

The History of Two Cohen Families

The Ancestors of Kate Bernitz - Holland, England and South Africa

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February 2013, London.

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For my siblings, our children and our grandchildren

London, February, 2013.

Prologue

I feel a duty to ensure that my children are properly aware of our ancestors' striving over the years and the challenges they faced – often for sake of descendants whom they would never meet. With this in mind I've sought to recount the history of four sets of ancestors - my father's parents (one born in Latvia, the other in London) together with their respective ancestors; my mother's parents, both born in Lithuania, plus their ancestors; and also Ruth's parents and grandparents, all of whom were born in Germany. I was particularly interested in uncovering their reasons for leaving their homelands and emigrating to South Africa. I shall accordingly include descriptions of their day-to-day lives and domestic circumstances where known to us from contemporary or historical sources.

In particular, I shall follow the histories of:

1. My father's father - Herman Bernitz, and his parents Michel Bernitz and Ernestina Herzenberg, both from Latvia.
2. My father's mother - Kate Cohen, and her parents Maurice Cohen, born in Latvia, and Louisa Cohen, born in Holland.
3. My mother's father - Chaim Abelsohn, son of Yehuda Leib Abelson from Lithuania.
4. My mother's mother - Sara Tsipe Chasan, daughter of Meyer Moshe Chasan, and his second wife Ita, both from Lithuania.

Ruth's parents fled Germany in 1936. For Ruth's family I will follow the histories of:

1. Her father's father – Benjamin Blum, son of Meier Blum and Marjamme Plaut.
2. Her father's mother - Rickshen Hammerschlag, daughter of Moses Hammerschlag and Margolies Katzenstein.
3. Her mother's father - Jakob Goldschmidt.
4. Her mother's mother – Jettchen Plaut, daughter of Wolf Plaut and Betty Moses Frank.

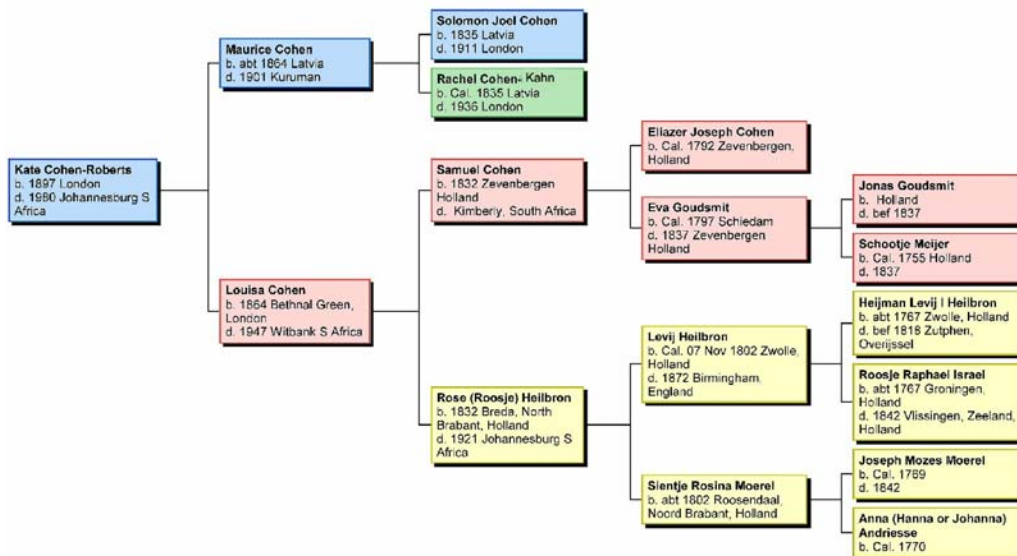
They all lived within a small area in central Germany.

As adults, Ruth and I also emigrated with our children. We knew why we chose to leave South Africa, thus leading to a further question - why were we repeating the actions of previous generations of our Jewish ancestors. When I began the process of retiring, I at last had the opportunity to seek the answers. It is my hope that my children and grandchildren will read this, and better understand their origins and heritage. I have tried to uncover where my ancestors and Ruth's came from, to describe how they lived and how their lives were constrained by the circumstances affecting the Jews of their time.

The Ancestors of Kate Cohen-Roberts

My paternal grandmother Kate (born Cohen) Roberts, was born in England in 1897, during a visit by her parents to London. Kate was descended from two different (and unrelated) Cohen families; her paternal grandfather Solomon Joel Cohen, a boot-maker, was a

Latvian Jew. Her maternal grandfather, Samuel Cohen was a Dutch Jew who at various times made a living as a boot-maker, and as a cigar-maker. Kate's parents were both from London, but they were in South Africa when they met, and got married.



Kate's father Morris (he later changed the spelling to Maurice) Cohen was the ninth child of Solomon Joel Cohen and Rachel (called Rala), maiden name Kahn. Maurice and ten of his twelve siblings were all born in Polangen, Latvia - the town in which their parents Solomon and Rachel were married. The entire family had emigrated to London when Maurice was a

teenager. He emigrated again, to South Africa in 1890, aged about twenty five. Kate's mother Louisa Cohen was also born in London. Her parents, Samuel Cohen and Rose Heilbron were born and had married in Holland. They had emigrated to London around 1857, with one daughter. Some thirty years later they again emigrated, taking their entire family, now consisting of eleven children, to South Africa.



***Solomon Joel Cohen
and Rachel Cohen-Roberts,
their ancestors and descendants***

Solomon Joel Cohen and Rachel (Rala) Cohen
My great-great-grandfather and great-great-grandmother



Solomon Joel Cohen was born in Polangen in Latvia, a small coastal town close to the Lithuanian border. At that time it was part of Kurland, and located outside of the Pale of Settlement. It is now known as Palanga, in Lithuania. His wife Rachel (maiden name Kahn), was also born in Polangen, in 1835, and they were married there ca. 1863. Between 1868 and 1878 they had eleven children, all born in Polangen. The 1911 census in London recorded a total of fifteen children born alive, of whom four had subsequently died.



Rachel was born in Polangen, Kurland in ca. 1841, the daughter of Avraham *ha'*Cohain. Her maiden name was Kahn. It is not known whether she was related in any way to Solomon.

Samuel and Rachel emigrated to London. Although the exact date is not known, it can be calculated as being between 1881 and 1884. We know that the family was not yet in London at the time of the 1881 census, and also that their twelfth and last child, Lazarus, was born in Mile End, London in 1884.

Pictures right, and over leaf - Solomon and Rachel
The original photographs are very early albumen prints, a process which was used from the 1850's to the 1890's. These photographs probably dates to the time of Solomon's marriage to Rachel (ca. 1865), when she was 25 and he was 30 years old. These pictures have been restored from the originals, which have deteriorated extensively. The originals are held by Louise Berzen, daughter of Miriam (Mabel) Cohen-Roberts.

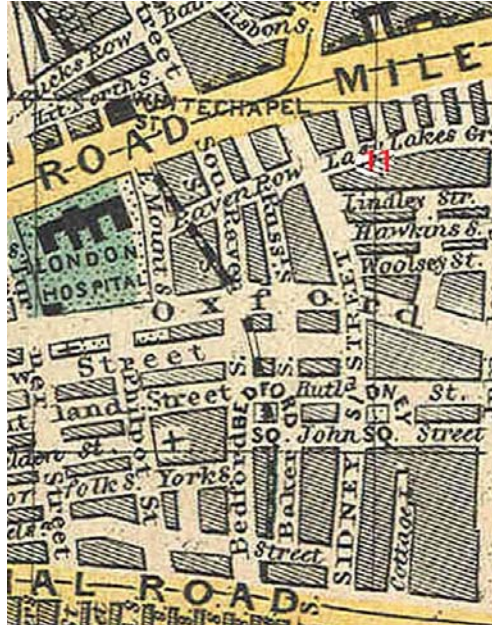




The census documents for 1891 and 1901 (the year of Solomon's death) described him as a boot-maker. The main industry of Polangen was leather goods of all kinds including boot and shoe making. The town was in the centre of the major cattle farming area, while the nearby town of Skud (now Skuodas) was, and remains to this day, an important center for the tanning of leather, which was processed in nearby towns, including Polangen. It is likely that Solomon trained and earned a living there as a boot maker. To have been able to migrate to England with eleven children indicates that he was either sufficiently well off to afford this, or possibly received help from his brother Goodman who was already living in London.

The 1891 English Census provides the following information about the inhabitants of 11 Horsley Buildings, Mile End Old Town: Solomon Cohen, aged 56, born in Russia, his wife Rachel aged 50 also born in Russia, their daughters Harriet (23 – no occupation given), Deborah (19 - tailoress), Kate (16 - tailoress), Annie (14 - scholar), Minnie (10 - scholar), and sons Lewis (14 - tailor machinist), Goodman (12 - scholar) and Lazarus (7) a scholar born in Mile End, London. Solomon's occupation was entered as a boot maker, it being further noted that he was "neither employer nor employed". The other working members of the family were all employees. The birthplace of their youngest child, Lazarus (7) is given as London. The next oldest, Goodman (12) is recorded as having been born in "Russia".

By the time of the 1901 Census, Solomon Cohen, then aged 66, and Rachel aged 60, were still living at 11 Horsley Buildings, Adelina Grove, Mile End Old Town, though the children had all left the home. The 1911 Census records Solomon and Rachel as still living at 11 Horsley Buildings. The lanes were very narrow streets, and could not have been negotiated by car. Goods would have been carried on hand carts. Neither the buildings nor the lane exist today, and the area has changed substantially.

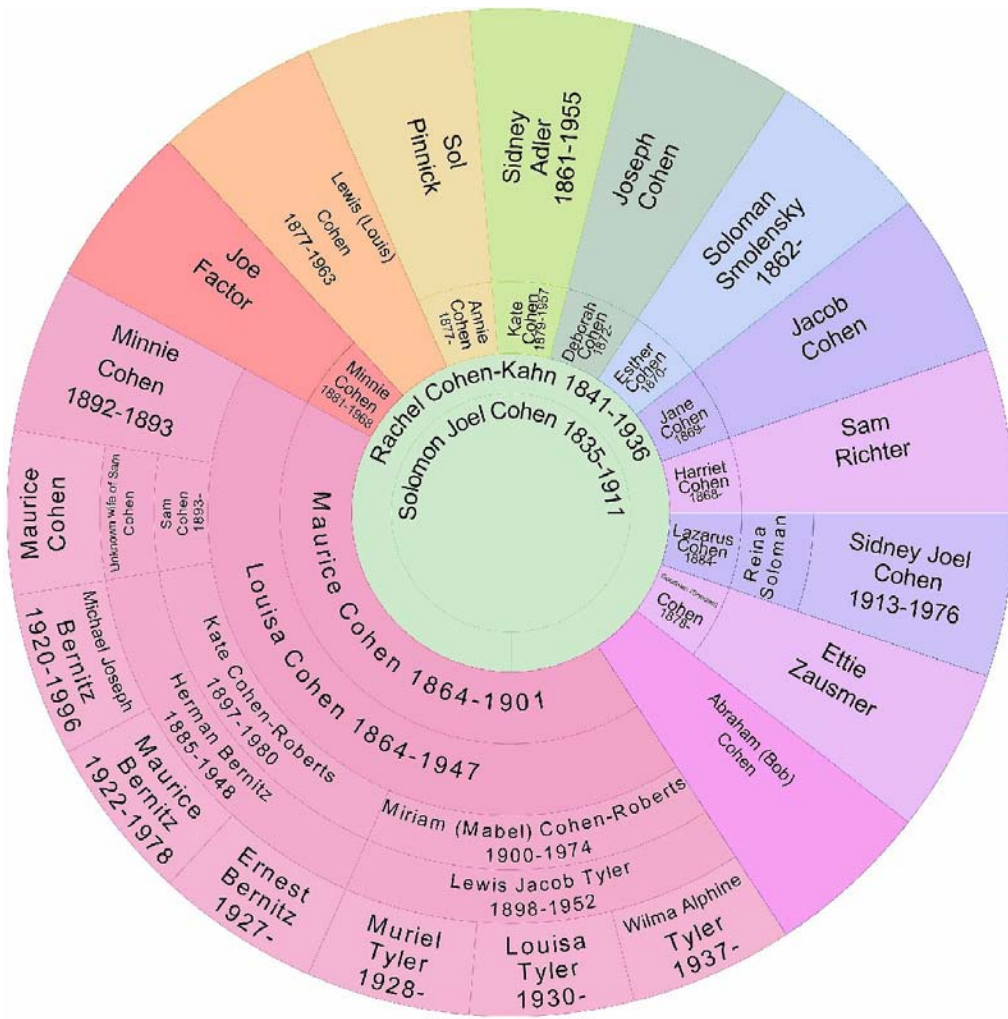


The area had become a slum well before World War II. It was heavily bombed during the blitz, and suffered further damage from the German Flying bombs.

After the war it was redeveloped, and the street layout was changed to provide luxury small housing for professionals wishing to live close to the city. By using an 1882 map in conjunction with a modern one, it is possible to identify the location of the Horsley buildings. No 11 is indicated on this early map.

By 1882 the street name had by then been changed from Adelina Grove to Lady Lakes Grove. But the Lanes running between it and the Mile End Road remained, and can be clearly seen.

The Descendants of Solomon Joel Cohen and Rachel Kahn



Goodman Cohen - Brother of Solomon Joel Cohen.

Solomon Joel's brother Goodman (Godien) Cohen was already living in London, and was in all likelihood instrumental in assisting him and his family to settle in the East End, and obtain employment.

From both the censuses of 1881 and of 1891, we know that Solomon's brother Goodman and his family were also in London, at no. 26 Leman Street in Whitechapel (near the Poor Jews' Temporary Shelter which was at no. 82 Leman Street).

The precise year in which Goodman and his wife Jane left Polangen is uncertain but it must have been between 1867 when their eldest son Lewis (Louis) was born in "Russia", and 1870, the year in which their next

child Ester was born in London. Apparently Goodman and his family had emigrated to and settled in London about ten to fourteen years earlier than his brother. Presumably Solomon's and Goodman's circumstances had been similar in Polangen, since they were both involved in the leather business, Goodman being described in 1881 as a leather cutter, and in 1891 as a leather merchant. His daughters Ester and Hannah were described as leather sellers. It is probable that Goodman was running a family leather business from his home, as was the custom. His son Louis had been apprenticed to a watchmaker. Solomon would certainly have been aware of the opportunities offered by moving to London, and may well have been helped to immigrate by his brother.

Extract from the 1891 census.**Name Relationship Status Sex d.o.b Occupation Place of Birth**

COHEN, Goodman Head Married M 1840 Leather Merchant Russia

COHEN, Jane Wife Married F 1844 Russia

COHEN, Louis Son Single M 1867 Apprenticed to Watchmaker St Mary's Whitechapel

COHEN, Ester Daughter Single F 1870 Leather Seller St Mary's Whitechapel

COHEN, Hannah Daughter Single F 1873 Leather Seller St Mary's Whitechapel

COHEN, Rebecca Daughter Single F 1875 Scholar St Mary's Whitechapel

COHEN, Lily Daughter Single F 1880 Scholar St Mary's Whitechapel

A nephew, Louis Layerson, a machinist tailor, was listed as living with them at the same address at the time of the census.

Life for the Cohen's in London's East End in the late 1800's and early 1900's

The Siege of Sidney Street

In his family history of Solomon Cohen, Stan Hart (also a descendent of Solomon Joel) states that "The family lived at 11 Horsley Buildings, Mile End, Stepney, London - their home was described as being at the extreme end, facing the entrance to the Lane which was situated near to Sidney Street."

The "Siege of Sidney Street" in January 1911 is well documented. Whilst the Cohen's are not known to have been involved directly, they would certainly have been aware of these happenings in the neighbouring thoroughfare. The following account of the siege provides a fascinating account of the life of the inhabitants of the area at that time.

"Number 100 Sidney Street was one of a block of ten houses that had been erected as recently as 1900. They were called Martin's Mansions after the local property tycoon to whom they belonged. They each had three main floors below a spacious attic. Number 100 had been leased to a ladies' tailor named Samuel Fleischmann. With his wife, Rebecca, he occupied the front room on the ground floor together with the middle room on the first floor where their two children slept.

He operated his business from the attic and also used one of two second floor rooms as a stockroom. He sublet the rest of the house. The middle room on the ground floor was occupied by an elderly couple, the Clements. The other two rooms on the first floor had been let to David Shiman, a ladies' tailor originally from Russian Poland. He slept in the front room with his wife and two infant children. Two older children slept in the back room. The remaining room at the front of the second floor had been rented to Betsy Gershon. No. 30, Sidney Square was occupied by Mr. Davis Schieman, who had occupied two rooms on the first floor for the past four years, paying a rental of seven shillings and six pence per week to Mr. Fleischmann. He worked for Mr. Isaac Levene, also at No. 30 Sidney Square (as a Ladies' Tailor) earning an average of forty five shillings per week.



He has a wife and four children, their ages ranging from 1 1/2 yrs. to 11 yrs. The two eldest children are scholars at Baker Street School."

The Sidney Street Siege, popularly known as the "Battle of Stepney", was a full scale gunfight in London's East End in 1911. The street battle was started by a small gang of Latvian anarchists under the leadership of Peter Piaktow, better known as Peter the Painter. In December of 1910 they had robbed a jeweller's shop at Houndsditch by tunneling through the wall of an adjacent building. In their ensuing escape an unarmed constable had been shot. In January 1911, an informant told police that two or three of the gang, including Peter the Painter, were hiding at 100 Sidney Street. Two hundred men cordoned off the block and the siege began. The Home Secretary Winston Churchill went himself to Sidney Street to take command. One of the gunmen emerged from a window, and was shot. The building burst into flames, and a wall collapsed, burying five people, one of whom died in hospital.

Life at 11 Horsley building.

We know that soon after arriving in London the Cohen family was sharing tiny premises, probably no more than two or three rooms. The five youngest children were still at school, whilst the eldest daughter was occupied in household duties with her mother. Two daughters and a son were employed as tailors, almost certainly in one of the numerous sweatshops in the area, and were probably providing for the family.



Above:

Solomon's Grave, second from left in Plashet Cemetery, London. From the Hebrew: Here lies Mr Solomon Zelman Yoel ben Yehuda Avraham who died (illegible) Iyar 5671. May his dear soul be bound up in the bonds of the living. English: In loving memory of our dear husband and father Solomon Cohen who died May 3rd 1911 in his 76th year. Deeply mourned by his widow, children grand-children brothers, sister (or sisters? not clear) relatives and friends.

Rachel is buried to the right of Solomon. The gravestone is in poor condition and is barely legible. From the Hebrew: here rests Rachel daughter of Avraham Ha'Cohain, who died 5697 by the Jewish calendar. English: in loving memory of our beloved mother Rachel Cohen who passed away 2nd Nov 1936. Solomon's brother Goodman is buried to the left of him. The white grave in the back is that of Nancy, widow of Lewis, and that on the far right is that of Sophia, widow of Henry Cohen (relationship uncertain).



Above: A tailors sweatshop in London's East End, 1890's.

Solomon was not employed, and the family would have been struggling financially. Ten years later things had improved considerably. The 1901 census shows that all of the children had left home. Solomon and Rachel were still living comfortably in the same premises, with Solomon working at home as a self-employed boot-maker. Most of their children had emigrated by then, either to South Africa or the USA.

They continued to live at 11 Horsley Buildings until Solomon's death, aged 76, on May 3rd, 1911. He was buried in the Plashet Cemetery in London's East End on May 5th (section I, row 23, plot 6). To the left of his grave is that of his brother Goodman. Rachel outlived Solomon by over 25 years. She was living with her grand-daughter in Hackney when she died in London in 1936 at the age of 95. She is buried next to Solomon. From the inscriptions on their grave stones we know that Solomon died before they had great-grandchildren. Rachel went on to have many great-grandchildren and great-great grandchildren.

The Descendants of Solomon and Rachel

Solomon's was obviously a close knit family. Eleven children grew up together in Latvia, and then immigrated to London, soon to have a new brother. Conditions initially were extremely difficult, with all of them living in very cramped quarters, and the children working to support the family. Within ten years their lot had improved dramatically.

Eventually all of the children had left home, some to go on to great success, and Solomon and Rachel enjoyed a reasonably comfortable old age, apparently with some financial support from their children. We know from old correspondence that in 1901 Maurice Cohen was sending Solomon and Rachel a monthly allowance from South Africa

Following are some details of their children:

1. Harriet Cohen (b. 1868) - immigrated to Chicago, where she married Sam Richter.
2. Jane Cohen (b. 1869) - immigrated to South Africa. She married a Jacob Cohen, and they had ten children.
3. Esther Cohen (b. 1870) - married Solomon Smolensky in 1889. They immigrated to South Africa but later returned to London. They had nine children.
4. Deborah Cohen (b. 1872) - immigrated to South Africa. She married a Joseph Cohen, and they had five children.
5. Kate Cohen (1861-1855) - married Sydney Adler. They had four children in South Africa.
6. Annie Cohen (b. 1877) - married Sol Pinnick, in Chicago. They had twin children. Louis (Lewis) Cohen, and Annie - born in 1877.



Above: Deborah, Minnie, Jane and Kate Cohen.
Below: Esther Smolensky (née Cohen) with her mother Rachel Cohen



7. Goodman Cohen (1878-1925) - pictured below. He married Ettie Zausmer. They remained in London, and had four children.



8. Minnie Cohen (1881-1968) - immigrated to South Africa. She was first married to Joe Factor, and they had one child. She later married Abe Falcke, and they had two children. Minnie died in 1968 in Durban.

9. Maurice Cohen, my great-grandfather (1864-1901) pictured below. He immigrated to South Africa where he married Louisa Guites (née Cohen).



10. Abraham (Bob) Cohen (below) – no further details are known.



11. Lazarus Cohen (aka Laurie, Lew James), was born in 1884, when Rachel was already forty seven years old. He immigrated to South Africa, and was married to Reina Solomon. They had two sons. The eldest, Sidney Joel, gained fame under his stage name of Sid James (picture below). Following an early career in South Africa, Sid had moved to England, and became a leading member of the "Carry On films" team. He was one of the most featured performers and made nineteen movies. He also had a successful career on stage and TV. He died in London in 1976.



Maurice Cohen – born 1864
My great-grandfather



Maurice Cohen, Louisa Cohen, Rose Guites, Minnie Cohen and Sam Cohen, circa 1895

Maurice immigrated to South Africa in the late 1880's. In about 1891 he married Louisa Guites (née Cohen), a divorcee with two children. He became stepfather to the two children from her first marriage to Joe Guites - Theodore Guites, born in 1882 and Rose Guites, born in 1885. Maurice and Louisa initially settled in Kimberley, South Africa and had four children of their own. Miriam (known as Minnie) was born in 1892 in Kimberley, where she died as an infant on 10th February 1893; Sam, born between 1893 and 1896 in Kimberley, lived and died in Oudshoorn; Kate – my paternal grandmother (born 1897 in London) and my grand aunt Miriam (known as Mabel), born in 1900 in Kimberley (following the death of their first infant they again used the name Miriam for their fourth child, although she was known to all as Mabel). Maurice and Louisa went to Johannesburg in late 1892, but returned to Kimberley before 1900. In 1897 Maurice declared his occupation as a share dealer. As Johannesburg and Kimberley each already had stock

exchanges at that time, and it is unclear whether he traded on one or both of them. In 1897 Maurice, Louisa (already pregnant with Kate), and Sam sailed to London to visit Solomon and Rachel, and to participate in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations. They had three tickets allowing them to view the parade on June 22nd 1897, from an upper floor window of a business on Borough High Street.

A description written at the time of the parade -
“. . . by general consensus it was one of the most remarkable occasions of a remarkable century. Mark Twain sat in his chair on one of numerous wooden stands erected along the Strand in order to watch the parade of the era as it wound its six-mile way through London. On foot, on horseback, and by carriage, the participants went first from Buckingham Palace to St. Paul's Cathedral. Later, after a stop at the Mansion House, the home of the Lord Mayor of London, they crossed the Thames, traversed the poor residential dis-

trict of Southwark (where Maurice and Louisa were seated), recrossed the river on Westminster Bridge, and passed the Houses of Parliament before returning to Buckingham Palace”.

Mark Twain wrote of the elaborately decorated streets, of the well-dressed and well-behaved spectators at every window and on every balcony, and of the tightly packed sidewalks patrolled by red-coated soldiers. Captain Oswald Ames, the tallest soldier in the British army, led what seemed to be an unending procession of troops - white, yellow, brown, and black - from Australia and the Far East, from India and Africa, from Canada and the West Indies. "For varied and beautiful uniforms and unceasing surprises in the way of new and unexpected splendors, it much surpassed any pageant that I have ever seen," he wrote. The purpose of this procession was to celebrate the survival on the throne for over sixty years of the little old lady, by now half-blind, who reigned over the largest empire the world had ever known and had done so for a longer time than any of her predecessors or any of her European counterparts. Just over two months later, on Sep-tember 8th 1897, Kate was born in London. From her British birth certificate we know that she was born at 91 Wiesbaden Road, Stoke Newington, Maurice Cohen's residential address at the time; she was presumably born at home. Soon after the birth they returned to South Africa where they were to be profoundly affected by the outbreak of the Second Boer War.



Above: A view of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee procession showing the progress of the Royal Carriages. The Queen travelled from Buckingham Palace to attend a service in Westminster Abbey.

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF BIRTH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE

Application Number 700770-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT HACKNEY

1897 BIRTH in the Sub-district of Stoke Newington in the County of London

Column	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No.	When and where born	Name, if any	Sex	Name and surname of father	Name, surname and maiden surname of mother	Occupation of father	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar	Name entered after registration
	14th September 1897	Kate	Female	Maurice Cohen	Louisa Cohen formerly Cohen	Bookbinder	M. Cohen, Bookbinder, 91 Wiesbaden Road, Stoke Newington	18th September 1897	[Signature]	[Signature]

A copy of Kate Cohen's birth registration. She was born in Stoke Newington, London, to Louisa Cohen, formerly Cohen. There is an interesting anomaly in this entry. Although the birth was registered on 14th September 1897, it states that she was born four days later - on 18th September 1897, at 91, Wiesbaden Road (this address no longer exists - following WWI most German street names were changed to English ones).

The Boer Republics

The two main Boer republics were the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. The Republics' financial position was always precarious and their economies depended entirely on cattle. Most trade was by barter. When diamonds were discovered near Kimberley in 1869, Britain stepped in quickly and annexed the area. The Boers were disturbed by the foreigners, both black and white, who poured in following the discovery and were angry that their impoverished Republics were missing out on the money the mines brought in.

First Anglo-Boer War The First Anglo-Boer War started when long-standing Boer resentment turned into a full-scale rebellion in the Transvaal (under British control from 1877). The first war, known to Afrikaners as the 'War of Independence', broke out in 1880. It ended almost as soon as it began with the Boer gaining victory at the Battle of Majuba Hill in 1881. The republic maintained its independence as the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (South African Republic), or ZAR. Paul Kruger, one of the leaders of the rebellion, became President in 1883. At the same time, the British, moved forward with their plans to federate the Southern African colonies and Republics. This was the best way for them to promote their larger strategic interests in the area and maintain some sort of control. With the discovery of a huge reef of gold in 1886 and the ensuing explosive growth of Johannesburg the ZAR was suddenly host to thousands of *uitlanders* (foreigners). The enormous wealth of the mines, mainly controlled by Europeans, soon became irresistible to British bureaucrats. This only intensified the Boer's grievances which had begun during the earlier diamond rush. In 1899 the British demanded that voting rights be given to the 60,000 foreign whites on the Witwatersrand. Paul Kruger refused, and demanded that British troops be withdrawn from the Republic's borders. The British refused to move their troops, and subsequently Paul Kruger declared war. To protect his Republic, Paul Kruger formed an alliance with the Orange Free State.

Second Anglo-Boer War This conflict was more protracted than its predecessor, as the British were better prepared. By June 1900, Pretoria, the last of the major Boer towns, had surrendered. Yet resistance by Boer *bittereinders* (bitter enders) continued for two more years with guerrilla-style battles, which in turn were met by scorched-earth tactics by the British. In May 1902, the Treaty of Vereeniging brought a superficial peace. Under its terms, the Boer republics acknowledged British sovereignty, while the British promised to rebuild the areas under their control. By 1902 26,000 Boer people had died of disease and neglect in concentration camps.

Jews in the Second Boer War

Jews, including a number of our ancestors fought on both sides during the Second Boer War. Nearly 2,800 Jews fought on the British side a 125 were reportedly killed. It is probable that Maurice, who had been living in Johannesburg in the ZAR, was one of many British colonials who left the Witwatersrand rather than declare allegiance to Boers and fight against the British. He returned to Kimberley, and died whilst on active service with British forces at Kuruman. Other ancestors who supported the Boers included Woolf Carlis, who took the oath of allegiance to the Republic, and provided material support. Around 300 Jews, mainly from Russia served among the Boers and were known as *Boerjode*: those who had citizenship rights were conscripted along with other burghers (citizens), but there were also a number of volunteers. Jews fought in many of the major battles and engagements and during the guerrilla phase of the war, and a dozen are known to have died. Around 80 were captured and held in British POW camps in South Africa, St. Helena, Bermuda, and Sri Lanka. Some Jews were among the *Bittereinders* (Bitter Enders) who fought on long after the Boer cause was clearly lost. Other family members who fought on the Boer side included Isidore Bernitz, a Latvian Jew, who was a member of the Smithfield Commando.

British Rule



The Boer's weapons were decommissioned at the end of the war, and handed over to the British forces (seen in the back-round). Right of centre, raising his hat, is Isidore Bernitz.

The British response after their victory was a mixture of appeasement and insensitive imperialism. It was essential for the Boers and British to work together. The non-whites were scarcely considered, other than as potential labour, despite the fact that they constituted more than 75% of the combined population of the provinces.

Afrikaners found themselves in the position of being poor farmers in a country where big mining ventures and foreign capital rendered them irrelevant. As a backlash, Afrikaans came to be seen as the *volkstaal* (people's language) and a symbol of Afrikaner nationhood. The former Boer republics were given representative government in 1906–07, and moves towards union began almost immediately. On 14 October 1899, at the beginning of the Second Boer War Kimberley was besieged by the Boers.

The British forces attempting to relieve the siege suffered heavy losses. The blockade was only lifted on 15 February 1900, but the war continued until May 1902. By that time, the British had built a Concentration camp at Kimberley to house Boer women and children.

Maurice served on the British side, as a member of the Kuruman Home Guard. Kuruman is the principal town of the Kalahari, in the Northern Cape, and is situated approximately 240 kilometers North West of Kimberley. In November 1899 the town of Kuruman was being besieged by a Boer force.

The garrison, less than a hundred strong, held out for six weeks against the enemy, but were forced to surrender on the 1st of January 1900. Kuruman was re-occupied by the British in June 1901.

In addition to serving in the home guard, Maurice was a supplier of meat to the British forces, through the "Cold Storage Company". He was involved in this business, with Manny (unknown surname), who was either his employer or partner. He travelled from Kimberley to Kuruman in late December 1900 to commence the slaughter and supply of meat to the British garrison, and over the next few months he wrote regular letters to his "darling Louisa". These letters provide wonderful descriptions of his experiences in Kuruman during the Boer war.

Kuruman, December 20th 1900

My own darling Louisa

After a long and miserable journey I thank goodness arrived at the god forsaken miserable hole. Well love, of all, the places I have been to I have never seen anything as miserable, I will tell you that it is a caffir (sic) location, not a single house bar the courthouse and the hotel, but what a hotel. I came there and asked him if I could get accommodation, and he said am very full up. Of course having nowhere to go, the only place was for me to sleep on the feld (sic), I started begging for my very life, however he has asked one of the police to give me his bed, so thank God I am alright.

My next thing was to get ready to kill, as there was never killed any oxen here before. I could not get a slaughter pole, and for love nor money there is no pole to be had in the place, and not a tree in the place. Well I overcame this difficulty as well; I got a place from a caffir some distant away to kill under a tree of his, and I have to pay 5 shillings a month for the use of the tree. Now comes the greatest difficulty – there is no place to be had for a butcher shop for the present. The Commandant gave me the use of a caffir hut, but is so small that I cannot fit an ox in. The next trouble is that I cannot get a kraal to put my stock in; I tell you my dear it is a fine place. I just hope the war will be over soon and I will be able to get out of it. Now love, if you don't want to stay in Kimberley, you can go to Cape Town.

Don't even think of coming to me, as it (would be) impossible.

I have started killing today. My love, I am very anxious to hear from you how you and the darling children are getting on.

*.....fondest love and a thousand kisses to yourself, our Theo, Rose, Sam, cute and darling Mable (sic) your ever loving Maurice
fond love to Clara, Sam and Edy (sic)*

To this day there is a place of interest listed as the Slaughter Tree along the Kuruman trail. Since 1913 this has been the official slaughtering place of Kuruman. It is probable that this was the tree that Maurice mentions in his first letter.

Kuruman, December 22nd 1900

.....the Boer commando near this place, about 1800 strong, captured the convoy (of) 28 wagons, and 3 wagons belonging to storekeepers. We now have nothing; there is no bread, no flour, potatoes, vegetables, nothing of any sort to drink.....I hope this letter will reach you before you leave for Cape Town.

Kuruman, December 26th 1900

I am writing to you today so that if the Boers attack us and I should fall victim, I cannot die without saying a few words to you. My love, I love you most dearly and shall die with a heart full of love for you. May God almighty give you strength to go through all of your troubles.

.....Goodbye and May God bless you.

Kuruman, December 29th, 1900

.....we are not attacked yet, but I wish the beggars would come ...I hope we shall soon be relieved.

....Let Manny know that I am alright I have plenty of stock, and that he must be prepared with money, as I am giving cheques. (Manny was based at Danielskuil, a village with a British fort, about 90 kilometers away from Kuruman).

Many of the letters speak of the problems of communications and letter deliveries. The siege prevented regular mail deliveries, and the letters that Maurice was able to send and receive were usually delivered by military runners or dispatch riders.

Kuruman, December 30th, 1900

.....should we not be restored with communication I want you to send £4, on about the 8th of next month to my parents (Solomon and Rachel Cohen – Maurice was to repeat this instruction in subsequent letters, calling it an allowance).

Kuruman, January 6th, 1901

I wrote today to Manny to send you £15-2-6d. I must tell you dear I am doing very well.

Kuruman, January 16th, 1901

....I am in the prime of health, I never felt better in my life. Although we have no liquor, we have everything else, plenty of fruit of every kind, a beautiful river to swim in, which I indulge in every morning. I get finished with my work at 7 in the morning.

I have a swim and then a jolly good breakfast, then 2 hours sleep, then dinner.

Then I go down to the slaughter pole, then I count my sheep in, this finishes my every day's work; 8 o'clock to bed. But mind dear, no companion; I am a very good boy. I am getting very stout.

In a number of letters, Maurice mentions that no lights are allowed in the camp at night. He was presumably living within the British encampment.

Kuruman, February 2nd, 1901

.....I have a very large stock of about 70 head of cattle and 400 sheep . . .

Kuruman, February 5th, 1901

..... still no letters received. I wrote to Manny and told him that if he still wants to go to Germany, I will come and take his place over until he returns. I have plenty of milk and fruits, no tobacco or matches...

Kuruman, February 8th, 1901

.....I have (still) not received any letter from you. I have received a letter from Manny yesterday, in which he says he has seen you and the darling children ... I have certainly accepted, and will P.G. be with you at the beginning of April.

Kuruman, February 12th, 1901

This morning I received from you all your letters, about 175 in number.....I could hardly help myself laughing when I read one of your letters where you think I am a skeleton. ...I am as fat as can be.... I am very glad that your mother (Rose) is coming back to Kimberley (from Cape Town)I am very sorry that Ed and John are doing nothing yet. This place would not suit them and the pay also not . . .

Kuruman, February 17th, 1901I hope to see (you)

by the end of March or the beginning of April, so love get prepared – oh what a time - I received my first payment of my Town Guard, to the 1st of this month, at the rate of 7/6 a day. This is for you my love. When I return you shall have the lot for dresses.

This was the last letter that Maurice wrote.

*Kuruman, February 25th, 1901 My own darling
Louisa*

Just a short note to say that I have received your two letters today, and one on the day before yesterday. T.G. that you are all well. I am glad to say that I am well. I am writing this again in such a hurry as the dispatch rider is leaving in a minute, and I have to write yet to Manny. Love do forgive me for such a short letter. I will write again by ordinary post in a day or two. Love I am getting very anxious to meet you. I can assure you that every day is a year. I must thank you very much for the attention to my dear parents. I received a letter from them in which they send you their best love and kisses. With fondest love and a thousand kisses to yourself my love and the dear children. I remain your ever loving husband, Maurice. Love and kisses to darling mother, John, Clara and Sam.

Maurice died in Kuruman on March 4th 1901, where he was buried. It was tragic that he died within days of his discharge and potential return to Kimberley.

Louisa arranged to have his body disinterred, and he was reburied in the Jewish cemetery in Kimberley on April 2nd 1901, so that, as she wrote “*he will rest in peace among good Yiddisher Brethren*”

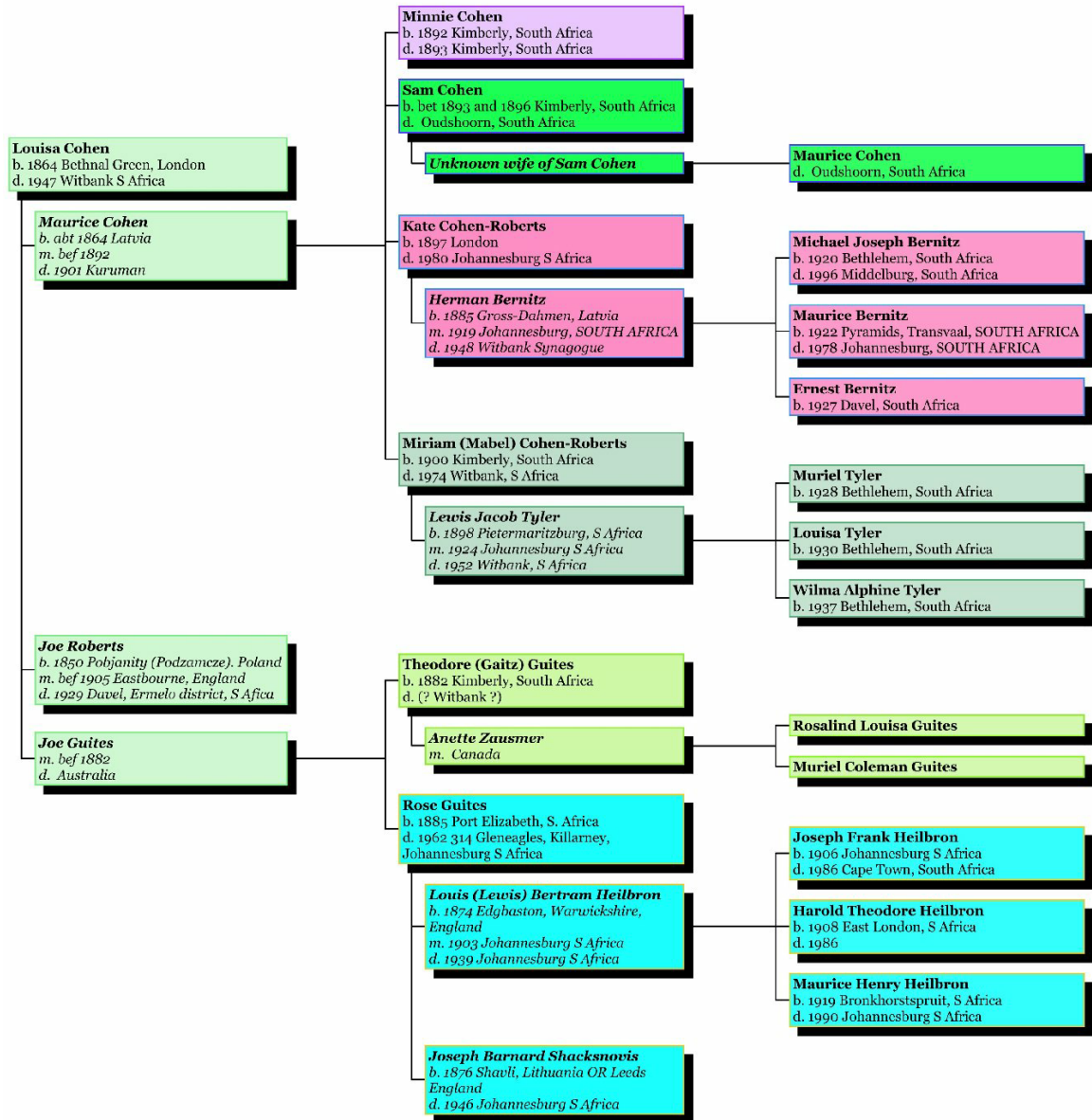
The cause of death is not known. There has been family speculation as to whether it was from natural causes, disease or war wounds. In a letter to Louisa from Colonel Leavage, the Commandant notes his appreciation for the services rendered by Maurice, both in his capacity as a representative of the Cold Storage Company and as a member of the Town Guard.

He mentions that Maurice was granted a full Military funeral “*which was well attended, testifying to his having many friends in this place*”.

It is known that the garrison at Kuruman was not strengthened until the 3rd April 1901, by a detachment of the 3rd (Militia) Battalion, The Welsh Regiment. It is feasible that there was military activity in the area around March 4th, and it is possible that Maurice may have been killed in such action.



Descendants of Louisa Cohen





Louisa Cohen, with her daughters and their husbands

Front Row: Mabel Tyler, born Cohen. Louisa Cohen-Roberts. Kate Bernitz, born Cohen.

Back Row: Rose Shaksnovis, born Guites, nee Heilbron. Lewis Tyler. Herman Bernitz. Joe Skasnovis.



The Dutch Cohen Families

The Jews in the Netherlands - Early History

My father's paternal great-grandparents (on my grandmother's side) were Samuel Cohen and Rose Heilbron, both Dutch Jews, born in Holland.

The earliest Jews arrived in the "Low Countries," present day Belgium and the Netherlands, during the Roman conquest early in the Common Era. Records show that for several centuries the Jews were persecuted and expelled on a regular basis. The most violent such persecution took place in 1349 and 1350, after the Jews were accused of spreading the Black Plague. Rioters massacred the majority of the Jews in the region and expelled those who survived.

The Sephardi Jews

The first Jews to settle permanently in the Netherlands were descendants of Spanish and Portuguese Jews. In 1492, under the pressure of the Inquisition, the Jews of Spain were forced to choose between exile and conversion to Catholicism. Many fled to Portugal where, in 1497, they were again subjected to forced conversion en masse. Nevertheless, in both Spain and Portugal, a number of Jewish converts remained secretly faithful to Judaism in the privacy of their homes even as they lived as Catholics in the outside world.

Following the Inquisition in Portugal in 1536, a close watch was kept on those Jews who were forcibly converted. This led many to seek refuge elsewhere, in lands including Brazil and France and the Republic of the United Netherlands. Many of these Marranos (meaning secret Jews) settled in Amsterdam, and as the city became a center of world trade and shipping they were able to deal in goods like Brazilian sugar and tobacco, and in Indian diamonds, spices, and cotton, via the commercial connections they still maintained with Lisbon.

In Amsterdam, many Spanish and Portuguese converts and their descendants chose to revert to Judaism. Because of their Iberian origins, this group was known as Sephardi Jews (Sephared being Hebrew for Iberia);

and, because their vernacular language was Portuguese, they were also referred to as Portuguese Jews. Amsterdam was a city that did not recognize religions other than Protestantism. The Jewish community was discovered, and its leaders arrested in 1603. As a result, some of the newly-acknowledged Jews moved to the towns of Alkmaar, Rotterdam, and Haarlem, which extended them protective charters. The majority, however, remained in Amsterdam.

The Ashkenazi Jews

Jews from Central and Eastern Europe began to arrive in the Netherlands Republic after 1630. These so-called Hoogduitse (High-German) and Ashkenazi Jews (Ashkenaz being the Hebrew word for the German lands) spoke Yiddish, a mixture of vernacular German with Hebrew and Slavic elements and written in Hebrew characters.

Most of the Ashkenazim who arrived in Amsterdam were refugees from the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) or from the Ukrainian uprising against Polish rule in 1648. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was one of the most destructive conflicts in European history. The War was fought primarily (though not exclusively) in what is now Germany and at various points involved most of the countries of Europe. Armies were expected to be largely self-funding from loot taken or tribute extorted from the settlements where they operated. This encouraged a form of lawlessness that often imposed severe hardship on inhabitants of the occupied territory.

Many of the Ashkenazi immigrants arrived penniless. They were permitted to settle in Amsterdam partly because of the openness of the city and partly because of the financial support and guarantees forthcoming from the Sephardim. Despite their differences both groups were viewed in the eyes of the outside world simply as Jews, a single religious community. Ashkenazi immigrants also settled elsewhere in the Netherlands, particularly around Rotterdam and The Hague.

Politically the Jews were left to their own devices. Their internal affairs were managed by the *kehilla*, the Jews' semi-autonomous governing body. Jews judged themselves in '*beth dins*' (religious courts), organized their own educational system, and appointed leaders from within their own ranks. Though Dutch cities and towns were legally free to restrict Jews to separate 'ghettos', the practice was never enforced.

The Rise of the 'Mediene'

During the eighteenth century, Jews began to settle outside of Amsterdam and a vibrant Jewish life arose in the cities and towns of provincial Netherlands or, as Jews called it, the Mediene (from the Hebrew word for 'state'). In cities such as The Hague, Rotterdam, and Middelburg, Sephardic communities arose that looked to the mother community in Amsterdam for leadership. Other Ashkenazi communities moved from Germany directly into Groningen, Gelderland, Overijssel, and other eastern provinces of the Netherlands. Ashkenazi communities were also formed in the semi-independent trading towns in west of the Netherlands and on the banks of the Zuiderzee.

In the new communities of the Mediene, religious services were held in private homes or farm houses until construction of a synagogue was permitted or could be afforded. In addition to a synagogue, the infrastructure of each new community also included a *mikva*, a *cheder*/school and a Jewish cemetery. Each Jewish community in the Mediene was autonomous. The communities were financed through an internal structure of tax levies, donations, and fines. Elected elders established rules and presented them to the local civil authorities for approval. They were responsible for the order, conduct and social and economic welfare and conduct of the 'Jewish Nation' under their control.

Traditional Jewish occupations in the Mediene included commerce, shop keeping, and trade in and slaughter of cattle. Depending on its size and wealth, each Jewish community employed its own rabbi and

cantor, teacher, and scribe, ritual slaughterer and inspector. In smaller communities several or all of these functions were performed by a single individual. In every community, charitable organizations served both social and religious functions, ensuring care for the poor, the sick, the dying, and the dead, as well as support for brides without dowries, pregnant women, widows, orphans, needy students and teachers, and so on.

In other ways, however, the Netherlands' Jewish community was atypical. While European Jews in the 17th century were isolated economically, socially and politically, the Jews of the Netherlands enjoyed economic and social integration that the rest of European Jewry would not know for hundreds of years. Professions like medicine became very popular, and Jewish physicians were free to practice amongst non-Jews. Jews, particularly the Sephardim, played a large role in the economic expansion that elevated the Netherlands to a world economic center. Portuguese Jews with their knowledge of languages and connections to the international trade network of Jews and Marranos, became important in the shipping and trading industries. Several Jews were important shareholders in the East Indies Company, which dominated international trade during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Jews became prominent in other businesses as well, succeeding in the tobacco, sugar refining, and printing and publishing industries. Most of all, they dominated the diamond industry.

As a result of their economic integration, Jews in the Netherlands eventually united with the greater society to a much larger extent than any other Jewish community in this period. While they continued to be governed by the *kehilla*, they did not live in a ghetto, but rather in a Jewish quarter, which they were free to leave and which was frequented by non-Jews. Rembrandt, for example, lived and worked in the Jewish quarter. The anti-Semitic violence that was still prevalent in Germany and Eastern Europe was absent from the Netherlands. Christian conversions to

Judaism, while not common, were not unheard of, and secular scholars were remarkably knowledgeable about Judaism. At a time when most of Europe believed in the Blood Libel (a blood libel is a false accusation that Jews murder children to use their blood as a part of their Religious ritual on Passover), non-jewish scholars in Amsterdam were studying the Mishnah and the Talmud, and even composing poetry in Hebrew. Reciprocally, some Jewish artists and authors made significant contributions to the flourishing culture of the Dutch Golden Age. It was however mainly the Sephardic Jews who were succeeding so well in the Netherlands. The more numerous Ashkenazim were closer to being a proletariat than a merchant class. They continued to speak primarily Yiddish, and made few lasting contributions to Dutch culture. While many important rabbinical works were published in the Netherlands because of the excellent printing industry, few, if any, were composed there. The Ashkenazi community never produced its own rabbis, and was forced to import them from abroad. Ashkenazim in the Netherlands faced less persecution than their brethren in the rest of Europe.

Jewish Emancipation

By the mid-eighteenth century, the Netherlands were in serious decline. Matters grew worse during the Anglo-Dutch war of 1780-1784. After a subsequent popular revolt that resulted in French occupation of the Netherlands, trade dwindled to near zero, and the economic crisis affected Jews and non-Jews alike. By the end of the eighteenth century about half of the Jewish population survived only on charity.

Dissatisfied with their economic situation and encouraged by the nearby French revolution, Jews began to lobby for emancipation, and the abolition of the autonomous kehilla. The Batavian Republic, France's puppet government in the Netherlands, officially instituted emancipation on September 2, 1796, but the rights granted to the Jews were rebuffed

by a large percentage of the community, who wanted to retain their political separateness. The kehilla split into two factions: those who wanted to be emancipated, and those who refused. The government sided with the pro-emancipation camp, as did Napoleon Bonaparte, who annexed the Netherlands and turned it into the Kingdom of Holland. King William I instituted compulsory secular education for Jewish children,

Surname Act & Registration

In 1811-12, following a decree by Napoleon, all Dutch citizens, including the Jews were obliged to take a surname. It is uncertain whether the Cohen family used 'Cohen' as a surname before that time, but it seems reasonable to assume that ancestors with the surname Cohen had all descended from Cohens, and simply adopted the name from their patronymic. Many Jews struggled to settle on a surname and spelling. We know from archival documents that Heiman Levij Heilbron, the father of Levij Heilbron, had initially spelled the surname Hijlbron; also that Heiman's wife Roosje Raphael was initially named Roosje Israel. They later legally changed the names and spellings.

The spelling of first names was also inconsistent, and changed between generations. We find the spellings Hijman, Heiman and Heijman for the same individual at different times in their lives. We also find the name Levi, Levy and Levij varying across different generations. This is in part due to these names having been originally recorded in languages and alphabets other than Dutch. Local and Jewish records were kept in Dutch, German and Yiddish using Hebrew script. Many families used both Hebrew and local first names. Transliteration between languages is the main cause of these inconsistencies.

Without direct evidence we cannot assume that a surname in use after 1811 had been used prior to that date.

The Jewish communities of our ancestors.

Towns from which our ancestors are known to have originated include Helvoetsluis, Zevenbergen, Schiedam and Breda, in the province of Brabant. All of these places still exist in modern Holland. My great-great-grandparents Samuel Cohen and Rose Heilbron were married in Breda, and my great grandmother Louisa Cohen was born there. It was from Breda that the family emigrated to London around 1857.

Breda



The Dutch Jewish municipality of Breda was founded in 1803. The community grew quickly and by 1840 there were 230 Jews. In 1845, the Breda community constructed a synagogue and a school in Schoolstraat. Voluntary organizations included a council to help the poor, a society for assistance to the infirm, and a women's society for the care of the synagogue.

In December, 1942, most of the Jews of Breda were deported to Nazi death camps. Few returned. A small group of Breda Jews did however manage to go into hiding and escape deportation. In all a total of eighty Jews successfully hid from the Germans, aided in part by resistance groups in the surroundings of Breda. During the War, the Breda synagogue was damaged and plundered by Dutch Nazis. By 1992, the Breda Jewish community had restored and re-consecrated the old synagogue in Schoolstraat, and religious services are now held there regularly. Breda is probably the only European community where the shul in which a great-great-grandparent of mine was married is once again in daily use. The community did not have a cemetery of their own, but buried their dead in the nearby town of Oosterhout, where a Jewish cemetery had been established in 1810. The cemetery later merged into the Jewish community of Breda. It still exists, and is in a reasonable state of repair. In 1899 a wall was built around the cemetery, and a memorial plaque was erected. The chairman of the committee was Adolf S. Moerel, an ancestor of Rose Cohen (née Heilbron). Pictured below is the memorial plaque.



Cohen's and Goudsmits from Breda who were victims of the Holocaust.

In 1950 a monument was erected in the Oosterhout Jewish cemetery, in memory of those members of the Dutch Jewish Municipality of Breda who were murdered in the Holocaust. The victims were mainly from Breda, though some came from Geertruidenberg, Oosterhout, Zevenbergen and Etten-Leur. Included in the list of names on the monument are the following, probably all mishpachah:

Name Dates of birth and Death Death Camp

Cohen - Levie, Anna	26 May 1886 - 9 April 1943	Sobibor
Cohen, Barend	25 Sept. 1883 - 9 April 1943	Sobibor
Cohen, Barend	10 Jan. 1942 - 21 May 1943	Sobibor
Cohen - Herschel, Elisabeth	21 April 1914 - 21 May 1943	Sobibor
Cohen, Elisabeth	5 Dec. 1920 - 9 April 1943	Sobibor
Cohen - Schönberger, Hildegard	19 Nov. 1898 - 11 June 1943	Sobibor
Cohen, Johanna (born Breda)	7 Jan. 1938 - 26 April 1943	Vught
Cohen, Leo	26 Oct. 1924 - 30 Nov. 1943	Dorohucz
Cohen, Marcus Samuel	27 Sept. 1888 - 14 Oct. 1942	Amersfoort
Cohen, Maurits	7 June 1918 - 9 April 1943	Sobibor
Cohen, Pinas	2 April 1895 - 31 Aug. 1944	
Cohen - Goudsmit, Regina	20 Nov. 1887 - 3 Sept. 1942	Auschwitz
Cohen, Unknown first name	30 Jan. 1914 - 21 May 1943	Sobibor
Van Gelder - Cohen, Judith	30 Oct. 1886 - 23 Nov. 1942	Auschwitz
Goldschmidt - Grunewald, Margaretha	24 Aug 1894 - 28 Jan 1944	Auschwitz
Goldschmidt, Siegfried	18 Nov. 1883 - 28 Jan. 1944	Auschwitz

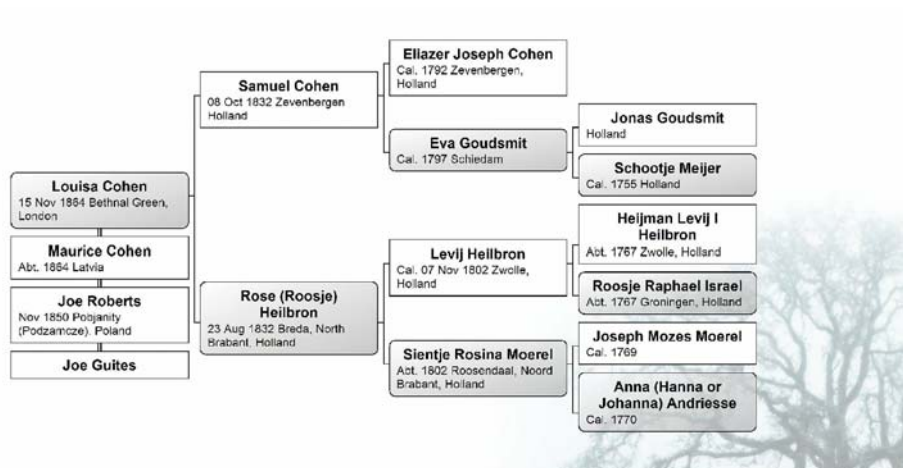
Middelburg

Middelburg was one of the first cities in the Netherlands where Jews could express their religion freely. The synagogue in Middelburg was founded in 1705 and was the first to be built outside of Amsterdam. Middleburg is also home to two Jewish cemeteries, one Ashkenazi and the other Sephardi. The Ashkenazi cemetery dates back to 1705 and is still in use today, whilst the Sephardi cemetery was in use between 1655 and 1721 and was recently restored. Both of Middelburg's Jewish cemeteries have been recognized as national monuments. Whether or not the Cohen ancestors came from Middelburg is not known. It is however noteworthy that their descendants (the family of Mickey Bernitz) are stalwarts of the small Jewish community in Middelburg, South Africa.

The Major Towns in Brabant, Holland



We are descended from Samuel Cohen and Rose Heilbron respectively. They were both Dutch Jews who were born and married in Holland, and who then emigrated, initially to England circa 1857; and then emigrated again thirty five years later to South Africa. Their ancestries can be traced in Holland to the mid 1700's.



Eliazer Joseph Cohen – born about 1792

My great-great-great-grandfather

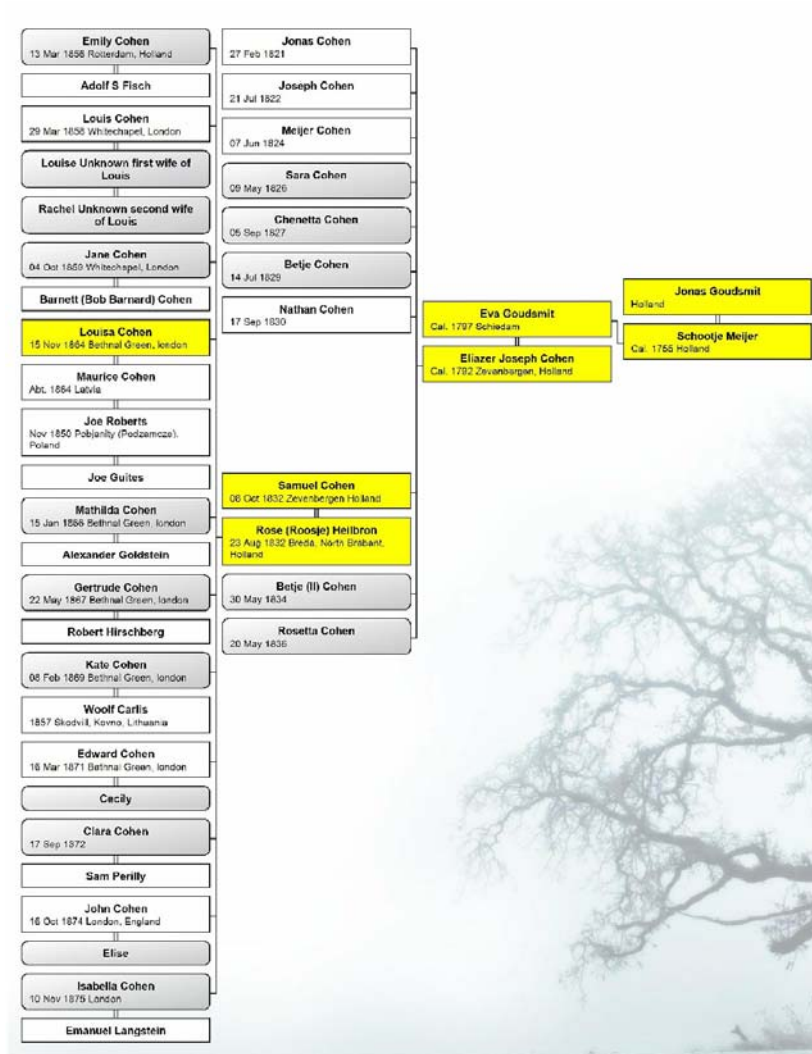
Eliazer was born in Zevenbergen (a town less than 20km. from Breda) around 1792. It was a center for sugar production at that time. He moved to Schiedam in the South of Holland (now part of the city of Rotterdam), where he married Eva Goudsmit (the daughter of Jonas Goudsmit and Schootje Meier). They returned to Zevenbergen, and had 10 children between 1821 and 1836.

Eva Goudsmit – born 1797

My great-great-great-grandmother

The sixth, a girl called Betje (Betty) born on the 14th July 1829 only lived for 2 days. 5 years later, and after the birth of 2 further sons, they again had a daughter, whom they again named Betje. Samuel Cohen, their eighth child (and my great-great-grandfather) was born in 1832.

Ancestors and descendants of Eliazer Joseph Cohen, born 1792.



Jonas Goudsmit – born 1750-1755**Schootje Meier – born 1755*****My great-great-great-great-grandparents***

Jonas' exact birth date has not yet been established. As we do know that his wife Schootje Meier was born in 1755, and as we can reasonably assume that their age discrepancy was no too great, he was probably born circa 1750-1755 as well.

Heijman Samuel Levi Heilbron – born 1767**Roosje Raphael- born 1767*****My great-great-great-great-grandparents***

Hijman (Heijman) Samuel Levi Heilbron was born around 1767, and died on the 2nd February 1818 in Zutphen, in the Overijssel district of Holland. The Jewish community in Zutphen was expanding rapidly at that time, with many Jews coming from Germany. It is possible that Heijman's father was German. Heijman was a watchmaker and also a chazzan.

In 1785 he married Roosje Raphael Israel (born around 1767 in Groningen, she died on 12th August 1842 in Vlissingen, Holland). On the 10th March 1812 Heijman, previously known as Levi, legally changed his surname to Heilbron (for himself, his wife and for their children). The children were:

1 Samuel Hijman Heilbron, born December 1787 in Zwolle, Holland. He was, like his father a chazzan, initially in Dordrecht and later in Middelburg. He married Saartje Isaac Park in 1815 in Zwolle. She was born in 1797 in Amsterdam, the daughter of Isaac Simon Park and Ester Jacobs.

2 Chara Gerrigje Heilbron, born in 1791 in Zwolle.

3 Israel Rafael Heilbron, born in 1793, and died in 1848 in Den Haag, Holland where he had been a businessman. He was married to Sara Snitseler (Schnitzler) the daughter of Abraham Moses Schnitzler and Sophia Samuel Levi, in Rotterdam in 1818. Born in 1783 in Amsterdam, Sara died after 1851.

4 Ester Hesje Heilbron, born 11th March 1797 in Zwolle. She married Benedictus Snitsler on the 4th June 1828 in Rotterdam. He was born in 1803 in Rotterdam, the son of Abraham Moses Schnitzler and Sophia Samuel Levi. *It is interesting to note that a Heilbron brother and sister were married to a Snitseler sister and brother.*

5 Hendrina Heilbron, born May 1800 in Zwolle.

6 Levy Heilbron (my great-great-great-grandfather), was born on the 7th November 1802 in Zwolle. He died on the 8th September 1872 in Birmingham, England. (see next page for details).

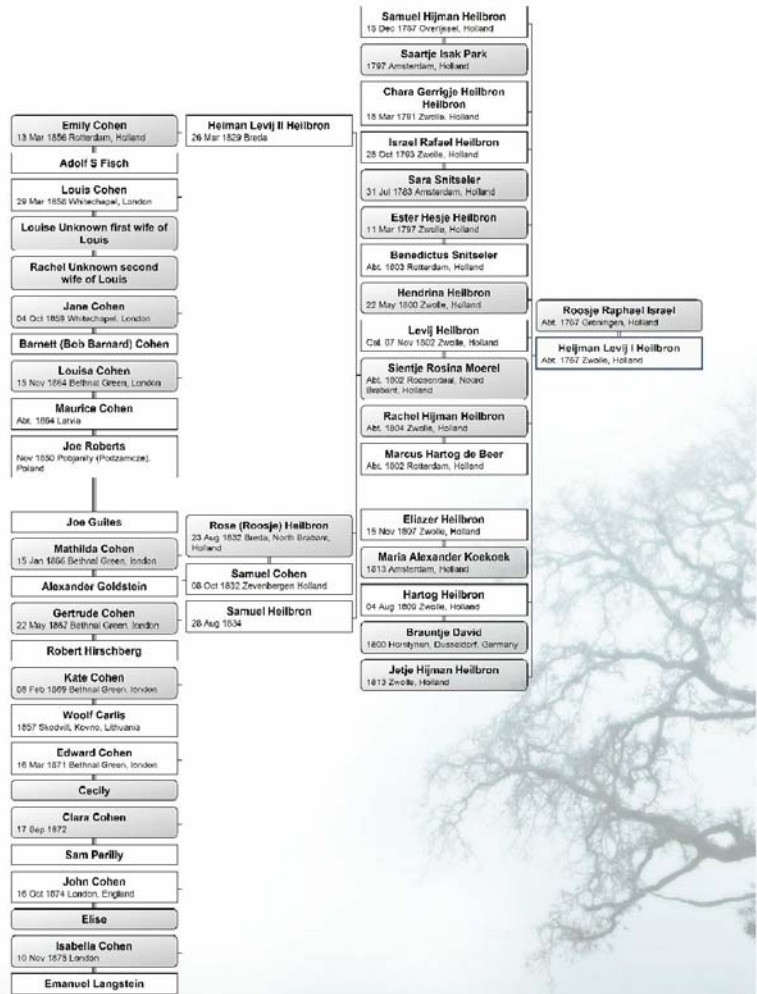
7 Rachel Hijman Heilbron was born about 1804 in Zwolle. She died on the 5th February 1883 in Vlissingen where she had been a businesswoman. On the 19th March 1834 she married Marcus Hartog de Beer, a businessman, in Vlissingen. He was born about 1802 in Rotterdam and he died on September 21st 1892 in Vlissingen. He was the son of Hartog Nathan de Beer and Lea Marcus.

8 Eliazer Heilbron was born on the 15th of November 1807 in Zwolle. He was a businessman, peddler, and beer brewer. He was married on the 3rd of April 1839 in Amsterdam to Maria Alexander Koekoek who was born about 1813 in Amsterdam. She was the daughter of Alexander David Koekoek and Saartje Jacob Kreins.

9 Hartog Heilbron (a businessman), was born on the 4th August 1809 in Zwolle. He died on the 18th July 1847 in Vlissingen. Married (second marriage) on 22nd January 1840 in Vlissingen to Brauntje David, who was born in 1800 in Horstye (Dusseldorf), Germany, the daughter of Herz David and Reisje David.

10 Jetje Hijman Heilbron, born about 1813 in Zwolle, she died on the 4th February 1869 in Amsterdam.

The Descendants of Rose (Roosje) Raphael-Heilbron



**Levij Heilbron, born 1802, and
Sientje Moerel – born ca. 1804**

My great-great-grandparents

Levij, was the son of Hijman Samuel Levi Heilbron and Roosje Raphael (later changed to Israel). He was born on the 7th November 1802 in Zwolle, Holland, and died on the 8th September 1872 in Birmingham, England, where he was a businessman. He married Sientje Moerel on the 26th March 1828 in Breda. She was born about 1802 in Roosendaal, North Brabant, the daughter of Joseph Moses Moerel and Anna Andriesse. Much of what we know regarding Levij and Sientje is included in the comprehensive text of their Dutch marriage certificate; it includes an affidavit sworn by Levi that on 18th March 1808 his surname, which had been registered at birth by his father as Hijlbron, was changed to Heilbron, and his mother's name was registered as Roosje Israel (instead of the originally registered name of Roosje Raphael). This accords with the period before 1811 when permanent surnames were made compulsory under Napoleonic rule.

A copy of the marriage certificate is included in the appendices; the text states that at midday of the 20th March 1828 in the town of Breda, Levij Heilbron, a businessman born in Zwolle, now living in Helvoetsluis, being the adult son of Heijman Levij Heilbron and of Roosje Raphael, both living in Zwolle, agreed to marry Sientje Moerel, unemployed, 22 years old, born in Roosendaal and now living in Breda; the adult daughter of Joseph Mozes Moerel and of Anna Andriesse, both of Breda. She had a brother, Mozes Moerel, a salesman, 7 years her senior.

Although named in the marriage certificate as the mother of the bride, it was noted that Roosje Raphael could not sign the certificate as she had declared that she was unable to write!

They had three children;

1 Heiman Levi Heilbron, born 26 March 1829

2 Rose (Roosje) Heilbron, born 23 August 1832 - *My great-great-grandmother*

3 Samuel Heilbron, born 28 August 1834

Samuel Cohen – born 8 October 1832

Rose (Roosje) Heilbron – born 23 August 1832

My great-great-grandparents



Samuel Cohen was born in 1832 in Zevenbergen, Holland. At the time of his marriage he was living in Schiedam. As before, we can glean much from the text of the Dutch marriage certificate. It reads as follows: On the 13th March 1855 Samuel Cohen, aged 22, a banker's agent born in Zevenbergen and living in Schiedam, the son of Eliazer Cohen and Eva Goudsmit – parents and grandparents all deceased – accompanied by his guardians Jonas Cohen, a gold and silver dealer living in Schiedam and Mozes Goudsmit, a businessman living in Brielle, married Roosje Heilbron, also 22, and born in Breda. Her parents Levij and Sientje were both present and agreed to the marriage of their daughter. The witnesses included her Uncle Mozes Moerel, then aged 57, and also Aron Lazarus Asbacher, a manufacture aged 34, Philip van Ham, a businessman aged 38, and Solomon van Zivananberg, a gold and silversmith aged 29. They all lived in Breda. In 1856 Rose, in Rotterdam, gave birth to their first child, a daughter named Emily. Samuel and Rose then emigrated to England.

Jewish Emigration to Spitalfields from Holland - mid 19th Century.

Even before the mass emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe after 1880 there was an established Jewish enclave in Spitalfields, Whitechapel known as the Tenterground. This was a community of poor Jewish families from Holland who had arrived after 1850. This group of about 1000 families formed a distinct sub-culture differing in many respects from that of the Jews from the Pale of Settlement. They were known as Chuts (or Choots, with the Ch pronounced as in loch) - the term being applied to Jews from The Netherlands during the latter part of the 19th century. They typically came from Amsterdam and practiced the trades they had learned there, most notably cigar, cap and slipper making. They settled mainly in the small system of streets in the Tenterground, formerly an enclosed area where Flemish weavers stretched and dried cloth on machines called *tenters* (hence the expression "on tenterhooks"). By the 19th century, the site had been built upon with housing, but remained an enclave where the Dutch immigrants lived as a close-knit community. The area was demolished and rebuilt during the twentieth century.



Above: The Tenter Street arch.

Following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, many thousands of Jewish refugees, fleeing political unrest in Eastern Europe, arrived in the East End of London, including the Tenterground, by which time the Chuts had begun to disperse. The successful introduction of machinery for the mass-production of cigarettes ultimately led to the collapse of the cigar-making economy on which the Chuts community depended. Many Chuts returned to improved conditions in Amsterdam, some (including Samuel Cohen and his family) emigrated further afield to places such as South Africa, Australia and the USA, some assimilated into other Jewish families, and some eventually lost their Jewish identity altogether. There was distinct rivalry between the Chuts and the later Jewish immigrants, not least because the Chuts had arrived as city-dwellers, with useful industrial skills, and by 1881 had already learned to speak English, whereas the later immigrants were generally impoverished rural workers who had to learn new trades in the notorious sweatshops and, arriving penniless and in great numbers, drew attention to the problem of immigration which resulted in the Aliens Act of 1905. Furthermore, the Chuts were treated with suspicion by other Jews because the former had developed specific customs and practices, many of their families having lived in Amsterdam since the first synagogues were established there in the early years of the 17th century. Uniquely in Holland, Ashkenazim (so-called "German Jews") and Sephardim (so-called "Spanish Jews") had lived in close proximity for centuries, resulting in a cultural blend not found elsewhere. The Dutch Jews were well accustomed to the sea, and ate seafood considered *traife* (not kosher) by other Jewish communities. They loved jellied eels. They drank beer. They liked to gamble, indeed many were bookmakers. Dutch Jewish cookery included *lockschen*, which are vermicelli, also *farfel* and *kreplach*, which are meat pasties. But fried fish reigned supreme - it was eaten cold. During the 1800's there was a poem that the Dutch Jews used to sing. "The Christians are ninnies, they can't fry Dutch plaice, believe me, they can't tell a carp from a dace".



The East End – 1882

Cigar Makers of London

Cigar making was very much an Ashkenazi Jewish occupation.



Above: Cigar Makers in a London Warehouse

The Dutch Jews from Holland monopolised the Cigar Making Trades and the Tobacco industry in Whitechapel and St George's. In 1860 the two districts contained 2294 Dutch Jews as against only 894 East European Jews. By 1875 between 3000 and 4000 Jewish workers were engaged in the tailoring and tobacco trades. Most Jewish manufacturers were employing fifty or more workers in the tobacco business. Wages were good and work was regular. Cigar-makers on piecework earned up to £2 a week, and tobacco-cutters £2 to £3. As late as 1901 there were still 343 men and 48 women of Dutch descent employed in the Cigar-making trade. Tobacco was imported, packed into large hog's heads and stored in bonded warehouses in Pennington Street (now Tobacco Dock). It was kept there until the duty was paid and then sold to the manufacturer to be turned into cigars, pipe tobacco, cigarettes or snuff. On average they worked 8am – 7pm with half an hour for lunch plus a half day on Saturday. Overtime meant working up to 11pm or even all night.

Trade

According to the 1881 census records for the area of Spitalfields 83% of the population was Jewish. More than 50% of the Jews were in the tobacco trade and most were from Holland. In the 1890's an average man's wages was 25 shillings a week. He gave 20 shillings to his wife out of which she would have to pay rent of 6 shillings (30p) for two rooms and a box room, 4 shillings on clothes, heating and medicine for a family of six, and 10 shillings on food. A respectable family such as this rarely went hungry. Three shillings (15p) would buy one quart of milk, 2 lbs. of meat, 1 dozen eggs and 1lb of cheese. There was little left over. A highly skilled worker such as a mason, typesetter or watchmaker would be able to earn £3.50 a week, of which the husband might need 5 shillings for beer and tobacco. During the period 1875-1900 the Whitechapel Road would be used to hire labour for the clothing workshops, an event known as the "Hazer Mark" (pig market). Jews were denied every civil right except that of paying taxes.

Synagogues and Religion

In the 1860's the Jews had eight main Synagogues in London, as well as many smaller ones. The Great Synagogue in Dukes Place was the largest. Of particular interest is Sandy's Row Synagogue (pictured below), off Artillery Lane. It was founded in 1854 by Dutch immigrants working mainly in the tobacco industry.



Whitechapel and Spitalfields

Whitechapel was named after its white washed parish church. The Whitechapel Bell Foundry in Whitechapel Road made notable bells such as "Big Ben" cast in 1858 and America's original "Liberty Bell". Crime and prostitution were endemic in Whitechapel and death through violence was common. Spitalfields took its name from the priory and hospital ('spital') of St Mary in the Fields. One of the "Ripper" murders took place near the Spitalfields Market. Annie Chapman known as 'Dark Annie' being found murdered in 1888 in the passage by 29 Hanbury Street. These events must have been a disturbing experience for the Cohen's.

Life in London's East End in the late 1800's.

The poorest people lived in slum houses, many of them made of wood, in a furnished room with a bed, a table and a chair, or in a common lodging house, most often sharing a bed. In 1888 there were 233 common lodging houses with over 8500 people in Whitechapel alone. The slums were degrading and sanitation was inadequate. The filth and stench was at times unbearable. Not all the streets were cobbled; more than half the roads were still dirt tracks. A survey carried out in 1851 showed that there were 253 people to the acre living in Whitechapel, as opposed to one person to the acre in Hampstead.

Theatre's

Whitechapel had many theatre's and music Halls, and the cheap admission kept some of the inhabitants out of harm's way for a few hours. When the sailors landed in the docks and drew their wages, they too would frequent the local theatre's and Music-Halls.

Pawnbroker's

The pawnbroker served the same function in that era that a bank overdraft or credit card serves today. A good pair of boots would bring 2/6d (12 1/2p), a shirt in reasonable condition would make 2d (1p). Pawnshops were to be found on most streets, and the populace used them almost every week.

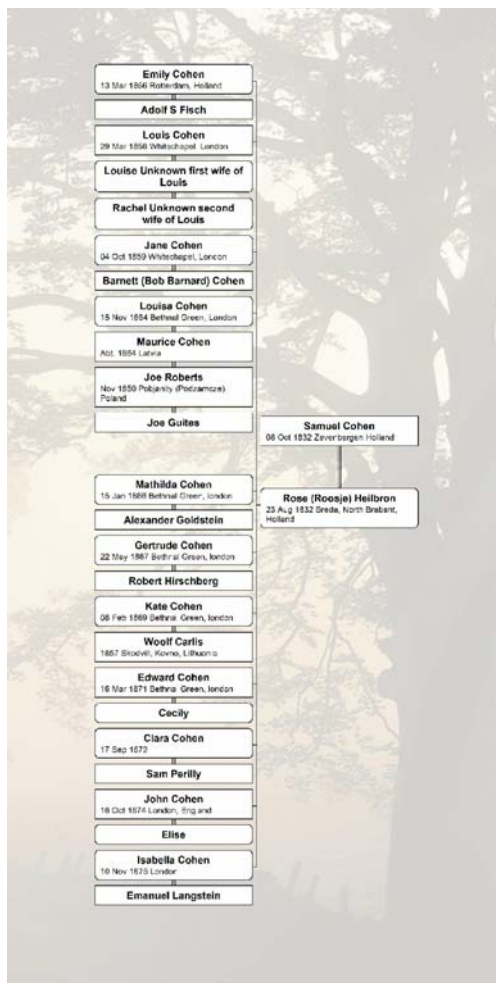
Samuel and Rose's arrival in London

Samuel Cohen and Roosje (née Heilbron), and their first born daughter Emily, left Breda to seek better opportunities around 1857, at the height of an economic depression in Holland. They travelled from Amsterdam to London, ending their journey by sailing up the River Thames. The Ports and Docks of London were part of the main trade routes to the rest of the world. They would have arrived in London at the Irongate Stairs, a flight of stone steps that rise out of the Thames directly beneath where Tower Bridge is today. The ships would lie at anchor and the immigrants would be taken off by small rowing boats to a wooden jetty. Many migrants were given rented accommodation in Tenter Street, East London. These were poor quality apartments allocated by the parish mainly for Dutch Jewish immigrants from Holland. Where Samuel and family were accommodated initially is uncertain, but by the time of the 1861 census they were living at No. 32 Chiswell Street, Finsbury, in the district of St. Luke. The census shows that they had three more children, and the household now numbered six: Samuel Cohen, aged 28, his wife (now known as Rosetta), and their children - Emilia aged 5, Louis aged 3, Jane aged 1 and 2 month old Edward, as well as Charles Cohen -16, a lodger, born in France. Samuel's occupation is listed that of a shoe warehouseman. Ten years later he was listed as a boot and shoe maker, and twenty years later he was registered as a cigar maker. By the time of the 1871 (February) census the family fortunes appear to have improved further, and they now lived at 18 Elwin Street, Bethnal Green, Hackney - a more desirable address. They had lost a son - Edward (1), and had had a further six children. The household numbered 14 people, including 4 servants. By the time of the 1881 census circumstances had further improved. The family was now living at 79 Hackney Road, Shoreditch - an even better address - near to the present day Columbia Street Market but not far from their previous address in Elwin Street. Samuel was described as a Cigar Manufacturer (maker). The household had two servants: Susannah Grubb aged 64, and Jacob Os, aged 44.



An illustration of a boot maker selling his wares in East London. The 1871 census describes Samuel Cohen as a boot and shoemaker. Shoes and boots were handmade in many different styles.

The Descendants of Samuel Cohen and Rose Heilbron



Migration to South Africa

Most, if not all of Samuel Cohen's children emigrated to South Africa before 1891, and there is evidence that they were living in Kimberley, South Africa by 1892. We can only guess their reasons for leaving England, and for choosing South Africa and Kimberly - they may have been seeking better economic opportunities. These were certainly known to exist in South Africa, and particularly in Kimberley after the discovery of diamonds in 1867. Because of their extensive trade network, Jews immediately became involved in the diamond and precious stones industry, many moving north from Cape Town to Johannesburg. Cecil Rhodes, Alfred Beit, Barney Barnato, and later Ernest Oppenheimer, joined forces in founding the De Beers Consolidated Mines in 1888. Kimberley soon became the largest city in the area, with massive African immigration providing cheap labour for the mines. The city housed South Africa's first Royal Stock Exchange, and became the first town in the Southern Hemisphere to install Electric Street lighting.

Some surviving letters, written by Samuel to Maurice and Louisa in 1892 provide interesting details of Samuel's life and circumstances, and indicate that he and his family were struggling financially. During August, September, and October 1892, Samuel wrote that he now owned a factory, purchased from (his son) Louis, but that it was struggling because of the poor prevailing economic situation. Rose had rooms to let, providing the bulk of the family income. A number of Maurice's brothers and sisters children were living with Samuel and Rose at the time.

In August 1981 Samuel had written that he was hopeful that the exhibition, together with the completion of the railway line to Johannesburg would lead to an improvement in his business. However, on the 19th and 20th October 1892 he wrote of his illness, and of his desperate financial situation. He died on the 29th October, 1892, and was buried the following day in Kimberley.

Rose Cohen (née Heilbron) and her family



Photograph circa 1905. Possibly taken taken at a marriage, possibly that of Joe Roberts and Louisa Cohen.
Source: Mimmie Rose.

Back row, from left: Alec Goldberg, Woolf Carlis, Joe Roberts, Robert Hirschberg, Louis Cohen, Joe Heilbron.

Centre row, from left: Fanny Benjamin, Tilly Cohen, Kate Carlis, Rose Cohen (née Heilbron, my great-great-grandmother), Louisa Cohen (my great-grandmother), Gertrude Cohen, and Rachel Cohen.

Front row, from left: Dora Jacobson, Evelyn Orkin, Kate Cohen-Roberts, Mabel Cohen-Roberts, Sophie Heilbron, Rose Goldberg.



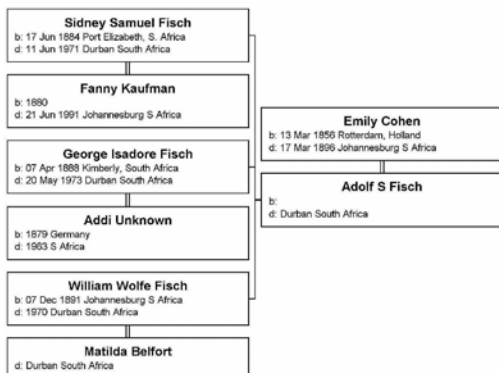
1. Robert Hirschberg, husband of Gertie Cohen
2. Unidentified gentleman.
3. Unknown Rosenberg, brother in law of Eugenie Cohen (not family)
4. John Cohen
5. Edward Cohen
6. Emanuel Langstein
7. Unidentified
8. Ruby Rosenberg, sister-in-law of Elise Eugenie Leon-Cohen (not family)
9. Aaron Orkin, husband of Evelyn Cohen
10. Evelyn Cohen-Orkin
11. David Wolf Orkin
12. Not identified
13. Katie Cohen-Roberts
14. Gertrude Cohen-Hirschberg
15. Louisa Cohen-Cohen
16. Elise Eugenie Leon (wife of John Cohen)
17. Gordon Benjamin Cohen
18. Rose Cohen
19. Unidentified child – Edna?
20. Kate Carlis
21. Cecily (Cissie Steinberg-Cohen, wife of Edward Cohen)
22. Isabella Cohen-Langstein.
23. Eric Samuel Cohen
24. Cyril Cohen
25. Unidentified child
26. Muriel Cohen-Simmons

Inset. Unidentified Lady



The children of Samuel and Rose Cohen

Emily Cohen – born 1856 married Adolf Fisch



Extracts from various sworn statements:

"I was a burgher since 1882 in Potchefstroom. My name was put on the burgher roll (of the Transvaal Republic) soon after the war started. The landrost Neethling sent for me and told me that I must become a burgher at once and register my name. This was at the commencement of the war. I did register through the oath of allegiance. I came to this country in 1879. I never exercised burgher rights nor voted for (the)president."

Question: Where resided since outbreak of war?

Answer: Boer Commissariat until June 1900. Surrendered at Pretoria. In British employ until peace.

Question: Military service, if any?

Answer: Contractor for supplying troops.

Woolf submitted a number of claims to the British authorities for losses incurred during the war. Everything claimed for had been destroyed by British troops on his farms. Woolf had numerous farms, and he had been supplying farm produce to the Boer fighters, as well as and to their woman and children.

"Sworn by Joseph Carlis: I was the manager on my brother Woolf Carlis' farm Kaffirskraal. I was present on the 11th day of November 1900, when General Douglas' column came along and camped there for two days, during which time great damage was done to the crops, which were reaped and stacked; and to the fences around the lands, the wire of which was cut and the poles removed. The potato crop was dug up and used by the troops. I had planted 45 bags. The kaffirs from all around were told to take all they could to prevent the Boers taking any. I estimate they took fully 20 loads of forage and wheat. Another 10 loads were broken and lay scattered over the ground. The troops loaded 42 wagons with forage and wheat for which receipts were given and for which the sum of £694.10.0 has been received. I estimate the value of the crops taken and destroyed at £5186 as per schedule. The total of the claim is therefore £4492.5.0. No claim has been put in for the potato, mealie, barley or bean crops."

Kate Cohen – born 1869 married Woolf Carlis – born 1857

Kate Cohen (sister to my great-grandmother Louisa) married Woolf Carlis around 1905. There were no children. Woolf was born in 1857, in Skodvil, Lithuania, a village in the Kovno district. He arrived in Kimberly early in 1879 as a 22 year old refugee from the Russian pogroms. In 1882 he moved to Potchefstroom. His brother Joseph went first to Sweden, before joining Woolf in South Africa in 1888.

There is substantial documentation relating to Woolf in various South African archives, including many legal documents, some of which contain sworn statements made by Woolf and by Joseph relating to Woolf's business interests. These documents are interesting, in that they describe his exploits during and after the Boer war, and provide interesting background information about the life, times and the later circumstances of his wife Kate Cohen, and her brothers John and Edward.

On 13 May 1901, the column of Colonel Williams slaughtered pigs on the Carlis property of Elandsdraal. In July 1901 the column of Colonel Wessons destroyed buildings on the farm Witfontein in the district of Kroonstad. On 13 June 1901 the Boers raided our farm Zandpan and removed all of our cattle (142 head), 900 sheep and goats, 4 horses, 9 donkeys. All of our livestock were recaptured from the Boers by the British. On 17th August 1901 British columns took or destroyed property belonging to Wolf Carlis from the farm Vaalboschfontein”.

In allowing a claim on 24 September 1903 the representative of the Compensation Commission wrote that the facts of the claim were so fully dealt with in the supporting documents, and the claimant (Wolf Carlis) was so well known that he did not consider further comment necessary. During the Boer war Woolf was initially a benefactor of the Boers, and assisted their cause financially. He used his contacts with the British to assist the Boer prisoners being released from prison, as well as their families who had been held in British concentration camps. A philanthropist, Woolf was touched by the tragedies of the Boer war, and started one of the first settlements for poor whites on the Mooi river near Potchefstroom, ultimately absorbing 300 Boer families, the so-called Carlis repatriation scheme. Woolf transferred land to the African Agricultural Finance Corporation and stated that “I have now got the present government to advance money to me and to the settlers. The farm Kaffirskraal now has 80 settlers on it”. Woolf was a signatory and guarantor to an agreement between the Government and the Potchefstroom and Klerksdorp Farmers' Association for a Burgher Land Settlement in the Potchefstroom district in June 1903. The agreement provided “for homes and occupation for such indigent white families now in the burgher camps and elsewhere. . . .” Woolf was later to provide further guarantees to the government such that the Burghers were able to first rent, and later buy the livestock necessary for working the land. The Burghers got loans and land sufficient to build a

house and to farm their own produce, and further shared in farming a larger tract of common land – an early South African kibbutz? This is referred to in a letter written by Miss Emily Hobhouse, a British welfare campaigner, primarily remembered for her work related to British Concentration camps in South Africa). She wrote in 1904 to General Smuts: “By the way, how goes it with the Woolf Carlis Settlement?” Woolf later settled in Klerksdorp, where he was an active member of the Hebrew congregation. He was actively involved in the diamond industry. A visionary, he travelled north to Tanganyika where he found further rich alluvial deposits of diamonds and other gemstones. He became a very wealthy man, and in years to come his female relatives were to all receive beautiful diamonds. Ernie Bernitz recalls that “*Wolf used to carry Diamonds around, as if they were marbles*”. He employed his own brother Joseph as well as a number of Kate’s brothers in his businesses. He died on April 2nd. 1937.

Ernie Bernitz writes: “*He was a mining speculator, and a friend of the mining magnates, like Barney Barnato, and Ernest Oppenheimer. He was a multi-millionaire, and after his death his brothers-in-law John and Eddie Cohen (who were the executors of his estate) set up a trust for Kate’s brothers and sisters and their children. There were over 50 beneficiaries. The assets of the trust included shares in the companies of Woolf’s then friends, including Barney Barnato, Ernest Oppenheimer and Cecil John Rhodes. The shares included Anglo, De Beers, and all the new Gold and Diamond Mines being opened. Kate was living with her widowed sister Clara Perilly after Woolf died. Clara was running a working class hotel in the western part of Pretoria (in the late 1940’s). “When Kate died she was suffering from dementia, which was said at the time to have been caused by the hair dye she used (she had pitch black hair until the day she died). She was incapable of knowing what was going on and was completely controlled by her brothers Eddy and Johnny. “*

Jane Cohen- born 1859

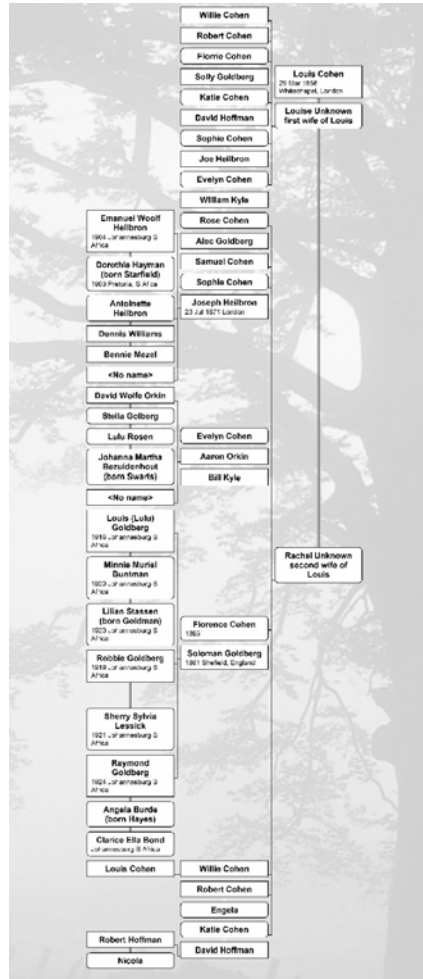
No information available.



John Cohen – 1874 – 1967

Louis Berzen recalls: “Johnny (as he was called) was well known on the Johannesburg stock exchange. He was married to Elise Eugenie Leon. They had four children - Eric Samuel, Cyril, Gordon Benjamin and Muriel. Muriel married (unknown first name) Simmons, who in turn became head of the stock exchange. Muriel had a son Robert, who was born deaf. She rejected him, and his grandfather John enrolled him at St Vincent’s school for the deaf. He matriculated and graduated, and married a girl, deaf like himself. They had 3 deaf children”.

Descendants of Louis Cohen – born 1858



Louisa Cohen – born 15 November 1864.**My paternal great-grandmother**

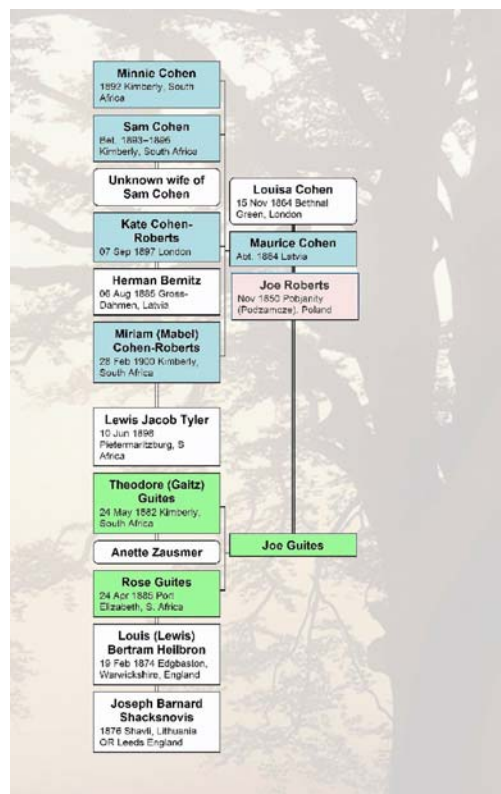
Louisa Cohen was born in London in 1864, the fourth of 11 children. The entire family emigrated to South Africa, in the late 1880's.

Louisa was married three times:

Joe Guites – 1881 to 1885

Maurice Cohen - 1891-1901

Joe Roberts - 1905-1929



Louisa's first marriage was to Joe Guites. They had two children, Theo (Theodore) born in 1882 and Rose, born in 1885, and were then divorced. From available correspondence it appears that Louisa and Joe's divorce was an acrimonious one. Joe went to Australia. In May 1892 using the pseudonym of Joe Edwards, he wrote a letter from Adelaide, Australia to Louisa's new husband, Morice (sic) Cohen. He offered to give Louisa a Get, in exchange for custody of Rose and Theo. In the letter he states that he had a new wife, and two sons. In September 1894 Maurice Cohen replied on Louisa's behalf. She refused to provide custody, noting that the courts had already granted her a divorce, (it would seem this was granted in Joe's absence) as well as maintenance payments, which were not being honored by Joe. Maurice accuses further that Joe has "run away with a married women with whom he has had two illegitimate sons." Nothing further is known of Joe or his new family.

There are some discrepancies in the spelling of Guites/Geitz. I have received this comment from Barbara Shaw and Joyaa Antares, two of his descendants in Australia: ". . . pronunciation of Guites as Guytz or Gates (however this is spelled) seems familiar to me...GUITES is the spelling I have seen used in the USA census records, military and passenger records."

Louisa Guites (née Cohen) as she now was, married her second husband Maurice (aka Morris) Cohen (See Page 27) around 1891. Maurice was born in Polangen, Latvia. His family left Latvia and settled in London. Later Maurice and many of his siblings emigrated to South Africa.

Louisa and Maurice had four children - Minnie, Sam, Kate (my grandmother) and Miriam (my Aunt Mabel). Kate thus had two sisters, a brother, a half-brother and a half-sister. I can clearly remember granny Kate telling me how she was born in London, after her parents had gone there to participate in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations, and that she was born during that visit.

Louisa and Maurice had travelled to London to visit his parents, who were living on London, where they later both died (Solomon aged 65 and Rachel aged 99). Maurice and Louisa were to view the Jubilee procession on 22nd June 1897, shortly before the birth of Kate in London. Maurice died in 1901 during the Boer War (on the British side) and he is buried in Kimberly. Louisa, aged 37 was a divorcee and a widow.

She then married for a third time, her last husband being Joe Roberts, a bachelor. He was a wealthy and kindly man. They had no children of their own, but he did adopt Kate and Mabel, and was a reputedly a wonderful father to them. Kate and Mabel took the surname Roberts. Joe had been born in Lithuania in 1876. He emigrated to Leeds, became a British citizen and studied law, before emigrating again to South Africa, where he became a successful businessman. Ernie says of him *“Joe Roberts had a store in Bronkhorstspuit. He had a big moustache and a bigger nose”*. In its description for Bronkhorstspuit the publication ‘Jewish Life in the South African Country Communities, Volume 1’ recounts that in 1920 Joseph Roberts was one of only two Jewish families living there. His property is described as a large compound with many kraals, workshops, sheds and stores, alongside the railroad track. Louise Berzen recalls that he owned the mill in Bronkhorstspuit.

Ernie writes: *“Granny Louisa, after becoming a widow, lived with Mabel and Lew Tyler (Mabel’s husband) in Bethlehem. Mickey and I lived with them there as well. Your Dad (Maurice Bernitz) was in boarding school in Bethal. Later Mickey went to WITS University, your Dad to Pretoria Technical College. I went to school in Witbank. In December 1936 the Tyler’s re-located to Witbank, together with Granny Louise. Mabel and Lew helped in the Carlton Hotel for a while, and then they left to take over the Central Hotel in Newcastle. Granny Louisa remained with her daughter Kate in the family flat in the Carlton Hotel in Witbank”*. She died on the 31st July, 1947, and is buried in Witbank.

The children of Louisa Cohen and Joe Guites.

Rose and Theo Heilbron were brought up with their half-siblings, Sam, Kate and Mabel (Miriam) Cohen-Roberts. and they remained close throughout their lives. Rose married Louis Heilbron in 1903, and they had three sons, Joseph Frank (Joe), Harold Theodore and Maurice Henry. Rose was married for a second time in Johannesburg, to Joe Shaksnovis, then the legal advisor to OK Bazaars. Joe’s son Archie Shaksnovis (from a previous marriage) was a QC at the Johannesburg bar. Louise Berzen comments: *“Joe Heilbron had an affair whilst in Japan, from which a daughter was born. After the war Rose’s son Harold went to Japan to meet his half-sister.”*

Theo joined the Canadian Overseas Expeditionary force in 1916. He listed his address as Vancouver. Theo must have remained close to Kate, since he named his next of kin as Mrs. K Roberts, Johannesburg, and described her as his mother. He married Annette Amuser, and they had two daughters; his descendent families now live in Australia.



Louisa Cohen is buried in the Witbank Jewish Cemetery, as are her daughters Kate and Mabel.



Above: Louisa, her daughters and their husbands

Back: Rose Shaksnovis (née Guites, née Heilbron), Lew Tyler, Herman Bernitz, Joe Shaksnovis

Front: Mabel Tyler (née Cohen-Roberts), Louisa Cohen-Roberts, Kate Bernitz (née Cohen-Roberts).



Left: Four generations

From left to right:
Frank Joseph Heilbron with his mother Rose Heilbron (née Guites), her mother Louisa Guites (née Cohen), and Louisa's mother Rose Cohen (née Heilbron).
Picture circa 1906.

Kate (Katie) Cohen-Roberts – b. 7 Sept. 1897
My Paternal Grandmother
Gittel bas Yehuda Leib

(For a full account of her life and marriage to Herman Bernitz see The Bernitz Family History.)

Around 1898, and shortly before the commencement of the Second Boer war in October 1899, Maurice and Louisa had returned with Kate from London to Kimberley in South Africa, where Kate (known as Katie) received her primary education.

Later, she was sent as a boarder to the Pretoria High School for Girls. In December 1912, aged 15, she was awarded the second Progress prize, and the head-mistress wrote to her mother, suggesting that “Katie” should not be removed from school, but rather be allowed to finish another year and take the Cape Junior Certificate. She suggested that it was “detrimental for an intelligent girl of Katie’s age to have no definite object of work, and that she knew that Katie was anxious to return to school”. Kate was allowed to remain at school, and completed her education. Many years later her grand-daughter Shana was to become Latin mistress at the same school. In 1919 Kate married Herman Bernitz.

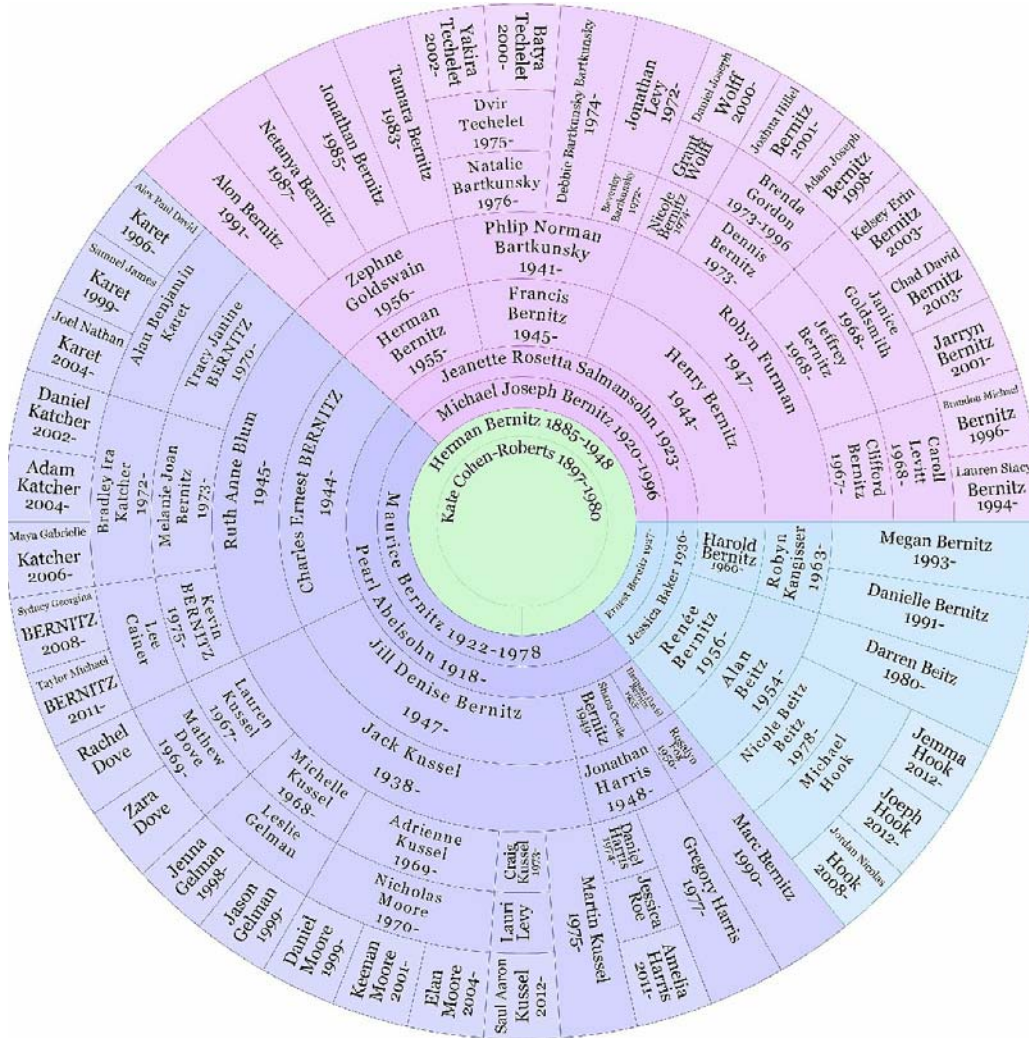


Kate, Louisa and Mabel



Herman Bernitz married Kate Cohen-Roberts on the 15th Sept 1919 in Johannesburg

The Descendants of Kate Cohen-Roberts





Appendix - Documentation

Dewelke ons verzocht hebben, alsu te willen overgaan tot het plegtig
 vieren van het door hun voorgenomen Huwelijk, waarvan de afkondigingen
 zijn gedaan voor den ingang van ons Gemeentehuis, te weten: de wettige
 afkondigingen van de huwelijksvertrouwen, geboren op
 deze zwaer, een trouw op den vordelinge, als
 wettig en deze gelyc ding van te Schiedamsch d'lyc
 huns Vertrouwen hier by overgelegd.

En dewijl er ons geene tegenkating tegen hetzelve is bekend gemaakt, zoo is
 het dat wij, regt doende aan hun verlangen, hun in het openbaar hebben afgevraagd,
 of zij elkander sannemen tot echtgenooten, en getrouwelyk alle de pligten zullen
 vervullen, welke door de Wet aan den Huwelijken staat verbonden zijn, hetwelk
 door hen bevestigend beantwoord zijnde, hebben Wij in naam der Wet verklaard, dat

Samuel Cohen en Roosje Heilbron

door den echt aan elkander zijn verbonden



Waarvan door ons akte is opgemaakt, in tegenwoordigheid van *Meer. Mev. Heilbron*
en de zwaer en wettige zwaer, van de Bode
Amsterdammer, geboren op
de zwaer zwaer, die op den vordelinge, als
en wettig en deze gelyc ding van te Schiedamsch d'lyc
huns Vertrouwen hier by overgelegd.

M. Heilbron
A. Heilbron
Sam Heilbron
Leau Heilbron

S. Cohen
R. Heilbron
L. Heilbron
S. Heilbron
geborene Heilbron

De Ambtenaar voornoemd,
H. van Nieuw St.

The Marriage certificate of Levij Heilbron and Sientje Moerel, 20 March 1828.



 In het jaar een duizend acht honderd 10 /
 acht en twintig, den 20 en twintigsten
 Maart, van twaalf ure des middags
 vergaarde veel ons Wetkender Raadte
 van den Burgerlijken Staat der Stad Bre-
 da, ter zover Levij Heilbron, koopman, oud 37
 en twee jaren, geboren te Dordrecht en wonende te
 Halvotsteeg, meerderjarige welig zoop van Herman
 Levij Heilbron, en van Roosje Aaphaël, zonder
 leeuw, wonende te Zoetle, teekommende, bij acte
 van teekomming, en bekeerslijken form geyngden
 en ter ander zijde, Sientje Moerel, van der
 leeuw, oud twee en twintig jaren, geboren te
 Noordmaat en wonende te Breda, meerder-
 jarige welig dochter van wijlen Jozeph Mo-
 derel, en van Anna, knuweste, zonder
 leeuw, wonende te Breda, alhier tegenwoordig
 en teekommende - En hebben de vergaanten
 met de nu genoemde getuigen, naar aanleiding
 van des Staat vrandes keizer van den 20^{ten} Augustus
 Maart achtien honderd acht onder teke de
 Klaard, dat men in het doordijloned des
 Burgerlijken Raads, zinnen tekerlyken fami-
 lienamen by wijfslag heeft gesteld Heilbron, en
 plaats van Heilbron, en dien zinnen moeder,
 Roosje Aaphaël, in Stede van Roosje Aaphaël,
 en mans van daer ten tekerlyken de recht tekerlyken
 verstaet - En is diende al het voorschreven Met
 de respecten en geboden daer tekerlyken, een kinn
 bij tekerlyken tekerlyken een acte van bekeersheid,
 dat nummer een tal onmet nummer 20 ge-
 liggenditekerlyken - Deswelken van ons gevoerd
 holdende al nu tekerlyken omgaan tot het plo-
 gij vieren van het doer hun voorgevoerde
 metlyken, waar van de afvrandigingen zyn ge-
 staant voor den ingang van ons Stadhuys, te
 Breda, de eerste den twintig en de laatste den
 negende dater, om elf ure des voormiddags
 alsmade te Halvotsteeg, ingedelge bekeers-
 linge, onder nummer Leven een gekeers-
 linge - En dewyl en ons geene tekerlyken tekerlyken
 gemetlyken kinnelyken is bekeerslinge gemaekt, zoo
 wil t dat my, zegt doerde van kinnelyken

dering, na alle de boven genoemde Stukken, wel-
 ke zullen geveegd worden bij deze tegenwoordig-
 arkte, te hebben doen voorlezen, alsmede het
 voornamde, advies en het eerste hoofdstuk van
 den titel van het Burgerlijk Wetboek, handelen
 de over het huwelyk, thans nog in gebruik, aan
 den Bruidgym en aan de Bruid, hebben af-
 gevraagd, of zy elkan anderen in allen noemen tot
 Man en tot vrouw, en derijde elck hinner dege-
 ente vnaag toestemmend heeft beantwoorde, zoo
 verklaeren my in naam des Wet, dat Senij
 Huwbrout met Sientje Moerel, door den band
 des huwelyks zijn vereenigd. - Waar van door
 ons akte is opgemaakt, in tegenwoordigheid
 van Joseph Beerenburg, Zondler beroep, oud vier
 en vyftig, Bernardus Landuyzen, winkelier, oud
 acht en vyftig, Conarinet Samson Kaveck, onderwij-
 zer der jeugd, oud vijf en dertig en Moses Mo-
 rel, koopman, oud negen en twintig jaren, Broe-
 der van de Bruid, allen wonende te Brin-
 derweken, na dat aan hun mede van alles was
 lecture gegeven, deze met ons geteekend hebben
 en met de kontrakterende partijen, behalven
 de Moeder van de Bruid, verklaarnde niet
 te kunnen schyven.



Joseph Beerenburg
 B. Verder J...
 E. J. K...

J. Hallberg
 S. Moerel
 J. G. van Noord Jan

N^o 13.

Birth Certificate of Roosje Heilbron, 23 August 1832.

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Heilbron
Roosje

In het Jaar Een duizend acht honderd Twee-en-dertig, den *drie en twintig*
tegen Augustus des voormiddags ten elf
 ure, compareerde voor ons Wethouder Ambtenaar van den Burgerlijken Stand
 der Stad BREDA, Arrondissement BREDA, Provincie Noord-Brabant, Leuy
Heilbron, Hoopman, oud een en dertig Jaeren
 wonende te Breda, dewelke ons heeft vertoond een Kind van het *vrouwelyk*
 geslacht, aan hetwelk hij verklaard heeft de voornaam te geven van
Roosje
 geboren te Breda, den *twee en twintig* ten Augustus
 dezes jaars, des nachts *ten een twaalf ure*, van *hem kom-*
parant, en van Sientje Hoorel, Zyne Heusvrouw,
Zonder beroep, oud acht en twintig Jaeren
 wonende te Breda;
 gezegde verklaring en presentatie is geschied in bijwezen van *Floriaan*
Laonen, Commis van den Burgerlyken Stand,
 oud *negen en dertig Jaeren*, en van *Elzeus Abraham*
Damm, Geomplacende bij den Burgerlyken Stand,
 oud *twee en twintig Jaeren* beiden wonende te Breda;
 Na gedane voorlezing is deze acte geteekend door ons Wethouder met de
comparanten

L. Heilbron
Laonen
Damm

De Wethouder Ambtenaar voornoemd,
J. Van der Sacre

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Extensive use has been made of Dutch and South African archives.



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Front Cover
Wedding photograph of Kate Cohen-Roberts to Herman Bernitz

Back Cover
Rose Cohen and her Family