | Russian | Abel. J... |
| 2 | Borodacz | Jechiel | Ukraine | | | | |
| 3 | Aprinas | Ignaz | Ukraine | | | | Citt. |

Figure 4 Sylvia's father Jechiel Borodacz arriving in NY from Rotterdam on July 12, 1910 on the SS Nieuw Amsterdam

"Jechiel's" manifest from 1910 confirms he too was from Lutsk and that his wife Bassa was still back there when he left for the States. Jechiel was headed at the time to an uncle in New York but at some point apparently made the decision to go to Baltimore, where I would eventually learn Sylvia's uncle was also living. Like many other husbands who came ahead of their families in this period, WWI separated Jechiel from family until after the War.

It was a bit surprising when I discovered that Sylvia's mother, Bassa Borodacz (Bessie Barditch) and Sylvia's younger brother, Meyer, were not on the ship traveling with Sylvia and the rest of the family in 1921. They showed a few weeks later, before following the same route as the others to the US, leaving Le Havre on October 22 on the SS Rochambeau and arriving in New York on November 1. I suspect that it was an illness that had caused the delay and just confirmed this hunch with Sylvia's niece, Marilyn.

The manifest indicates that Bassa and son were also headed to her husband Isidore in Baltimore.

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|---|-------|----|---|---|---|--------|----------|---------|
| X | 3 | Borodacz | ✓ | Bassa | 46 | ✓ | F | M | Housew | 2-458003 | 6/12/36 |
| X | 4 | UNDER 10 Borodacz | ✓ | Majer | 15 | ✓ | M | B | None | 3-668740 | 11/1/39 |
| | 5 | Barditch | ✓ | | | | | | | | |

Figure 5 Bassa and Majer traveling on the SS Rochambeau from Le Havre, arriving in New York on November 1

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------|----|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | " | Him Self | 10 | 2 | " | " | Husband Isidore Barditch 28 Annapolis Av. Baltimore Md." |
| 4 | " | " | " | " | " | " | " |

Figure 6 Bassa Barditch and son are headed to Bassa's husband Isidore Barditch in Baltimore

The manifest of Bassa Barditch (Sylvia's mother) revealed a clue that began to explain Sylvia's ties to Mlynov. The manifest indicates that Bassa's closest family member was a mother living back in "Milenof." Everything suddenly fell into place; this was the connection I was looking for. Sylvia's maternal grandparents had been from Mlynov. Sylvia had a special connection to the place.

| | | | | | | |
|---|--------|-------|-------------------------|--------|-----|-----------|
| | | | REGION | Poland | * | Bronx |
| " | Poland | Walyn | Mother Malia Ferteybaum | Poland | Md. | Baltimore |
| " | " | " | Milenof | Poland | " | " |

Figure 7 Bassa indicates her closest relative in Europe is her mother Malia Ferteybaum in "Milenof" (Malya Teitelbaum)

Before we go on, we have to acknowledge and deal with a discrepancy between living family memory and the records. The name of Sylvia's maternal grandmother is given here in this record as Malia Ferteybaum, which became Teitelbaum in the US. But when we talk, Sylvia's niece, Marilyn Israel, insists that this record is incorrect and that Malia was Bassa's mother-in-law and not her mother. That would make Malia the paternal, not the maternal grandmother, of Sylvia. Marilyn should know since she is named for Malia.

The only problem is that family memory plays tricks sometimes and all the records all support the opposite conclusion. Marilyn and I go round and round on this topic for a while when we talk because her very strong memory on the issue doesn't align with the records. I mostly listen because I want to respect a strong and important family memory, which are sacred in their own right. Who am I to argue with Marilyn over the name of her maternal grandmother. But I go back to the records after our call and find still more records that suggest the original interpretation. I am almost certain now that Malia Ferteybaum is Bassa's mother and Sylvia's maternal grandmother who was back in Mlynov.¹

Having learned that Sylvia's maternal grandmother was back in Mlynov, I wonder about Sylvia's mother. Was she also born in Mlynov? It is not entirely clear. In this passenger manifest, Sylvia's mother, Bassa, lists her own birthplace and that of her son Meyer, not as Mlynov, nor Lutsk where Sylvia was born, but as "Varcovis," likely the town today called Varkovychi, Ukraine, only a thirty-minute drive to Mlyniv.² This contradicts her later Petition for Naturalization which Bassa (by now Bessie Barditch) signed on April 27, 1937, in which she gives her birthplace as Lutsk, the same birthplace as her husband Isidore and her daughter Sylvia.

¹ It seems clear from the records that Dwoire, the grandmother on the first ship with the Borodocz kids, was their paternal grandmother, i.e. the mother of their father Isidore Barditch. A death certification of her husband Peretz Bardith lists "Divoira Barditch" as his wife, confirming that Dwoire is a Barditch and Mallia must have been the Teitelbaum.

² On Varkovychi, Ukraine, see <https://www.jewishgen.org/Communities/community.php?usbgn=-1057382>

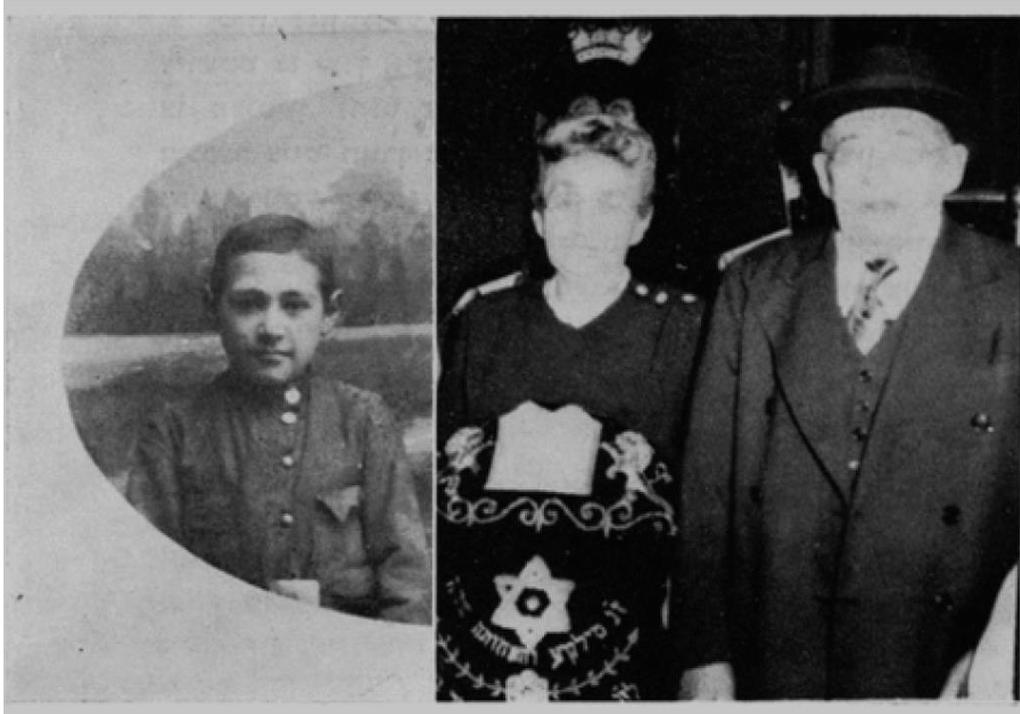


Figure 8 Photos from the Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book, p 110. Caption reads: "Sylvia Goldberg's brother Chaim-Meyer and Sylvia Goldberg's parents." They are Isidore Barditch and Bassa (Bessie) (Teitelbaum) Barditch.

Sylvia's Memories of Childhood

Confirmation of Sylvia's connection to Mlynov emerged when I recently found a translation of a Yiddish article that Sylvia had contributed to the Mlynov book. That translation had been circulating informally in a collection of translations edited by Irene (Fishman) Siegel, one of the collectors of Mlynov history and had been originally produced by Eugene Schwartz, a third cousin of mine, once removed. It had only come into my hands in the last year and for some reason did not get into the translated material in David Sokolsky's translation of the Memorial book. I have published the full translation at the end of this reflection.

Writing in Yiddish, Sylvia recalls, a wedding that took place between Chayke, the daughter of Aharon Kovel from Mlynov who was marrying Moshe, the cantor's son from Lutsk. It is a classic childhood memory of an impressionable young girl, who got to put on a beautiful dress, attend a festive event, in which she herself received a great deal of notice. In that memory, Sylvia confirms her special connection to Mlynov, quoting this new translation that I recently had commissioned.

I was, as is usual every year, visiting my grandparents for Shevuot. My grandmother tells me, "Silkele, wash up. I will put your new little dress and new shoes on you; I will comb your braids and put pretty ribbons in

them; and you will go to the wedding with us.” Afterwards, she orders me to not get in the way, because she and my grandfather needed to get ready themselves.

So I went out, all dressed up, in the street. I see in the house next door, in Chaim the miller’s garden, men, women, children, and friends in white. Everybody wants to see the bridegroom, who is staying there. Near the steps at the entrance, the klezmerim from Lutsk are standing. I push through the big crowd and recognize, among the musicians, Isaac, our neighbor, with his flute. He puts his arm around me, kisses me, and says: “Silkele, dance for me like you do at home.” I do not allow him to beg, and he tells the ensemble to play a cheerful tune. I dance, tapping my feet to the beat. The crowd is enthusiastically clapping, and I hear someone saying: “Here is a worldly child.” (Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book, 27-29)³

In the reflection, Sylvia goes on to describe the dancing, the food served, and mentions, among other names, her grandfather “Itse Starosta”⁴ [Itzic Teitelbaum] with his long, red beard, long kaftan and tall boots. From my Yiddish translator, I learned that Starosta can signify the head of a village.

[Sylvia’s Connection to Mlynov](#)

I now understood some of the emotional reasons that Sylvia had gotten so involved in the Mlynov project in 1970. Sylvia had special fond childhood memories of Mlynov that connected her to her childhood and to her grandparents. They were like my own similar nostalgic memories of Baltimore where I was born and lived until I was ten. When one loses a connection to the place of one’s childhood, those memories are often intensified since they are frozen in time and no longer evolve with new memories.

Knowing that Sylvia visited Mlynov on holidays, it hit me that she could very well have met her future husband Gershon / Joe Golberg during one of her visits to Mlynov on the holidays and fallen in love with him back there. Niece Marilyn Israel confirms hearing that they were already in love before they had arrived in the States. In fact, Sylvia’s future husband Gershon / Joe Goldberg was on a passage to the US just a month before Sylvia and her siblings arrived. They probably knew of each other’s passage.

But if Sylvia and Joe were already courting, they didn’t get much of a chance to pursue the relationship right away as Sylvia and her family headed to Baltimore when they arrived to be with her father and a large contingent of Mlynov immigrants who had settled there, including, as it turns out, her mother’s brother, as we shall see in a moment.

³ Translation by Hannah Berliner Fischthal, recently commissioned by Howard I. Schwartz. The full essay appears at the end of this essay.

⁴ The Yiddish translator tells me that Starosta signifies that he was head of the village.

A tragedy would be responsible for bringing Sylvia and her family back to New York, where she could rekindle her reconnection with Gershon / Joe Goldberg. Before revealing that tragedy, there is one more wrinkle in this Mlynov story of Sylvia Goldberg that needs teasing out and that emerged in my conversation with Sylvie's niece, Marilyn Israel.⁵

[How I found Marilyn Israel](#)

It is perhaps worth taking a small digression here to tell the story of how I had learned about Marilyn Israel in the first place since without her I could not have pieced together Sylvia's story.

A few years ago on a family history trip back to Baltimore, I had been introduced to another Mlynov descendant, Sheila Mandelberg.⁶ Sheila had told me that she was related to my family but neither she nor my Aunt Pearl could say exactly how. As I started my research on Sylvia Goldberg, I had heard from another Mlynov descendant that Sheila had known Sylvia Goldberg and so I reached out to Sheila to try to find out more.⁷ Sheila responded in email.

I understand that you want to know more about Sylvia Goldberg. I understand that she was related to both my mother and my father. She lived in New York and came down to Baltimore occasionally while to visit relatives and friends here. She lived in New York and had one daughter that I know of. When she came here, besides visiting relatives, including my mother, father and Libby [Tesler], she also visited the Barditch family. In addition, I know she was very literate and wrote short stories and poems. If you are looking for information beyond this, I'm afraid I can't contribute anything else.

After a back and forth via email, Sheila emailed me the following

I called a cousin in New Jersey who is also related to Sylvia. She got the phone number of a niece of Sylvia – we think her name is Marilyn Israel. Furthermore, other information is that Sylvia wrote for a Jewish newspaper in New York. We don't know which one. I hope this is of some help to you. Good luck. Sheila

That is the story of how I tracked down Marilyn Israel, Sylvia's niece, and learned the next set of clues that unlocked more of the story.⁸

⁵ Marilyn Israel is the daughter of Sylvia's sister, Shirley (Barditch) Jacobs.

⁶ Sheila Mandelberg is the granddaughter of Isaac Marder and Clara (Tessler) Marder from Mlynov.

⁷ I want to thank Joyce Jandorf, a Schuchman descendant, for this tip that broke open the story.

⁸ Marilyn Israel -> daughter of Shirley (Barditch) Jacobs, her mother -> Isidore and Bessie (Teitelbaum) Barditch, her parents.

Bassa Barditch's Brother Usha

From conversations with Sylvia's niece, Marilyn Israel, I learned that Sylvia's mother, Bassa (Teitelbaum) Barditch had a brother named Usha Teitelbaum.

When I heard that name, I was floored. I had found an Usha Teitelbaum from Mlynov several years earlier when I started researching my family history and the migration of Mlynov immigrants to Baltimore. His name appeared on the passenger manifest of my great uncle Israel Schwartz who was traveling to Baltimore along with another Mlynov relative, Nathan Fishman.

The three men arrived together in Baltimore on March 31, 1911 sailing from Bremen on the SS Chemnitz. Each of the men were going to an address of other Mlynov immigrants who had arrived before them.

| No. | Name | Age | Profession | Other |
|-----|-----------------|-----|------------|---------|
| 10 | Fischmann Nuti | 46 | m m miller | yes yes |
| 11 | Schwartz Israel | 36 | m m tailor | yes |
| 12 | Teitelbaum Usha | 23 | laborer | yes |

Figure 9 Usha Teitelbaum with Israel Schwartz and Nuti Fischman arrive from Mlynov in Baltimore on March 31, 1911 traveling from Bremen on the SS Chemnitz.

Sylvia's uncle, Usha Teitelbaum, was headed to the home of his "uncle Heschel Schwarz" (later Michael Schwartz), another one of my great-uncles, at 813 E Pratt Street, an address on Pratt Street where the first immigrants from Mlynov, Getzel and Ida Fax, had earlier settled. Getzel and Ida had moved down the street to 836 E. Pratt Street, where a number of other Mlynov immigrants stayed when they first arrived.⁹ This early landing place for Mlynov immigrants abuts what later became the Star-Spangled Banner house, a national historic landmark in Baltimore where Mary Pickersgill, her daughters and a slave woman sewed the flag that flew over Fort McHenry during the bombing by the British.

I had figured out from the passenger manifest of these three men, that Usha Teitelbaum was related to my own Schwartz family, in ways that were no longer remembered by anyone. That explained why he was traveling with my great uncle, Israel Schwartz, and why his photo had managed to show up in a packet of old family photos that had been sent to me by my cousin Marvin Schwartz, who had no idea who Harry and his wife Fanny Teitelbaum were and who had himself received the packet from Mlynov descendant Irene Siegel. Now we knew. Usha (Harry) Teitelbaum from Mlynov was the

⁹ On the Fax pioneers from Baltimore to Mlynov, see <https://kehlalinks.jewishgen.org/Mlyniv/families.html#FaxFamily>

11-From the desk of Howard I. Schwartz

brother of Bassa (Teitelbaum) Barditch and an uncle of Sylvia (Barditch) Goldberg. The mysterious Sylvia Goldberg and I might even be related.



Figure 10 A photo of "Asher Teitelbaum and his wife Faiga" in the Mlynov Memorial Book, p 498

Figure 11 This is the photo of Harry and Fanny Teitelbaum passed to me in a packet of photos by my cousin Marvin Schwartz, who received the packet from Irene Siegel. Obviously from the same photo session as the one in the Mlynov book.



In his passenger manifest, Usha (Harry) Teitelbaum lists his place of birth and last residence as Mlynov, same as his fellow travelers. He lists his father Itsig Teitelbaum as his relative back in Mlynov when he left. Itsig Teitelbaum is the grandfather with the red beard that Sylvia writes about in her Mlynov memories. If Usha was born Mlynov, it is also possible that his sister, Bassa Barditch (Sylvia's mother), was born there too, despite what she put on her passenger manifest and later petition.

I had now figured out that in 1921, when Sylvia and her family arrived in the US and headed to Baltimore, they were rejoining not only her father, Isidore Barditch, who had arrived there, but her mother's brother Usha (Harry) as well.

It is clear that Sylvia was still in Baltimore on January 6, 1923 when she filled out her own Declaration of Intention to naturalize. At the time, she was living at 501 Oxford Street and she describes her occupation as "mender of fish nets," perhaps working for a business concern down by the Baltimore Harbor. By the 1925 census, however, the family is back in New York living in Brooklyn.

292
 U. S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
 NATURALIZATION SERVICE
 No. 15992

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DECLARATION OF INTENTION

Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA DISTRICT OF MARYLAND
 In the THE UNITED STATES FOR THE COURT DISTRICT OF MARYLAND.

I, Silka Barditch also known as Sylvia Barditch, aged 18 years, occupation Mender of fish nets, do declare on oath that my personal description is: Color white, complexion fair, height 4 feet 11 inches, weight 160 pounds, color of hair dark brown, color of eyes brown, other visible distinctive marks none

I was born in Lucy Poland on the 28th day of April, anno Domini 1904; I now reside at 501 Oxford Street Baltimore, Maryland

I emigrated to the United States of America from France on the vessel La France; my last foreign residence was Lucy Poland; I am un married; the name of my wife is _____; she was born at _____ and now resides at _____

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to The republic of Poland, of which I am now a subject; I arrived at the port of New York in the State of New York on or about the 16th day of October, anno Domini 1921; I am not an anarchist; I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein: SO HELP ME GOD.

Silka Barditch
 (Original signature of declarant)

Subscribed and sworn to before me in the office of the Clerk of said Court this 6th day of January, anno Domini 1923

[SEAL] Chas M. James
 Deputy Clerk of the said District Court.

By _____ Clerk.

Figure 12 Silka Barditch aka Sylvia Barditch's Declaration of Intention, signed January 6, 1923 in Baltimore

The sudden shift from Baltimore to New York was caused by family tragedy that I recently learned about from Sylvia's niece, Marilyn Israel. Sylvia's younger brother, Meyer, was tragically run over by a car in a hit and run accident, as captured in this Baltimore Sun article below published May 5, 1922 (p. 24).

Unable to cope with the reminder of the tragedy in Baltimore, most of the family relocated to Brooklyn by 1925, except for Sylvia's brother, Paul, who remained in Baltimore for the rest of his life.

If Sylvia hadn't already fallen in love with Gershon Goldberg in Mlynov, she must have remet him when the family returned to Brooklyn. Gerhson / Joe known later as "George" (or "Uncle Joe" in the family) had arrived in the US with his sister-in-law and her children in 1921, in a story I tell as part of the Goldberg Family Story.

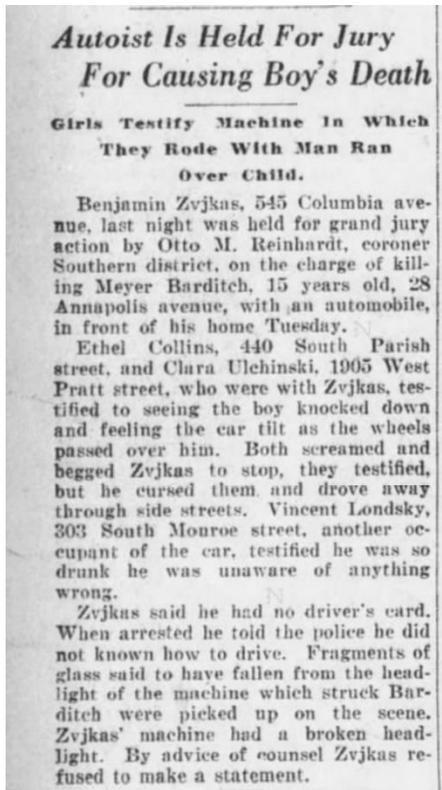


Figure 13 The Baltimore Sun, May 5, 1922, p. 24



Figure 14 A photo of Sylvia's brother Chaim Meyer who was later killed in the hit and run accident in Baltimore at the age of 15, from the Mlynov Memorial Book, p. 110

Mysteries Solved

I had now solved a number of mysteries. I understood why Sylvia Goldberg had become so fascinated with the Mlynov project. It was similar to my own obsessive interest in learning about Mlynov because my grandparents had come from there too.

In addition, Silka the little girl had exciting nostalgic memories from childhood, of festive occasions with wonderful food, and an exciting wedding, when she had worn nice clothes and danced and been noticed in public. Mlynov probably reminded her too of her grandfather, Itcik Staroste, whom she had known only in Mlynov and of her early life

with her brother Meyer, whose life was cut short by a hit-and-run driver in 1922. I know understood why she put Meyer's photo as a young boy in the Mlynov Memorial book.

Sylvia went on to marry a boy from Mlynov, possibly a childhood friend, and her work some 40 years later in the 1970s on the Mlynov Memorial book is what preserved so many memories of those who had come from that place.

After writing a first draft of this piece, I managed to get introduced to Andrea Kerker Zanzuri, a granddaughter of Sylvia's. Andrea shared with me a number of photos including the one below that had been saved in the family. It was the original photo from which Sylvia's brother Meyer had been extracted for the Mlynov Memorial book.

But now we could see another side of the photo, a side that had been cut out for the Memorial book, of Sylvia's mother, Bassa (Teitelbaum) Barditch. Sylvia had chosen instead to replace that side of the photo in the Mlynov book with a more recent one of both her parents later in life in the US, as displayed at the start of this essay. Something about seeing this original photo arrested me, seeing mother and son back in Mlynov and knowing what would happen to Meyer in Baltimore. It reminded me of how fragile life is and how one never knows what kind of future may overtake you as you make choices to improve life's conditions.



Sylvia (Barditch) Goldberg came alive for me as I learned more about her. All the individuals who remember her give a chuckle over the phone when recalling her. They remember her energy and speak about her vibrancy, and how she filled up a room with her presence. Marilyn remembers her as “a firecracker,” as a woman liberated and

empowered before her time, always at a Yiddish typewriter, pecking away at something she was writing for Yiddish newspapers. Perhaps her granddaughter Andrea captured her best:

“She was a little woman, but she was the biggest little woman you ever met. She was a presence. If she was in the room you knew it, she would embrace everyone. The expressions on her face, she looked at you like you were the most special person. People loved her. She was a joiner and doer. She was a libber before it was popular.”

Figure 15 Sylvia (Barditch) Goldberg, courtesy of Joyce Jandorf



Figure 16 Sylvia center with her husband George (Gershon / Joe) and daughter Edith Kerker

From just a name and a few photos in an old memorial book, Sylvia (Barditch) Goldberg had now come alive. I felt like I had a connection to her now that reached across time. I now read the words that Sylvia wrote towards the end of the Mlynov Memorial book and

they hit me differently than before knowing what I now know about her life and that of her family. I conclude with her words.

“We hear the voices of those who perished, telling us to record the destruction of our towns so that generations to come will know about their ancestors. Let them know that Mlynov-Muravitz was a community, rich in spirit and learning. Although the towns of Mlynov and Muravitz no longer exist, they will forever live in our hearts and in our memories.”

From the Mlynov-Muravica Memorial Book, pages 27-29
Translated by Hannah Berliner Fischthal
Commissioned by Howard I. Schwartz, PhD

A WEDDING IN MLINOV

Sylvia (Barditch) Goldberg
Jackson Heights

It was after the holiday of Shevuot. A beautiful summer day. The whole shtetl was in a state of excitement. Chayeke, daughter of Ahron the blacksmith, is getting married today with her bridegroom from Lutsk,¹⁰ Moyshe the cantor's son, who is also a cantor. The Count is sending out his carriage with two pairs of horses, decorated with ribbons and bells, to bring over the bridegroom with his parents. The Count does this for all the important people who marry off their girls. The bridegroom had *klezmerim*¹¹ come from Lutsk. The musicians from Ulik¹² were already there; they have the rights to perform here. The people are anxious to see a wedding with two klezmer ensembles.

I was, as is usual every year, visiting my grandparents for Shevuot. My grandmother tells me, "Silkele, wash up. I will put your new little dress and new shoes on you; I will comb your braids and put pretty ribbons in them; and you will go to the wedding with us." Afterwards, she orders me to not get in the way, because she and my grandfather needed to get ready themselves.

So I went out, all dressed up, in the street. I see in the house next door, in Chaim the miller's garden, men, women, children, and friends in white. Everybody wants to see the bridegroom, who is staying there. Near the steps at the entrance, the *klezmerim* from Lutsk are standing. I push through the big crowd and recognize, among the musicians, Isaac, our neighbor, with his flute. He puts his arm around me, kisses me, and says: "Silkele, dance for me like you do at home." I do not allow him to beg, and he tells the ensemble to play a cheerful tune. I dance, tapping my feet to the beat. The crowd is enthusiastically clapping, and I hear someone saying: "Here is a worldly child."

Someone screams out, "Make way, the bridegroom is going!" Two men show up who will lead the groom to the bride. The *klezmerim* play, the bridegroom is walking, and the musicians with the large audience follow the bridegroom to Chayse's house; the bride is staying there.

Coming into Chayse's house, I see the bride is sitting on an easy chair, and the large room is fully packed with men related to the groom; the bride is surrounded by well-adorned

¹⁰ "Loyts" in the text, but I assume this is the town of Lutsk, Ukraine--HBF

¹¹ Jewish musicians who play klezmer music, usually including a fiddle, a clarinet, and other instruments--HBF

¹² Small village in Ukraine--HBF

women of her future husband's family. The *badkhn*¹³ from Ulik, Reb Leyzer, a tall, big-bellied Jew in a black overcoat and high top-hat, gets closer to the bride and begins to sing a sad melody, in his own style with his strong bass voice: "Dear bride, dear bride." Then Itsik the fiddler from Lutsk, a deaf person, plays so artistically on his magical violin, making the strings cry, that everyone weeps out loud. Eyes are being wiped, noses are blown; the bride is crying with them.

After seating the bride, the girls stand outside with lit, colored candles in their hands. Boys, close friends of the bride, hold up the four posts of the chuppah. The Rabbi, Reb Henekhl, conducts the wedding ceremony. His beautiful voice resounds over the place. Afterwards the bride and groom are greeted—first in Hebrew, then in Russian and in Yiddish. People scream "Hurrah!" and throw confetti on them. Suddenly a wide aunt with a braided loaf in her hands appears, dancing in front of the bride and groom.

In the house, the crowd sits at long tables on benches; men are separate from the women. Boys and girls sit together. A group of women serve the tasty treats, which the servers had prepared: they were Rokhl Paveshe's and Leybtsikhe, whose reputation and cooking were well known. Gefilte fish is brought out, golden chicken soup, fatty kishkes, foods roasted and cooked. The men are brought bottles of 90 proof liquor. They smack their lips, and it doesn't take long until they become a little drunk. They dance the traditional *mitsva* dance with the bride.

Later, the Chassidim and the well-to-do from the town dance the Chassidic dances with enthusiasm. My grandfather, Itse Starosta,¹⁴ a tall Jew with a handsome red beard, combed into two points, wearing a long *kapote*¹⁵ and high boots—happily dances. And now Leybush Gershon's, a Jew with a small beard and a wide smile, takes him into the circle. And here comes the *mashgiakh*¹⁶ Itsik-Leyb, a tall Jew with a gray-white beard, in a black satin *kapote*, with high white socks, and with short half-shoes; he has a patriarchal appearance. The circle keeps getting bigger, the tapping with the feet, stronger. The men weave together, singing, in a holy chain. The *klezmerim* play louder, louder. People stand on the benches and watch the dancers.

Finally they sit down, tired. The musicians now play for the women. Quadrilles, a lively sher dance, a *lenseis*, a cheerful *freylekhs*. Afterwards the boys and girls come and dance together: waltzes, mazurkas, *vingerkes*, *krakovyak*, *polyespans*. They dance until day comes.

It is fashionable for the musicians to accompany the in-laws to their home. The music is especially beautiful. It is heard over the entire street. Some neighbor women are awake, waiting to hear the music, which is long remembered.

And so ended the wedding of Chayke the blacksmith's daughter in the town of Mlinov.

¹³ Wedding entertainer who usually composes improvised humorous and sentimental verse about the bride and groom--HBF

¹⁴ Head of the village--HBF

¹⁵ Long, black kaftan worn by Chassidim--HBF

¹⁶ Supervisor of kosher laws--HBF

The bride is led around the groom, she is turned around;
The groom, in his heart, follows her and accompanies her
Until he hears secrets from under the footsteps.

The *badkhn* suddenly finishes and becomes
The officiant of the marriage ceremony, and not for a joke,
And chants the blessings according to the laws and requirements.

(Excerpt from "The Chuppah" by Aleph Katz)

Translated from the Yiddish by Hannah Berliner Fischthal