

Congregation Ahavas Sholom
Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest Archives
Prepared by Jill Hershorin (5/4/09)

Record Group:

1

Collection Number:

17-08

Creator:

Congregation Ahavas Sholom

Inclusive Dates:

1962-2008

Extent:

1cf

Abstract:

Historical records of Congregation Ahavas Sholom

Acquisition information:

N/A

Preferred Citation:

Congregation Ahavas Sholom Collection, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest

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History:

**Ahavas Sholom* Synagogue started in rented quarters in 1905 on a street in walking distance from Prince Street, the center of the immigrant community. Like almost all other immigrant synagogues, it was traditional in every respect. The men who *davened* in the synagogue were storekeepers, who often lived in back rooms of their shops.

The synagogue served the dual functions of prayer and socialization. It would be very unfair to call the synagogue "JCC" or "Y," but there is no doubt that the social aspects of *Ahavas Sholom* were important to the membership.

As some money became available, the lot adjacent to the rented building was purchased, and a formal synagogue was constructed in 1921. Furnishings were hard to afford with a strained budget, but a solution was found. In 1927 a wealthy New York congregation renovated its facility and donated its impressive *aron kodesh* (holy ark), which was cut to fit the available space.

After World War II the original immigrant population was no longer the majority --- not in *Ahavas Sholom*, not in Newark. The generation was passing. Jews born to the immigrant parents were entering the work force. During the 1950s young families started moving, some to the outskirts of the city, others to suburban towns. The phenomenon hastened in the 1960s, and by the end of the decade only a smattering of Jews remained in Newark. *Ahavas Sholom* started to become an untenable operation.

Some say that the race riots of 1967 chased Jews from the city. In retrospect it might be fairer to say that the riots only hastened the process, which was well underway. Jews were looking to move up in society, and the suburbs provided that promise.

For many years *Ahavas Sholom* was all but forgotten. The congregation was never in the center of the community. In a period of social turmoil that saw the decline of major community institution, *Ahavas Sholom* was the least concern.

Yet, *Ahavas Sholom* was not totally forgotten. A small core of Jews lived with the dream that a museum could save the fading memories of Newark.

The museum on premises at *Ahavas Sholom* has changed a congregation with a membership of a handful into a synagogue with over 300 members. The vast majority are either museum supporters or the descendents of past members, who have renewed interest in the synagogue of their ancestors.

***Article found in the Jewish Magazine**

<http://www.jewishmag.com/113mag/newark/newark.htm>

Scope and Content:

This small amount of material has been pieced together by the archivist, no provenance exists for this.

The arrangement is alphabetical, then chronological. This collection is comprised of paper and photographs and is divided into five series as follows:

- I. Events
- II. History
- III. Photographs
- IV. Press
- V. Publications

Conservation Notes:

N/A

Removals:

N/A

Organization:

The materials are organized alphabetically, then chronologically within the series