



Born in London's East End, Mark Cohen moved with his family to Victoria in 1853. After two bankruptcies in the hotel trade, his father, Hymen Cohen came to Dunedin, where he suffered further bankruptcies, and by 1873 had left Otago (ultimately dying in San Francisco in 1882). Mark, the eldest in the family, had to make his own way in Dunedin.

At first Mark tried signwriting, legal work, and the *Otago Daily Times* publishing department. Then, joining Henningham's *Evening Star* as office dogsbody, he took his chance when the owner fell ill. Aged no more than 17, Cohen kept the paper going for three weeks. Henningham not only rewarded him handsomely, but sponsored a course in shorthand and promoted Cohen to reporter. When George Bell bought out Henningham, Bell became a second father to Cohen who devoted his considerable energies and talents to the *Star's* benefit. He was rewarded on Bell's retirement in 1895 with the editorship, which he held until 1925 when he also retired after converting the paper to one of the best liberal crusading papers in New Zealand.

Cohen married Sarah Isaacs in 1879 and they had four children, one of whom died young. Cohen led the campaign for free kindergartens which ultimately spread throughout New Zealand. He raised funds for a children's pavilion at Dunedin Public Hospital and later established the Prince Edward Convalescent Home, and the adjoining Sarah Cohen Memorial School for handicapped children. His list of community involvements is endless. In 1912 he chaired the Education Commission which

shaped New Zealand education for the next 25 years. In 1920 he accepted appointment to the Legislative Council.

Mark Cohen died in Auckland on 3 March 1928 but his body was brought back to Dunedin where he was buried beside Sarah, who had died on 7 February 1923, in the Jewish Section of Dunedin's Southern Cemetery.