



Temple Oheb Shalom, Newark, N. J.

Congregation Oheb Shalom
Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest Archives

Prepared by Jennifer McGillan and Jacky Grossberg, revised by Jill Hershorin (July, 2008)

Record Group: 1

Collection Number: 32-03

Creator: Congregation Oheb Shalom (various)

Inclusive Dates: 1860-present

Extent: 16 cu. feet

Abstract: Papers of Congregation Oheb Shalom of Newark and South Orange. These records are of the activities of the third oldest congregation in Newark. This collection includes records from Congregation Beth Torah (merged with Oheb Shalom in 1983), as well as Congregation Agudath Achim of Orange (affiliated with Beth Torah in 1950).

Acquisition information: Donated to the JHSMW by David Schechner, Congregation Oheb Shalom historian.

Preferred Citation: Congregation Oheb Shalom Collection, Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest

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History: The Oheb Shalom congregation was founded on Oct. 9, 1860, by a group of people who had broken away from Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, after Rabbi Isaac Schwarz had lost an election by one vote due to some members' dissatisfaction with one of his sermons. Oheb Shalom ("Lovers of Peace") was the third congregation established in Newark, and like its older brethren was originally an Orthodox synagogue. The congregation remained Orthodox until 1913, when it became one of the seven original and founding members of the Conservative movement in North America.

The first meetings were held in private homes. The first building for the synagogue was located at 32 Prince Street in the German section of the city. The synagogue was known as the "Bohemian Shul" because so many of the members were from the Bohemia region of Germany. Early rabbis for the congregation include Isaac Schwarz, the first rabbi (1860-1880), Dr. F. L. Sarnet, writer, composer and Civil War veteran, Bernard Drachman (1885-1888), Charles I. Hoffman (1906-1939), Leon Lang (1927-1939), and most notably, Dr. Louis Levitsky (1940-1972). Recent rabbis include Alexander Shapiro (1973-1993), Lawrence Troster (1994-1998) and the current rabbi, Mark Cooper (1998-present). Some of the cantors include Moses Gann, Edgar Mills and Erica Lippitz.

In 1880 the women of the congregation established the first congregational sisterhood in the community, called the Miriam Frauen Verlein later to be named Miram Auxiliary. The sisterhood was quite successful in raising funds for the congregation. The congregation built a new structure on the east side of Prince Street, which is now a Baptist Church. In the new building, men and women sat side-by-side and gave up German as its official language. By 1907 a decision was made to move, and planning and fund-raising began. A High Street building was purchased and in 1911 it was opened for worship after a dedication ceremony which featured guest speakers, Governor Woodrow Wilson and Educator Solomon Schechter. By the mid 1940s many members moved to the suburbs and created their own, sister congregation called Congregation Beth El. In 1957 Oheb Shalom Broke ground on their new location on Scotland Road in South Orange, where the congregation currently resides. And in 1983 Congregation Beth Torah of Orange affiliated with Oheb Shalom.

Today, the congregation continues making an impact with focus on education, preserving Jewish traditions, and community outreach.

Scope and Content: The collection is comprised mostly of paper and photographs. The contents include correspondence, financial records, lectures, student records from the Hebrew school as well as confirmation classes, records of the cemetery association, congregational bulletins and records as well as those of the Miriam Sisterhood and the Kadimah men's association.

Notes:

1. **Please refer to the Past Perfect entry for the Isaac Schwarz Collection (2-92) for additional materials.** This collection includes financial ledger, 1857 dedication speech for cornerstone laying ceremony of Temple B'nai Jeshurun in Newark, confirmation book of Emanuel Bloch, pharmacist books, a 1932 resolution honoring Emanuel Abeles, programs, periodicals, membership roster and minutes of Miriam Auxiliary, programs from Oheb Shalom, and newspaper clippings.
2. Arrangement for the education/Institute of Jewish Studies records - I have arranged the loose materials in alphabetical subject hierarchy, with the exception of some materials which were found in three-ringed binders. These materials have been kept in original order and are classified as "Adult Education". The dates range from 1976 to 1980. (Bible Classes, Living Book Lectures, Scholar in Residence Classes).
3. The Living Book series programs have handwritten notes on back of some pamphlets.
4. Most series are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically. Some, however, are not arranged this way. The Employees Series are for the most part arranged alphabetically, with the exception of Dr. Levitsky's materials. Because of the volume of documents, it was decided to keep them separated and in their individual boxes rather than keeping them with the rest of the employees materials.

Of interest:

- Letter to William F Helmreich about retaining him as historian of Oheb Shalom (Correspondences - 4/25/99) - B14 F3
- By-laws for Oheb Shalom (1903) –B10 F1
- Constitution and founding documents (1860 &1886) –B10 F11
- Resolution: Cantor Lippitz - Resolution voicing the strong disapproval of the decision of the Cantors Assembly rejecting the membership application of Cantor Lippitz based on her gender. - B10 F17
- Short biography of Charles I. Hoffman written by his son, Dr. David Hoffman – B14 F8
- There are correspondences related to a visit to Congregation Beth Torah by Eleanor Roosevelt. In addition to the documents (which are photocopies) there is also a personal account by Eva Goldie, the woman who orchestrated the whole meeting (Correspondences, 1980s-2000s – Incoming/Outgoing) - B14 F8

- There is a letter to Rabbi Levitsky from Chief Justice Earl Warren. In the letter, Warren kindly declines an invitation to speak at the congregation's centennial observance. - B31 F11
- Program from Reverend Gleuck's 1898 "Responsive Reading and Prayer During Wartime" sermon. - B34 F8
- Various written histories of Oheb Shalom and timelines (with names and positions held) and a copy of the 1911 Oheb Shalom "Fair Journal" (which can also be found in the Publications Series). - B38 F12
- Translation of diary and letters of Isaac Schwarz – B38 F13
- "The Story of Miriam Auxiliary of Oheb Shalom: 75 Years in Retrospect" by Sarah Kussy and a handwritten timeline of the Sisterhood. - B41 F8
- Oheb Shalom Fair Journal - Original copy. Brittle pages. There is a photocopy which tells us about the construction of the new building on High Street. There are photos of congregants and rabbis, writings about the congregation's history, observations, witticisms, etc. The ads give us a wonderful glimpse of Jewish life in Newark- B45 F1
- Printers plate of letter from Franklin Roosevelt to Nathan Kussy regarding the 75th Anniversary Celebration – B56
- Rabbi Levitsky's wife, Dr. Anna Levy's rubber stamp and pin from the Pediatrics Congress Conference of 1942 - B62
- Original minutes ledger from 1900-1919 – B61
- Photograph of Prince Street Building (1860) – B60

The collection is arranged in 17 series as follows:

- I. Administrative
 - a) Annual Meetings/Mid-Year Meetings of the Congregation
 - b) Annual Reports
 1. Rabbis Reports
 2. Standing Committee Reports
 - c) Board of Trustees Correspondence
 - d) Board of Trustees Officers and Members Lists
 - e) Board of Trustees Meetings Minutes (1919-2001) (Also: Executive Officer's Meetings)
 - f) By-Laws and Constitution
 - g) Building-Related
 - h) Congregation Agudas Achim
 - i) Congregation Beth Torah
 - j) Correspondence
 - k) Miscellaneous
- II. Artifacts
- III. Cemetery Association
- IV. Clubs/Groups
 - a) Oheb Shalom Players
 - b) Young Leaders
- V. Committees

- VI. Education
 - a) Adult Education
 - b) Bar/Bat Mitzvahs
 - c) Commencements/Lists
 - d) Commencement/Programs
 - e) Confirmation/Consecration Essays
 - f) Confirmation/Consecration Services
 - g) Correspondence
 - h) Events
 - i) Miscellaneous
 - j) Publications
- VII. Employees
- VIII. Events
- IX. Finance
- X. General
 - a) Affiliations
 - b) Directories
 - c) Friday Night Services issues and concerns
 - d) Publicity Materials
 - e) Oral History Transcriptions
 - f) Miscellaneous
- XI. Legal
- XII. Membership
- XIII. Mens' Club
- XIV. Miriam Sisterhood
 - a) Meetings
 - b) Administrative
 - c) Committees/Clubs
 - d) Events/Programs
 - e) Newsletters
 - f) Publications
- XV. Publications
 - a) Bulletins, newsletters, and announcements
 - b) High Holy Day Sermon Series
- XVI. Press
 - a) Articles about the congregation
 - b) Articles by the congregation
- XVII. Photographs

Conservation Notes: Many of the materials were found to be dirty and bug or mouse eaten. The collection has been re-boxed, re-filed and all metal fastenings have been removed. Publications/Oheb Shalom "Fair Journal", 1910 - B45 F1 – Brittle pages.

Removals: Duplicate materials have been removed, but no materials have been removed for preservation or other reasons.

Organization: The files are arranged alphabetically, then chronologically within the series.