



# Temple Israel FOUNDATION

## Biographical Information Sheet

### Phillips

Michael (“Mike”) David Phillips  
Occupation: Clothing store clerk, manager  
Born: March 2, 1884  
Birthplace: Hungary/Czechoslovakia  
Died: February 13, 1934

Elizabeth Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: Est. 1920-1921  
Birthplace: N/A  
Died: N/A

Bertha Farkus (“Wolf”) Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: August 31, 1882  
Birthplace: Hungary/Romania  
Died: February 25, 1952

Michael (“Mike”) Phillips was born in Hungary/Czechoslovakia on March 2, 1884 to Lebi Phillips and an unnamed mother.<sup>1</sup> The birthplace discrepancy reflects his differing answers in censuses and other vital records prior to and after World War I.<sup>2</sup> It is possible that he was born in modern-day Slovakia based on his responses. However, another possibility is that his birthplace was still located in Hungary after the war but he referred to himself as Czechoslovakian to avoid residual resentment towards Hungarians.

Dorothy Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: July 26, 1909  
Birthplace: Colorado  
Died: August 31, 1915

Michael was one of the few Leadville Jews who immediately made his way to the city upon immigrating to the United States. Although we do not know his reason for choosing Leadville as his destination, such actions were common for young Jews who had a relative in the city and sought apprenticeship under them. Whether Michael had a relative in Leadville is still unclear. Nevertheless, he arrived in the United States between 1899<sup>3</sup> and 1901,<sup>4</sup> traveled to Leadville between the ages of 14 and 17, and lived in the city intermittently for over 30 years.

Harry David Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: 1911  
Birthplace: Hungary/Romania  
Died: November 16, 1960

Between 1899 and 1902, Michael did not appear in Leadville’s city directories, nor was he recorded in the 1900 US Census. He first emerges in the 1903 city directory working at the Arkansas Valley Smelter,<sup>5</sup> a position he held until 1906.<sup>6</sup> Michael briefly worked as a fireman for the American Zinc Extraction Company<sup>7</sup> but left the mining industry by 1908 to work at Hyman Isaacs’<sup>8</sup> clothing store.<sup>9</sup> Michael remained employed by Hyman Isaacs for much of his Leadville residency.

Ilona Phillips Nelson  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: Est. 1914  
Birthplace: Colorado  
Died: N/A

Ernest Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: est. 1916  
Birthplace: Colorado  
Died: N/A

Erma Phillips Oppenheim  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: September 5, 1917  
Birthplace: Leadville, Colorado  
Died: March 11, 2008



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Michael met and married Bertha Farkus, born in Hungary/Romania, on August 31, 1882.<sup>10</sup> Like Michael, Bertha's exact birthplace is ambiguous. The exact date of their marriage is also obscure, but their first child, Dorothy, was born on July 26, 1909 in Colorado.<sup>11</sup> The family temporarily left Leadville and the United States for an extended period sometime in the latter half of 1909 or the first half of 1910. Neither Michael nor Bertha are listed in Leadville's city directories between 1910 and 1913, nor are they mentioned in local newspapers between 1908 and 1917. Also, no one sufficiently matching their vital information can be found in the 1910 US census. It's clear, however, that Michael and Bertha traveled to Hungary or Romania at some point after their daughter's birth and remained there until at least 1911, when their second child Harry was born.<sup>12</sup>

The Phillips family returned to Leadville in 1913 or 1914 and settled at 128 West 3rd Street<sup>13</sup> where Michael and Bertha welcomed their third child, Ilona.<sup>14</sup> The family's residence changed twice more, to 219 Harrison Avenue in 1915 and finally to 213 West 3rd Street in 1916, where they remained for at least three years.<sup>15</sup> Michael resumed work under Hyman Isaacs upon his return to the city as a clerk at the clothing store.<sup>16</sup>

Joy and sorrow accompanied Phillips family between 1915 and 1917. Michael and Bertha had two more children during those years: Ernest in 1916<sup>17</sup> and Erma on September 5, 1917.<sup>18</sup> Sadly, the Phillips' first child, Dorothy, passed away on August 31, 1915.<sup>19</sup> She is currently buried at Mount Nebo Memorial Park in Aurora, Colorado; however, since the family was living in Leadville at the time, Leadville's Hebrew Cemetery may have been her original burial site.<sup>20</sup> Though the cause of Dorothy's death is unclear, it's possible tuberculosis played a role. Leadville's *Herald Democrat* reported that Dorothy's mother, Bertha, was among the "Leadville colony" convalescing at the Glenwood Spring sanitarium in December 1916, the same

sanitarium where Doc Holliday passed away from the disease 30 years prior.<sup>21</sup>

The years following the Phillips family's return to Leadville heralded their most prolific professional and social period. The *Herald Democrat* began reporting on Michael's activities beginning in 1917. First, county officials asked him to interpret the "languages of southern Europe" in connection to the arrest of "two foreign men" who required legal translations.<sup>22</sup> Later that year, the Lake County court appointed him administrator for the estate of the late Tom Liamis, who died after being hit by the D.&R. G. train.<sup>23</sup> By 1919, Michael became involved in post-World War 1 relief organizations: he became a committee member for the Local Campaign for Jewish Relief Fund that provided food for Jews facing starvation in Europe and the Levant,<sup>24</sup> and was nominated for membership in the Leadville chapter of the American Red Cross.<sup>25</sup>

Although the publication of Leadville's city directories ceased after 1918, articles in the *Herald Democrat* indicate that Michael continued in the employ of Hyman Isaacs for much of his remaining time in the city. As chief clerk in 1919, he was instrumental in evacuating residents prior to the collapse of the south wall of Smith Block after hearing the building creaking.<sup>26</sup> Michael's responsibilities under Hyman Isaacs increased as the years passed; he traveled to Denver on a business trip lasting two months in 1921<sup>27</sup> and became manager of the "Hyman Isaacs company" in some capacity by 1924.<sup>28</sup> While the Phillips family apparently lived at a Denver residence at 2327 Vine Street in 1920,<sup>29</sup> the *Herald Democrat* in later years described his activities solely in relation to Leadville. Michael and Bertha welcomed their final child Elizabeth, born between 1920 and 1921 in either Leadville or Denver. The only sources identifying her are and the Phillips family's 1922 passport application and photograph, shown above. Elizabeth is not listed in the Phillips household in the 1930 US census, suggesting that she may have died at an early age.



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Michael's relationship with the Isaacs was not exclusively professional. He and his family were personally close to the Isaac family, including both Hyman and his son Louis. A photograph taken around 1914 on Harrison Avenue (shown below) reflects a genial attitude between Michael and Louis. The Phillips and Isaacs formed a familial connection when Bertha's sister, Charlotte Wolf (having anglicized her family name Farkus), married Louis in 1924.<sup>30</sup>

The Phillips contingent once again departed the United States for Europe in early 1924 to survey many of its devastated post-war countries. Upon their return seven months later, Michael relayed his experiences and observations to the *Herald Democrat*.<sup>31</sup> He found Ireland the most agreeable country, untouched by war in contrast to France, which he described as "about the most discontented and worse off nation in Europe." He also discussed the economic conditions of Romania, Germany, Hungary, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Holland, as well as political or social unrest pertaining to the rise of socialism.

Information on the Phillips family deteriorates after 1924. There were no further mentions of them in local or state newspapers; however, they do appear as residents of Leadville in the 1930 US census.<sup>32</sup> What little information is available on the family largely relates to three of the Phillips children, Harry, Erma, and Ilona. In *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959*, author Allen

Breck relays information gleaned from Harry, although he does not explain whether he obtained it through an interview, discussion, manuscripts or other means. Breck shares that Harry became an owner of a "Bookery" in Denver and that Harry described his father traveling throughout the surrounding counties by car during an undefined period to gather a *minyan* for Leadville services.<sup>33</sup> The youngest of the Phillips children, Erma, married William Oppenheim in Cuyahoga, Ohio, on August 13, 1938.<sup>34</sup> She and her family later moved to California, where she stayed for the rest of her life.<sup>35</sup> Regarding Ilona, the back of the photograph showing Michael and Louis Isaacs describes Michael as the father of "Ilona Nelson." According to Social Security death indexes, Ilona made her way to California like her sister.<sup>36</sup>

Much of the Phillips family is buried at Mount Nebo Memorial Park in Aurora, Colorado. Michael died on February 13, 1934,<sup>37</sup> Bertha died on February 25, 1952,<sup>38</sup> and Harry died on November 16, 1960.<sup>39</sup> As previously noted, Dorothy is also buried at the cemetery. Erma's grave is not currently listed on the website Find a Grave, but her husband is interred at Sholom Memorial Park in San Fernando, California.<sup>40</sup> Ilona passed away on October 2, 2005, according to the Social Security death index. The location of her grave is unavailable on Find a Grave. The whereabouts of Elizabeth after 1922 and Ernest after 1930 are currently unknown.



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## *Biographical Information Sheet*

**Phillips**

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David Phillips  
Occupation: N/A  
Born: 1884  
Birthplace: N/A  
Died: February 24, 1889

Aside from David Phillips' grave in Leadville's Hebrew Cemetery, nothing is known about the child or his parents.<sup>41</sup> It is unlikely he was related to Michael Phillips.



<sup>1</sup> U.S., *Passport Applications, 1795-1925*, database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1174&h=409373&tid=&pid=&queryId=3ac714a0c2da9db741e623464bb0873d&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=RNi722&\\_phstart=successSource](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1174&h=409373&tid=&pid=&queryId=3ac714a0c2da9db741e623464bb0873d&usePUB=true&_phsrc=RNi722&_phstart=successSource); accessed May 15, 2021), Michael Phillips and family, Denver, Colorado; citing *Selected Passports* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), microfilm roll: 2049.

<sup>2</sup> The borders for many European countries changed dramatically after World War I. Czechoslovakia officially came into existence just prior to the end of the war after declaring independence from Austria-Hungary.

<sup>3</sup> U.S., *Passport Applications, 1795-1925*, database with images, *Ancestry* ([https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1174&h=409373&tid=&pid=&queryId=3ac714a0c2da9db741e623464bb0873d&usePUB=true&\\_phsrc=RNi722&\\_phstart=successSource](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1174&h=409373&tid=&pid=&queryId=3ac714a0c2da9db741e623464bb0873d&usePUB=true&_phsrc=RNi722&_phstart=successSource); accessed May 15, 2021), Michael Phillips and family, Denver, Colorado; citing *Selected Passports* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), microfilm roll: 2049.

<sup>4</sup> "United States Census, 1920," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://www.familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MX21-WYM>; May 15, 2021), Michael D. Phillips, 1920, Leadville, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 72, sheet 4B, line 58, family 68, NARA microfilm publication T625 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.), roll 165; FHL microfilm 1,820,165.

<sup>5</sup> J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Twenty-Second Annual Leadville City Directory for 1903: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1903), P258.

<sup>6</sup> J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Twenty-Fifth Annual Leadville City Directory for 1906: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1906), P272.

<sup>7</sup> J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Twenty-Sixth Annual Leadville City Directory for 1907: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1907), P276.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the Isaacs family, see: Trevor Mark, *Isaacs* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation), 2018: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/isaacs.html>.

<sup>9</sup> J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Twenty-Seventh Annual Leadville City Directory for 1908: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Leadville, CO: Ballenger & Richards, Publishers, 1908), P233.

<sup>10</sup> "United States Census, 1920," Bertha Philips in the household of David D. Philips.

<sup>11</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images ([www.findagrave.com/memorial/77252611/dorothy-phillips](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/77252611/dorothy-phillips); accessed May 15, 2021), memorial page for Dorothy Phillips (July 26, 1909 – August 31, 1915), Find a Grave Memorial ID 77252611; citing Mount Nebo Memorial Park, Aurora, Arapahoe County, Colorado, USA, maintained by WalksWithAngels (contributor 47205696).

<sup>12</sup> "United States Census, 1920," Harry Philips in the household of David D. Philips.

<sup>13</sup> J. H. Ballenger and W. H. Richards, *Ballenger & Richards Thirty-Third Annual Leadville City Directory for 1914: Containing a Complete List of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies, Manufacturing Establishments, Business, Business Firms, Etc.* (Leadville, CO: Will H. Richards, Publisher, 1914), P218.

<sup>14</sup> "United States Census, 1920," Ilona Philips in the household of David D. Philips.

<sup>15</sup> Publication ceased on Leadville's city directories after 1918.

<sup>16</sup> Ballenger and Richards, 1914, P218.

<sup>17</sup> "United States Census, 1920," Ernest Philips in the household of David D. Philips.

<sup>18</sup> *Born* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), September 8, 1917, P4.

<sup>19</sup> *Find a Grave*, memorial for Dorothy Phillips.

<sup>20</sup> *Find a Grave*, memorial for Dorothy Phillips.

<sup>21</sup> *Society* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), December 3, 1916, P2.

<sup>22</sup> *Worst Slackers So Far Arrested* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), June 17, 1917, P3.

<sup>23</sup> *Appointed Administrator* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), August 6, 1917, P5.

<sup>24</sup> *Local Campaign for Jewish Relief Fund* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), September 14, 1919, P4.

<sup>25</sup> *Red Cross Election Tonight* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), October 22, 1919, P5.

<sup>26</sup> *Collapse of Building* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), May 7, 1919, P1.

<sup>27</sup> *Personal Mention* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), February 5, 1921, P3.

<sup>28</sup> *Around the City* (Leadville, CO: *Herald Democrat*), November 30, 1924, P5.

<sup>29</sup> *Social News* (Denver, CO: *Denver Jewish News*), August 4, 1920, P5.



<sup>30</sup> *Social News* (Denver, CO: *Denver Jewish News*), October 12, 1921, P3.

<sup>31</sup> *Around the City*, November 30, 1924, P5.

<sup>32</sup> "United States Census, 1930," database with images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:X74C-XG7>; accessed May 15, 2021), Michael D. Phillips, Leadville, Lake, Colorado, United States; citing enumeration district (ED) ED 4, sheet 3A, line 33, family 67, NARA microfilm publication T626 (Washington D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 2002), roll 244; FHL microfilm 2,339,979.

<sup>33</sup> Allen Breck, *The Centennial History of the Jews of Colorado, 1859-1959* (Denver: The Hirschfeld Press, 1960), P137.

<sup>34</sup> *Cuyahoga County, Ohio, U.S., Marriage Records and Indexes, 1810 – 1973*, database with images, *Ancestry*

([https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1876&h=2567098&ssrc=pt&tid=83509763&pid=36490379190&usePUB=true)

[bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1876&h=2567098&ssrc=pt&tid=83509763&pid=36490379190&usePUB=true](https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1876&h=2567098&ssrc=pt&tid=83509763&pid=36490379190&usePUB=true); accessed May 15, 2021), marriage between Erma Phillips and William Oppenheim, Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Ohio; citing *Cuyahoga County, Ohio, Marriage Records, 1810 – 1973* (Cuyahoga, Ohio, n.d.), microfilm, vol. 184-185, P537.

<sup>35</sup> *U.S., Public Records Index, 1950-1993, Volume 1*, database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://www.ancestry.com/discoveryui-content/view/260038963:1788?ssrc=pt&tid=83509763&pid=36490379190>; accessed May 15, 2021), public record index for Erma Oppenheim, California, USA; citing *Voter Registration Lists, Public Record Filings, Historical Residential Records, and Other Household Database Listings* (Washington D.C., n.d.).

<sup>36</sup> *U.S., Social Security Death Index, 1935-2014*, database with images, *Ancestry* (<https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=3693&h=76275037&tid=&pid=&queryId=71b02e87fae6c252158f1be37dc854f3&usePUB=true&phsrc=RNi798&phstart=successSource>; accessed May 15, 2021), death index for Ilona Nelson, Iowa; citing *Social Security Index, Master File* (Washington D.C.: Social Security Administration, n.d.).

<sup>37</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images ([www.findagrave.com/memorial/127422761/michael-d-phillips](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/127422761/michael-d-phillips); accessed May 15, 2021), memorial page for Michael D Phillips (March 2, 1884 – February 13, 1934), Find a Grave Memorial ID 127422761; citing Mount Nebo Memorial Park, Aurora, Arapahoe County, Colorado, USA, maintained by WalksWithAngels (contributor 47205696).

<sup>38</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images ([www.findagrave.com/memorial/107095765/bertha-w-phillips](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/107095765/bertha-w-phillips); accessed May 15, 2021), memorial page for Bertha W Phillips (August 31, 1882 – February 25, 1952), Find a Grave Memorial ID 107095765; citing Mount Nebo Memorial Park, Aurora, Arapahoe County, Colorado, USA, maintained by WalksWithAngels (contributor 47205696).

<sup>39</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images ([www.findagrave.com/memorial/140114749/harry-david-phillips](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/140114749/harry-david-phillips); accessed May 15, 2021), memorial page for Harry David Phillips (1911 – November 16, 1960), Find a Grave Memorial ID 140114749; citing Mount Nebo Memorial Park, Aurora, Arapahoe County, Colorado, USA, maintained by WalksWithAngels (contributor 47205696).

<sup>40</sup> *Find a Grave*, database and images ([www.findagrave.com/memorial/145907613/william-oppenheim](http://www.findagrave.com/memorial/145907613/william-oppenheim); accessed May 15, 2021), memorial page for William Oppenheim (1914 – 1975), Find a Grave Memorial ID 145907613; citing Sholom Memorial Park, San Fernando, Los Angeles County, California, USA, maintained by Jax (contributor 48121323).

<sup>41</sup> Leadville Hebrew Cemetery Database, *Phillips, David (d:24-Feb-1889), Blk: B, Lt: 14, Grave: 7* (Leadville, CO: Temple Israel Foundation, 2016).



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*Biographical Information Sheet*

**Phillips**

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EDITOR: William Korn & Andrea Jacobs

SOURCE: Jewish Surnames/Phillips

PUBLISHED BY: Temple Israel Foundation. Leadville, CO; USA. 2021

STABLE URL: <http://www.jewishleadville.org/phillips.html>