

NPS-143

SADIE PERLMAN

BIRTH DATE: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW DATE: NOVEMBER 22, 1983

RUNNING TIME: 5:11

INTERVIEWER: DENNIS CLOUTIER

RECORDING ENGINEER: UNKNOWN

INTERVIEW LOCATION: NEW YORK CITY, NY

TRANSCRIPT PREPARED BY: NANCY VEGA, 5/1995

TRANSCRIPT REVIEWED BY: LYDIA HANHARDT, 6/1995

RUSSIA, 1912

AGE 19

CLOUTIER: November 22, 1983. This is Dennis Cloutier with the Ellis Island Oral History Program. And, again, today we're speaking with an immigrant who came through Ellis Island. And what is your name, ma'am?

PERLMAN: Sadie Perlman.

CLOUTIER: Sadie Perlman. And you came through Ellis Island in 1911 or '12?

PERLMAN: Yes.

CLOUTIER: Where were you born?

PERLMAN: In Russia.

CLOUTIER: In Russia. When were you born?

PERLMAN: (she laughs) I don't know.

CLOUTIER: A personal questions, but. (they laugh) Do you mind?

PERLMAN: I don't really remember. You know how old I am now?

CLOUTIER: Uh, no.

PERLMAN: Guess.

CLOUTIER: Oh, seventy-two?

PERLMAN: Ninety.

CLOUTIER: Ninety years old! Oh, my goodness. That's incredible. You look wonderful.

PERLMAN: Thank you.

CLOUTIER: (he laughs) Do you remember what town you were born in?

PERLMAN: The town of Pinsk.

CLOUTIER: Pinsk. So you came, did you come alone when you came to America? Did you travel alone?

PERLMAN: I traveled alone.

CLOUTIER: And why was that?

PERLMAN: What?

CLOUTIER: Why did you travel alone?

PERLMAN: Why? I didn't have anybody else.

CLOUTIER: You were an orphan.

PERLMAN: I was an orphan.

CLOUTIER: Right. Both your mother and father were . . .

PERLMAN: My mother and father died.

CLOUTIER: Died at an early age?

PERLMAN: Very. My mother had a very hard life. She was married to a man, and they had five children, and they all died, so they got divorced. Then she married my father, and she had three girls, three sisters, and he died. So it was bad. We had to raise ourselves.

CLOUTIER: What did your father do for a living?

PERLMAN: I wouldn't know.

CLOUTIER: You don't know.

PERLMAN: No.

CLOUTIER: So why did you come to America? You just had to get away from Russia?

PERLMAN: Well, that's right, because I saw Russia's not good. They put prostitutes, they were all right but (?) people. (they laugh) It's true. See? Because I remember when I was going already, so they came, they had to come with the granites.

CLOUTIER: They had to what?

PERLMAN: You see, if you have money, a lot of money, you can buy a (?) pass. That is a ticket, let's say. It cost twenty-five dollars. But we didn't have twenty-five dollars to spend. (she laughs) So we went with again, what is it again, a person that takes you over, which we have to steal the granites, you see. Like, how can I explain you. They used to go a few, uh, a few treats, you know, and we had to hide. The soldiers, they would see us, they would have shot us.

CLOUTIER: Oh, so you escaped.

PERLMAN: Yes. So then I was very young, so I remember one

thing. They had to wait, I start to remember, then they had to wait to go, with the different people. So I climbed out there was a tall bed, with (Russian) feathers, featherbeds, whatever. So I climbed up, I was a kid. I climbed up, and I fell asleep. (they laugh) When they had to go, they woke me up. And they had to pass a (?), (?) a (?), like they have to examine all you for things, you know, you go. So we passed by, and I wanted, in the meantime I was very anxious to see things, you know. So I wanted to get out to look, so that woman there, the (Russian term). You know what a (Russian) is? The (Russian). The Russian, it's a swine.

CLOUTIER: The Russian pigs?

PERLMAN: Yeah, the Russian pigs. "Where are you going?" See. So she wouldn't let me pass by, all right, but I wanted to explore things, you know.

CLOUTIER: Sure.

PERLMAN: So finally we came to Ellis Island. We came there. How was it? My, that I was learning to a trade, the boss, they are a very nice person, and his sister was in America.

CLOUTIER: Now, who is this, again?

PERLMAN: My boss, the man that I was working for.

CLOUTIER: I see, uh-huh, your boss.

PERLMAN: The boss. His sister went to America. So we brought
the . . . (tape ends abruptly)