



120 Academy Street, Trenton, N.J. 08608  
609-392-7188 \* [www.trentonlib.org](http://www.trentonlib.org)

**Jewish Historical Society Oral Histories**  
**Millie Gilman Temkin, Saul Gilman, Belle Gilman (21 December 1994)**

By Ellen Callahan  
May 2020

**Link to audio file:**

<https://archive.org/details/JHS25SideA/JHS+25-+side+A.mp3>

<https://archive.org/details/JHS25SideA/JHS+25-+side+B.mp3>

**Summary Information**

Tape Number: JHS 25  
Length: 47:13 (side 1)  
24:25 (side 2)  
Interviewer: O. [Orvil "Ozzie"]<sup>1</sup> Zuckerman  
Interviewee: Millie Temkin (1917-2010)  
Saul Gilman (1919-1996)  
Belle Gilman (born ca.1909)

Date of Interview: 12/21/1994  
Place of Interview: Home of Millie Gilman Temkin

In this interview, siblings Millie Gilman Temkin, Saul Gilman and Belle Gilman recall their childhoods in Hamilton, New Jersey in the 1920s through the 1940s. They center their discussion on their parents Samuel and Lena Gilman.

Samuel Gilman was born in about 1881 in Russia and came to the United States in 1906. In 1908, he married Lena Gilman who was born in Russia in about 1883 and came to the United States in 1906. In addition to Millie, Saul and Belle, they had a son Paul (born ca. 1912).

Though initially a baker, Samuel and Lena made their way to Hamilton Township in 1924 where they bought and ran a grocery store until about 1943. While Lena ran the store, Samuel went to work for the Kravits family who had a scrap metal business in Trenton. Eventually, Samuel developed the idea of having various scrap dealers join together into a cooperative where they would pool resources and share profits. This became the Trenton Junk Peddlers Association. Samuel

Gilman continued to work with the association until about 1950 when he and Lena moved to Florida. Lena died shortly after this move.

This interview provides insight into the lives of peddlers and scrap dealers which were very prevalent in Trenton in the early 20th century. In addition, it reveals the workings of grocery stores at the time and demonstrates the ability of immigrant women to adjust to the role of being working mothers. Finally, it provides information about the lives of young Jews living in Hamilton, away from the larger population of Jews who lived in Trenton proper.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://njewishnews.timesofisrael.com/ozzie-zuckerman-chronicler-of-jewish-trenton>

<b>Key Word, Concept, Person</b>	<b>Side</b>	<b>Time Stamp</b>
Introduction	1	:05
Gilman Family History	1	2:12
Gilman, Samuel (“Pop”) - Immigration - Landed in New York in 1905 Russia/Poland and [eventually] went to Spotswood, NJ	1	2:17
Gilman, Samuel - Immigration - Came to relatives that lived in Passaic who sponsored him. They were the Gelmans (“e” not “i”). One branch had a delicatessen and the other had a furniture business.	1	2:48
Gilman, Samuel - early career as baker in Spotswood, then Englishtown	1	3:27
Bakeries - Decline - Samuel Gilman was a baker in Spotswood but once grocery stores began selling bread, bakeries declined	1	3:27
Englishtown - The Gilman family moved to Englishtown in 1922	1	3:47
Gilman Family - Came to Trenton area in 1924	1	4:03
Gilman, Saul - Worked for another baker in Englishtown but saw that this would not last	1	4:27
Socialism - The Gilmans’ parents were Socialists	1	4:37
Workmen's Circle <sup>2</sup> - active in this group	1	4:40
Rosen, Mary Jacobs - she was a friend at the Workmen's Circle and her parents had a grocery store on East State Street in Hamilton and sold it to the Gilmans in March of 1924	1	4:47

---

<sup>2</sup>American Jewish organization which promotes social and economic justice. Now known as the Worker’s Circle.

Education - Moving from Englishtown to Trenton area in the middle of a school year - Gilman children found this to be difficult	1	5:42
Gilman, Samuel - Transition to running a grocery store - “not his thing”	1	6:16
Gilman, Samuel - start in scrap metal business - Went to work for Mr. Kravits who had a scrap metal business on New Street	1	6:39
Kravits family	1	6:48
Gilman, Samuel - work for Kravits - driver - delivering scrap metal	1	7:15
Trenton Junk Peddler's Association (TJPA)- cooperative association of junk metal dealers that would share profits	1	8:29
TJPA - did business at various locations including New Street and Bloomsbury Street	1	9:26
Transportation - trucks vs. horse and wagons	1	10:00
Scrap Metal Business - description of how TJPA functioned	1	10:50
Rosenthal - purchased all the tires	1	11:03
Peddler families - Farber, Bash, Schwartz, Margolem, Syatt	1	11:30
Trenton Junk Peddlers Association - Finances	1	12:04
Brauninger News Building - discussion of location	1	12:22
TJPA - various locations	1	12:22
TJPA - About 20 members	1	13:05
Axelrod, Babe - Bookkeeper for TJPA	1	13:35
Saiyer, Beta - Bookkeeper for TJPA	1	13:36
TJPA - dissolved sometime in about 1951 when Samuel Gilman retired at age 70	1	14:08
Gilman, Saul - working at the TJPA	1	14:22
TJPA - description of tasks needed - bailing scrap rags; sort the metals, etc.	1	14:31
Brauninger News Building - suited needs of association	1	15:26
Families that worked as peddlers	1	16:12
College Education - All the Gilman siblings went to college	1	16:30

Gilman, Belle - her education from college to graduate school in Columbia University	1	16:41
Depression - Belle went to Columbia in 1931 and saw bread lines during the Depression	1	17:33
Gilman, Belle - attempts to get a job	1	17:50
Brooklyn Bureau of Charities	1	18:49
New School for Social Research, New York City - summer course in social work and introduction to this career	1	19:06
Upward mobility - 2 incomes meant that the Gilmans could send all four of their children to college	1	20:05
Gilman Family - finances - fortunate because they had 2 sources of income, the grocery store and the junk peddling business; most families did not have this	1	20:05
Credit at the grocery store - Gilman store let people run a tab	1	20:35
College Education - rare for junk peddlers children	1	20:48
Gilman, Saul - his education	1	21:27
Peddlers Families - one income, wives did not work	1	22:23
Peddlers - ambitions - the more they "hustled" and made contacts the more they made	1	22:44
Gilman, Samuel - counseled African-American employees to save their money and plan for the future	1	23:21
Gilman, Samuel - bought houses on Lambert Street	1	23:53
Goss, Jessie - Samuel Gilman - sold him/her a house	1	23:58
Gilman, Samuel - loaned people money to buy houses - making informal agreements	1	24:30
Mosses Dry Cleaners Ferry Street - were loaned money	1	26:12
Wollinskie Family - loaned them money	1	26:58
Goldberg, Meriam Rosenberg - always very grateful to Samuel Gilman for helping her family	1	27:55
Buying on Credit - everyone bought items from the grocery store on credit	1	29:05
Education vs. Income - many kids would leave school at 16 and get jobs at one of the many factories in Trenton or around the Whitehead Road.	1	29:17

WWI Bonus - customer finally received his WWI bonus money and used some of it to pay off a large credit bill at the grocery store, ca. 1935	1	29:31
Thermoid Rubber Company - paid Christmas bonuses in silver dollars to trace economic impact of the company on the area	1	30:07
Gilman, Saul - Became a coin collector; searched through the grocery store cash register for older coins	1	30:35
Gilman, Lina - came to US in 1906 - they were married in 1908	1	31:07
Gilman, Lina - met Saul in Spotswood while vacationing there and were married within 9 weeks	1	31:36
Gilman, Lina - Isolated in Spotswood since there were few Jews there but learned to speak English by studying her children's books	1	32:03
Gilkan, Lena - savvy business women who learned to run the grocery store	1	31:14
Temkin, Millie Gilman - Being courted by Sam Temkin	1	33:05
Temkin Store Fixture Business	1	33:25
Gilman Grocery Store - originally on South Broad Street - 1922	1	34:38
Dr. Berman - local physician	1	35:22
Trenton Junk Peddlers Association (TJPA) - unique concept	1	35:45
Klatzkin family	1	36:00
Klatzkin, Joe - Accountant for American Floor Company - recommended they hire Sam Temkin when he got out of the service	1	36:34
Rougoff, Ben - also a junk dealer	1	37:35
Zuckerman, Ozzie - he and his brother bought a store in the 1940s	1	38:02
Gilman, Lina and Samuel - later years	1	38:52
Chronovski Family - sold Gilmans their home at 46 Boudinot Street	1	39:32
Bradberry, Genevieve - beautician who rented the house for her shop until the Gilmans moved there	1	40:13
Boudinot Street neighborhood	1	40:42
Social Activities for young people in Trenton	1	41:13
Gilman, Saul - knew few Jewish people because their neighborhood had few Jews - his mother encouraged him to meet other young Jews	1	41:39

Young Men's Hebrew Association - clubs, dinner dances	1	42:23
Dating - Typical date - movie, dinner, sports event	1	42:53
Transportation - everybody walked	1	43:41
Transportation - Trolley	1	43:55
Transportation - Millie Temkin's first car	1	44:09
Jewish Historical Society of Trenton - Collecting interests	1	44:09
Transportation - Saul Gilman's first car	1	45:02
Local Families - Barr, Morris; Malowitz; Pallet, Max; Sholsburg, Johnny; Linowitz	1	45:39
Spiegel's Store	1	46:22
Zuckerman, Ozzie - Discusses his father's junk business in Waynesborough, PA	1	46:49
Emerson Brantingham Building in Waynesborough, PA	2	:04
Zuckerman, Ozzie - His father comes to Trenton as scrap dealer because of the Trenton Junk Peddlers Association (TJPA)	2	:22
TJPA - procedures for weighing scrap	2	:53
TJPA- origin of name	2	1:37
Crime - receiving stolen goods - stolen scrap would sometimes come to Association	2	2:05
Gilman, Samuel - as manager would be charged with receiving stolen goods and newspaper accounts would embarrass family	2	2:05
Social Activities - West State Street group vs. people in other parts of town	2	2:44
Gilman Grocery Store - open 6:00 - 11:00, 7 days a week requiring some family members to be there	2	3:35
Kosher house - Mrs. Gilman kept a "quasi" kosher house	2	3:53
Treife [non-Kosher] - Grocery store sold treife goods and the Gilmans would sometimes bring them home (pork goods)	2	04:11
Gilman home - attached to the store, family kitchen which led into the store front	2	4:22
Kitchen - family entertained in the kitchen	2	4:39

Activities - sports, dances, made their own toys or borrowed toys	2	5:34
Workmen's Circle - many of their parents' friends before they came to Trenton were from the Workmen's Circle	2	6:38
Workmen's Circle - discussion of founding	2	6:54
Graff, Sydney - member of Workmen's Circle	2	7:00
Workmen's Circle - founded as a fraternal organization	2	8:01
Josephson, Lou - member of the Workmen's Circle	2	8:31
Bogage Family - member of Workmen's Circle	2	8:40
Nabatowski family	2	8:46
Rogotzke, Max - was a scrap metal dealer	2	9:08
Gilman family finances - better off than most because they had the grocery store and the scrap yard	2	9:30
Gilman, Saul - as a young boy worked as a helper with a delivery firm that went to places like New York, Philadelphia; reminisce about going through the Holland Tunnel just after it was built	2	10:15
Generational differences - "today's" children vs. those who grew up with very little but kept themselves entertained	2	11:16
Gilman children - mischief - reminiscing about getting in trouble with their parents	2	11:35
Theater - the Orpheum and the State Theatres had movies and state shows	2	13:12
YWHA and YMHA - very important for social activities for the teenagers, especially for the Gilman children who did not live in a Jewish community	2	13:25
Sunday School at the Y	2	14:07
Education - College - money was available because of the store	2	15:17
Education - High School - division into 2 high schools in Hamilton Township	2	15:30
Education - High Schools - Steinhardt, Nottingham, Hamilton West	2	16:13
Jewish Community in Hamilton - discusses various families and businesses in their area	2	16:17
Photographs - discussion about borrowing photographs to make copies of for Jewish Historical Association	2	17:19

Zuckerman family - Ozzie talks about his family and Ozzie's work as a photographer	2	17:35
Copier Technology - discussion of laser copier technology of the time - only 2 available at the time	2	18:27
Reunions of Saul's high school class	2	19:31
Trenton Junk Peddler's Association - Discussion of making a "family" tree of association members	2	20:49
Jerosky, Silvia Abramson - hosted a sweet 16 party for Millie Gilman Temkin so she could meet Jewish kids from Trenton	2	22:52

## References

Wikipedia contributors. (2020, May 10). Workmen's Circle. In *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 16:42, May 23, 2020, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Workmen%27s\\_Circle&oldid=955879959](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Workmen%27s_Circle&oldid=955879959)

US Federal census Year: 1930; Census Place: Hamilton, Mercer, New Jersey; Page: 1A; Enumeration District: 0079; FHL microfilm: 2341097

*Find a Grave*, database and images (<https://www.findagrave.com> : accessed 27 May 2020), memorial page for Saul Gilman (4 May 1919-11 February 1996), Find a Grave Memorial no. 117946395, citing Ewing Cemetery, Ewing, Mercer County, New Jersey; maintained by Ellen Johnson (contributor 47361931).

"Times of Trenton," Mach 14, 2020 – Obituary, Mildred Temkin