



**Jewish Historical Society Oral Histories
Chester Cohen (18 June 1998)**

**By Paul Buckley
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Link to audio files:

<https://archive.org/details/JHS23SideA/JHS+23-+side+A.mp3>

<https://archive.org/details/JHS23SideA/JHS+23-+side+B.mp3>

Summary Information:

Tape Number: JHS 23
Length: Side A: 47:21
Side B: 40:32
Interviewer: O. [Orvil “Ozzie”]¹ Zuckerman
Interviewee: Chester Cohen
Date of Interview: 06/18/1998
Place of Interview: Home of Chester Cohen

The main focus of this interview is the life of Chester Cohen in Trenton, along with his recollection of his ancestors and immediate family members. He begins the interview with memories of his maternal grandparents, Max and Sarah Ipp, who lived on Warren Street, and his paternal grandparents, Morris and Rachael Cohen. Cohen explains Rachael Feistel (his grandmother’s maiden name) had immigrated from Europe.

Throughout the interview, Cohen discusses his knowledge of his family’s history in Europe in addition to their experiences after moving to Trenton. Cohen mainly details the lives of the Feistels, who he believes immigrated to the United States from either Latvia or Lithuania in the late 19th century. He also discusses his grandfather’s move from Perth Amboy, New Jersey, to Trenton. He talks briefly about his great grandfather’s occupation as a wagon driver in Europe, and later examines his family’s involvement in the operation of Trenton’s scrap yards.

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

Cohen also talks about Monty Barker and his involvement in operating an illegal distillery with his brother during prohibition in the 1920s. He recounts Trenton businesses of all kinds, from illegal distilleries, to popular department stores, to meat packing companies. Cohen not only mentions business enterprises in which his family was involved, but also talks about well-known stores and businesses within the Trenton area at large.

On side B of the tape, Cohen begins to examine the Jewish community in America of the late 19th and early 20th centuries on a more national scale, and he analyses anti-Semitic tendencies in the native populations. He also discusses his experiences in the military and his involvement in the Korean War. Cohen finishes the interview by expanding on his life in the Trenton and Ewing areas and discussing his participation with the school board, a charter commission, and democratic politics in general. He recounts much of his life throughout the 1940s and 1950s, discussing the birth of his children and the construction of his house.

Key Phrase, Concept, Person	Time Stamp
Parents' Families	Side A: 00:25
Great Grandmother's Marriage-Rachael	2:13
Experience with his grandmother Rachael Feistel	5:20
Cohen-Morris in pottery business	6:20
Great Grandparents' immigration from Lithuania or Latvia	7:25
Great Grandfather was a wagon driver	7:30
Cohen-Morris came to Trenton from Perth Amboy	8:20
Immigration to New York	9:05
Graves of ancestors and other family	10:00, 13:56
Feistel-Edgar	10:18
Feistel-Harris	10:50, 27:25
Feistel-Changed spelling of surname	12:47
The People of Truth Synagogue	14:23
Shul Synagogue	14:30
The State Theatre	15:30
Ipp Family	16:28

The Castle Garden in New York	16:40
Uncle who fought in WWI as a runner	17:29

Immigration of Barker Family	18:30
Jake Barker	19:25
Phil Barker and his business ambitions	20:44, 21:07
Monty Barker	23:00
Phil and Monte owned coal court on Perry Street	24:20
Monty and his brother's illegal distillery during prohibition	24:45
Carolyn Cohen	28:40
Jules Cohen	29:18
Property of Har Sinai	33:48
Siblings	34:12
Scrap yard business	35:40
Trenton Water Power	37:10
Trenton meat packing companies	39:42
Levine Family and Department Store	42:25
Jewish families living in Trenton	43:30
Naar Family	44:23
Interview of German Jews by Nathan Kramer	46:08
Anti-Semitism in 19th century New York	Side B: 00:45
Immigrant arrival in Galveston, Texas	1:51
Morris Cleveland	3:18
Visiting grandparents' houses on weekends	3:55
Visiting Market Street with his parents	6:00

Izzy's Delicatessen and previous/subsequent owners	8:10
Schools that Cohen attended	12:00, 13:37, 16:40
Irma Labak	13:15
Saperstein family on Hollywood Avenue	15:29
Catherine[?] Levin	16:03
Attended Rutgers University and graduated from the School of Chemistry in 1940	18:44
Cohen married his wife Evelyn in 1941	19:20
Cohen enlisted in the Air Force in 1942 and was commissioned by Yale as a cadet in 1943	19:39
Moved to Ewing Township in 1946	20:45
Discussing where his wife Evelyn lived while he was overseas	22:00
Cohen went on active duty during the Korean war	22:42
Worked as a property manager after the war	23:30
Involvement in buying and selling "war surplus"	24:17
Scrapyard on Lincoln Avenue	25:30
The Hanover Hotel	27:10
How Cohen became involved in politics	28:00
Birth of Cohen's second son	29:00
Architect Jack Hersh[?]	29:36
Architects Kramer and Hersh building Cohen's house	30:20
Involvement in Democratic registration programs	32:05
Thorn Lord	33:10
Cohen elected to Charter Commission	34:25

Attempt to abolish partisan politics in Ewing	35:27
Cohen getting elected to sit on the school board	36:05
Establishment of a county library branch	37:35
Cohen joined the township committee	40:00