

The Poet of Brighton Beach

Lea Lillian (Lontzá / Leontine) Knoll

Ben's great-grandmother · Knoll line · 1896 – 1969



Born Chane Lea in Stanisławów, she wrote verse as a refugee girl in wartime Vienna, and in 1935, threatened over her husband's Supreme Court victory, answered her anonymous enemy with a poem.

She was born Chane Lea on 11 August 1896 at house no. 61 in Stanisławów, Galicia (today Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine), and named on 17 August. The Jewish birth register, record 452, enters her as the daughter of **Ozyasz Knaul (Knoll)**, a merchant, and **Ester Lichtman**, herself the daughter of **Wolf Lichtman** and **Chane Chaje**. Her brother **Mendel (Emil)** had been born there in 1895, and her sister **Beile** followed in 1897. In America she gave her birth as 11 July 1898 and her birthplace as Nadwórna, the Knoll family's town, but the register's 1896 is the authoritative date.

In the First World War the family were Galician refugees in Vienna. Lehmann's directory puts her father at Darwingasse 12 in 1915 to 1918 and at Vorgartenstraße 150 from 1919. In 1917 the Vienna police issued her an identity booklet as 'Leontine Knoll'; 'Lontzá' is a diminutive of Leontine, and the portrait on this page is taken from that booklet. That October her sister **Fanni** married Juda B. Katz. In those war years Lea wrote verse, among it a poem called 'War'. On 27 May 1920, in Vienna, she married **Jozef Schächter**; the marriage register names his parents, **David Schächter** and **Malka Halpern**, and hers, Osias Knoll and 'Erna' (Ester) Lichtmann, and so ties the Schechter and Knoll families together in a single entry.

Lea and Joseph sailed from Le Havre on La Lorraine and landed at New York on 11 October 1922; the manifest lists her as 'Leontine Schachter', 24, born Nadworna, going to her father-in-law at 1603 Prospect Place, Brooklyn. A month later, on 8 November 1922, their son **Hyman** was born in Brooklyn. The 1925 state census finds 'Lillian Schechter', housewife, at 1439 St Marks Avenue with Joseph,

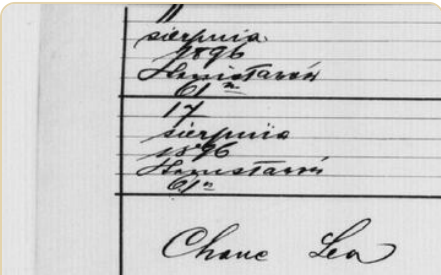
BORN	11 Aug 1896, Stanisławów, Galicia (later given as 11 Jul 1898, Nadwórna)
DIED	Sep 1969, Brooklyn
ALSO KNOWN AS	Chane Lea; Leontine (Lontzá); Lillian, Lilian
PARENTS	Osias (Ozyasz) Knoll and Ester Lichtman
MARRIED	Joseph Schechter, Vienna, 27 May 1920
ARRIVED	New York, La Lorraine, 11 Oct 1922
CHILDREN	Hyman (1922); Estelle (1936)
KNOWN FOR	Answering a 1935 threat with a published poem

who worked in the poultry market, and Hyman. Joseph’s 1929 naturalization petition names his wife Leontine, and on 20 January 1933, as Lilian Schechter of 257 Brighton Beach Avenue, she petitioned for citizenship herself.

In May 1935 Joseph and his brothers won the famous ‘sick-chicken’ case, in which the Supreme Court struck down the NRA. Soon afterwards Lea received an anonymous letter in Yiddish threatening to ‘dig out’ her eyes ‘for breaking the NRA’, with a photograph of her whose eyes had been punched out. Unbowed, she answered in verse in the Brooklyn Times Union on 31 May 1935, reminding her accuser that the decision had been the Supreme Court’s, not theirs: “Success bears enmity, this we all know.” Two weeks later the Brooklyn Daily Eagle spent ‘A Day With the Schechters’ and found her ironing at home in a blue-and-white checked dress. ‘I’m just a home-sitter,’ she told the reporter. She kept her poems in a scrapbook signed with her maiden name, Leontine Knoll, and the paper printed her wartime poem ‘War’.

Her daughter Estelle was born in Brooklyn in 1936, and through Estelle runs Ben’s own line. Lea died in Brooklyn in September 1969, according to her Social Security death record. Her life is pieced together from the Stanisławów birth register, the Vienna identity booklet and Jewish marriage register, Lehmann’s directories, the La Lorraine manifest, the 1925 census, the naturalization papers of 1929 and 1933, and the two Brooklyn newspapers of 1935 that let her speak, and rhyme, in her own voice.

FROM THE ARCHIVE



Birth record, Stanisławów 1896 no. 452: Chane Lea, daughter of Ozyasz Knaul & Ester Lichtman (AGAD 300/2053)



Vienna identity booklet, 1917 (photo page)

H family (Leontine × Jozef Schächter 1920)			
Marriages (Enhanced)			
Groom's age	Groom's Father	Groom's Mother	More
Bride's age	Bride's Father	Bride's Mother	More
	Meyer KATZ	Chane MANDEL	More
	Osias KNOLL		
	David SCHÄCHTER	Malka HALPERN	

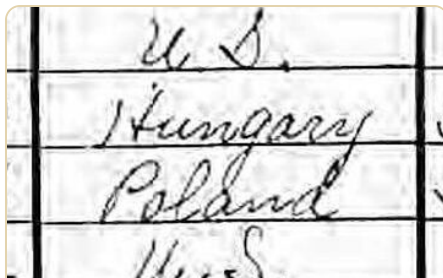
Vienna Jewish marriage index (JewishGen): Fanni Knoll × Juda B. Katz 19 Oct 1917; Leontine Knoll × Jozef Schächter 27 May 1920 (parents named)

STATES IMMIGRATION OFFICER AT PORT OF ARRIVAL

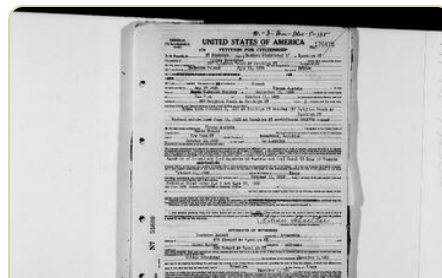
Arriving at Port of

No.	Name	Age	Sex	Birthplace	Occupation	Marital Status	Education	Religion	Political Beliefs	Previous Residence	Previous Occupation	Previous Marital Status	Previous Education	Previous Religion	Previous Political Beliefs	Previous Residence	Previous Occupation	Previous Marital Status	Previous Education	Previous Religion	Previous Political Beliefs
1	David Schachter	29	M	Budapest, Hungary	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic
2	Josef Schachter	26	M	Budapest, Hungary	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic
3	Leontine Schachter	26	F	Budapest, Hungary	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Brooklyn, N.Y.	Single	High School	Jewish	Democratic

Same manifest, facing sheet (arrived New York 11 Oct 1922): going to his father David Schachter, 1603 Prospect Place, Brooklyn; Josef born Budapest, Leontine born Nadworna



1925 New York State census, Brooklyn AD 17 ED 46: 1439 St Marks Ave, Joseph (29, poultry market), Lillian (26) and Hyman (2) Schechter



Her Petition for Citizenship, EDNY no. 176475, 20 Jan 1933: born Madworna (Nadworna), Poland, 11 Jul 1898; married Joseph in Vienna 27 May 1920; arrived on La Lorraine 11 Oct 1922; son Hyman born Brooklyn 8 Nov 1922



Her poem answering the 1935 threat (Times Union, 31 May 1935)



'A Day With the Schechters': Lea at home, quoted, with her poem 'War' (Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 16 Jun 1935, full page)