

# Highway 77 Motel

## Manasha & Miriam Bronkesh

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### Location

1040 North Pearl Street  
Bridgeton, NJ  
Cumberland County

### Years Active

Owned by the Bronkesh  
family from 1971 to 1986

Photo by Rachel Cobb - Local  
South Jersey Area  
Photographer

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## About Manasha and Miriam Bronkesh

Manasha Bronkesh was born in Ryki, Poland in 1917, one of six children in a religious, traditionally orthodox Jewish family. After their father fell ill, Manasha and his three brothers took over the family wholesale goods business. In 1941, under German occupation, the family was forced into the Ryki ghetto. When the ghetto was liquidated in 1942, Manasha's mother and two sisters were separated from Manasha and his brothers.. One sister later fought and died in the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Manasha and two brothers were taken to the Demblin forced labor camp. Manasha and one of his brothers escaped, and joined a partisan group that his other brothers belonged to. They fought with the partisans until the end of the war.

Miriam Bronkesh (nee Kotlan) was born in Łódź, Poland in 1930. Miriam's childhood was relatively carefree; she was an only child, and her family owned a business. Under German occupation, the family fled to Chmielnik, a small town, where they lived in a ghetto from 1940 to 1942. In 1942, Miriam and her mother went into hiding for two years, moving from place to place about 26 times. The fact that not only the Nazis, but also the Polish "Home Army" hunted Jews made hiding especially difficult and dangerous. The Soviet Red Army liberated the village where they were hiding in 1944, and they followed the front westward.

Manasha and Miriam, with their group of Holocaust Survivors, met in Lublin in 1945, and they followed the Soviet army westward until they reached Warsaw. They married in Warsaw in 1946. Manasha and his brothers opened a kosher restaurant on the outskirts of Warsaw, in a neighborhood that had not been destroyed by the Germans.

When the Soviet military authorities made it impossible to run the restaurant as a private business, Manasha and Miriam continued west until they reached a displaced persons camp in Munich. Their first child, a son, was born in the Munich DP camp in 1947. In 1951, the family immigrated to the United States. They settled in southern New Jersey, attracted by the opportunity to buy a chicken farm in Millville, where a daughter was born. The Bronkesh family operated the farm until falling egg prices made small family farms unprofitable. With their savings, they bought the Highway 77 Motel in Bridgeton. Manasha passed away in his home on March 3, 2012. Miriam Bronkesh still lives in New Jersey.

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## Highway 77 Motel

The family owned and operated the Highway 77 Motel from 1971 to 1986, providing lodging and hospitality for visitors to the Cumberland County area. When they bought the motel, it had thirty-two units. The Bronkeshes expanded the number of units to forty by adding eight units to the second floor. Manasha and Miriam Bronkesh lived at the motel with their daughter, who worked there after school. Their son, who was older, was away studying law. The Bronkesh family sold the motel in 1986.



Highway 77 Motel, artist rendering - Steve Lewis Cumberland County Native (<https://stevelewisart.com/>)

## Cumberland County Hotels owned by Holocaust Survivors

The Bronkesh family was not the only Holocaust Survivor family to own, operate and franchise hotels in Cumberland County. The Kezjman family also owned hotels in Vineland, such as the Ramada, or in Millville such as the Millville Motor Inn. In addition, the Cinger family operated the Circle Plaza Motel, and the Roth family owned several hotels and motels in Cumberland County.

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## For more information see

South Jersey Holocaust Survivor Digital Archive, Sara and Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center at Stockton University.

Manasha Bronkesh Testimony, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

Miriam Bronkesh Testimony, USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive.

*Daily Journal*, Vineland.

Photo Sources:

Art by Steve Lewis.

Photo by Rachel Cobb.

**Profiles of South Jersey Holocaust Survivors by George D. Quinn (Project Lead), with contributions by Dr. Michael Hayse (Curator & Editor) and Biographical Information by Brianna Doherty.**