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**Jewish Historical Society Oral Histories
James “Jim” Levy (1 October 1997)**

**By Ellen Callahan
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Link to audio file:

<https://archive.org/details/JHS52SideA>

Summary Information

Tape Number: JHS 52¹
Length: 15:59²
Interviewer: O. [Orvil “Ozzie”]³ Zuckerman
Interviewee: James “Jim” Levy
Date of Interview: 10/1/1997
Place of Interview: Bar, Greenacres Country Club, Lawrenceville, NJ [In May of 2018, became Cobblestone Creek Country Club]

The main topic of this interview is the history of the S. P. Dunham’s Department store as told by Jim Levy, son of Charles Levy, a co-owner of the store with Jules Aresty from the 1930s to the 1970s.

The predecessor to Dunham’s was a grocery and dry goods store located on State Street that opened in 1854. This store was owned by Henderson G. Scudder (1827-1882) who expanded it into a full department store. In 1882 John H. Scudder (1841-1918)⁴ and Sering P. Dunham (1842-1913) purchased it and created Scudder and Dunham Dry Goods Store. When Scudder retired in 1882, Dunham’s son Edward W. (1868-1944) joined the company which became S. P. Dunham’s and. Co. Dunham’s continued to expand and prosper, becoming the leading department store of Trenton for decades.

In 1934, Charles Levy (1904-1978) purchased the store in a bankruptcy sale. Julian “Jules” Aresty (1907-1999) joined the partnership in 1941. The store continued to expand and prosper throughout the 1940s and 1950s and eventually, new branches were opened in suburban shopping malls such as the Lawrenceville Shopping Center. Like many urban stores, Dunham’s in Trenton began to decline in the 1960s. Levy and Aresty sold the business in 1974 to Allan and Wallace Papinger and Mervyn

P. Platt. The Trenton store was closed in 1983 and all of the remaining branches were closed by 1977.

¹ There appears to be a speed problem in this recording making the playback very slow.

² At 16:00 this recording switches to a lecture on weight loss coaching totally unrelated to the Levy interview. It is assumed that Mr. Zuckerman taped his interview over a used tape.

³ <https://njewishnews.timesofisrael.com/ozzie-zuckerman-chronicler-of-jewish-trenton>

⁴ John H. Scudder was presumably related to Henderson G. Scudder but was not his son.

Key Word, Concept, Person	Time Stamp
Platt, Merv – plan to do an interview with him	00:26
Dunham’s - taken over by Levy and Aresty	00:38
Dunham, Edward W.	00:54
Dunham, Sering P.	01:05; 06:25; 08:04
Dunham Family background	01:14
Levy, James - earliest recollection of Dunham’s	01:26
Levy, James - working at Dunham’s (as gopher when young and at 14 when he could legally work)	02:14; 03:40

Levy, James - background, lived in Yardley, went to school in PA	02:35
Dunham's - scope of business - inventory	04:17
Dunham's - store locations in Trenton and then Lawrence Shopping Center, Lawrenceville, New Jersey	04:54
Dunham's - labor relations	05:08
Dunham's - advertisement - "Central Jersey's Oldest Privately Owned Department Store."	05:22
Dunham's - History [opened in 1854 - started as a grocery store]	05:44
Scudder, Henderson G. - opened original dry goods store in 1854	06:18; 08:21
Dunham's - S. P. Dunham and Co. formed by partnership between [John] Scudder and Sering Dunham [other sources record that the initial name of the business was Scudder and Dunham Dry Goods Store]	06:31
Dunham's - original location	06:36
Dunham's - purchase of Wallach Building	06:55
Dunham's - State and Broad Street location	07:14
American Radio	07:20

Dunham's - Hanover Street Entrance	07:20
Dunham's - Lawrence Shopping Center 1960	07:27
Dunham's - chain of owners	07:43
Dunham, Edward W. takes over store	08:14
Levy, Charles 1934 - bought store in bankruptcy sale	08:27
Aresty, Jules - became partner in 1941	08:43
Dunham's - Levy and Aresty sold store in 1974	08:59
Dunham's - Platt purchased in 1974	09:04
Levy, Mrs. Charles - painter	09:29
Dunham's - newspaper clippings about Dunham's and photographs of the store and owners	10:07
Dunham's - 100th anniversary story in Sunday Advertiser - September 18th, 1955	11:06
Levy, James - feelings about Dunham's store being sold by Levy Family	11:39
Levy, Charles - retirement life	12:52

Levy, Charles - death at 74 years of age	13:29
Aresty, Jules - still living at time of recording	13:41
Aresty, Mrs. Jules - cookbook author	14:04
Dunham's - Family atmosphere at store	14:40
Levy, Paul - son of Charles, brother of James	14:52
Levy, James - his career	15:04
Generation Gap - Generational Differences - Employment - younger people tending to change jobs frequently	15:31
Generation Gap - Generational Differences - younger generation needing to "find themselves"	15:49

References

http://www.historic-structures.com/nj/trenton/dunhams_department_store.php

<https://www.nytimes.com/1974/02/04/archives/concern-acquires-the-dunham-chain-special-to-the-new-york-times.html>