

**Congregation B'nai Israel of Kearny and North Arlington**  
**Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest Archives**

Prepared by Jill Hershoin – March, 2009

**Record Group:**

1

**Collection Number:**

2-98

**Creator:**

Congregation B'nai Israel of Kearny and North Arlington

**Inclusive Dates:**

1913-1988

**Extent:**

3 cf

**Abstract:**

Historical records of Congregation B'nai Israel of Kearny and North Arlington

**Acquisition information:**

Acquired by the Society in 1998. Several records in the collection were donated by Edith Saletan.

**Preferred Citation:**

Congregation B'nai Israel of Kearny and North Arlington Collection, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest

**Access restrictions:**

The collections of the Society shall be available for examination and study by any member of the public under the normal security procedures and other special procedures established for the protection of the specific collections.

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**History:**

As with most cases in the greater New York area, the outlying areas saw a growth in the Jewish population and an need for an organized communal life. In 1913, nineteen Jews, under the leadership of Israel Goldstein, formed an organization which they incorporated under the name of "Congregation B'nai Israel of Kearny – Arlington."

The formation of the congregation was a stepping stone in the development of Jewish life in Kearny-Arlington. Growth of the Jewish population at the end of World War I emphasized the need for a stable and permanent organization. In 1919 the congregation held its first meeting at which it was decided to prepare a constitution, to elect permanent officers and to start a building drive to erect a synagogue. The minutes ledgers from 1919-1937 were written in Yiddish and the early constitution declared that the congregation was to follow Orthodox Judaism.

The congregation soon organized a Hebrew School and in 1923, established a Sisterhood and became a member of B'nai B'rith. The congregation soon became an important factor in the social and cultural life of the Jewish community because of the efforts of B'nai Israel of Kearny-Arlington.

By the early 1950s the Jewish population of Kearny and North Arlington grew to over six hundred families. The congregation was forced to start a new fund drive to erect a newer and larger facility. The drive was successful and the groundbreaking of the new site took place in 1954 on Kearny Avenue.

Services were conducted by lay leaders in the congregation until the first Rabbi was appointed, Reverend Berris Aronson. He served the congregation for three years until November, 1925 when he was replaced by Rabbi Morris Shatz, whose duties were to conduct services, to serve as cantor and to teach the Hebrew school children. Rabbi Shatz served two years of service to the congregation. For a number of years the congregation was led by a number of spiritual leaders. In 1939 Rabbi Mordecai Simkes became the spiritual leader – a position which he held for almost eight years until 1947 when the congregation changed the existing constitution to fit the pattern of conservatism. Dr. Andrew Klein became the spiritual leader for three years. Again, a host of Rabbis served in the congregation and it was not until 1958 when the congregation hired the longest serving Rabbi, Sidney Bogner who served for sixteen years.

For other materials about Rabbi Bogner, please visit the Jewish Theological Seminary of America's website:

[http://www.jtsa.edu/Library/Collections/Archives/The\\_Ratner\\_Center/Papers\\_of\\_Conservative\\_Rabbis\\_and\\_Synagogues/Bogner\\_Sidney\\_M.xml](http://www.jtsa.edu/Library/Collections/Archives/The_Ratner_Center/Papers_of_Conservative_Rabbis_and_Synagogues/Bogner_Sidney_M.xml)

### **Scope and Content:**

The collection is comprised mostly of paper and photographs. The contents include few correspondence, meeting minutes (some written in Yiddish), congregational newsletters and records from the Sisterhood.

### **Conservation Notes:**

A scrapbook was dismantled, as it was plagued with preservation needs. The archivist removed staples, where appropriate. The biggest issue is the amount of double-sided tape and scotch tape on some materials. The archivist decided to leave some materials in place as they would suffer damage by removing harmful materials.

**Removals:**

None.

**Organization:**

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

- I. Administrative
  - a. Minutes
  - b. Miscellaneous
- II. Affiliations
- III. Clubs & Groups
- IV. Committees
- V. Constitution and By laws
- VI. Correspondence
- VII. Education
- VIII. Employees
- IX. Events
- X. Finance
- XI. History
- XII. Legal
- XIII. Membership
- XIV. Miscellaneous
- XV. Photographs
- XVI. General
- XVII. Press
  - a. Articles about the congregation
  - b. Articles by the congregation
- XVIII. Publications
  - a. Bulletins, newsletters, and announcements
  - b. Book of Remembrance
  - c. Journals