

Congregation Shomrei Emunah
Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest Archives
Prepared by Jill Hershorin, December, 2008

Record Group: 1

Collection Number: 3-93

Creator: Jack Kravitz, The Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest

Inclusive Dates: 1943-2008

Extent: .5cf

Abstract:

Institutional records of Congregation Shomrei Emunah, including assorted records consisting of architectural specifications, legal papers, newspaper clippings, synagogue newsletters, and anniversary journals.

Acquisition information:

The Dr. Jeshai Schnitzer documents were donated by a source unknown to archivist, Jill Hershorin sometime in 1993. The other part of this collection was donated by Jack Kravitz in 2005

Preferred Citation:

Congregation Shomrei Emunah, 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:

Temple Shomrei Emunah was founded in 1905 to serve the Jewish community of Bloomfield and Montclair, New Jersey. Initially operating without a building and with a Torah borrowed from Newark's Congregation Anshe Russia, the temple was formally incorporated in December, 1905 as Congregation Shomar Amuno of Bloomfield and Montclair. During its early years the congregation was frequently referred to by its English name, Guardians of the Faith. In 1907 the congregation purchased a church building at Highland and Bloomfield Avenues in Glen Ridge, midway between Bloomfield and Montclair; it began using the new building in

1910. In 1914, the building was remodeled and improved after a community-wide fundraising drive.

Shomrei Emunah had no rabbis during its early years, and congregation members led the services. The congregation also had difficulty maintaining a Hebrew school during these years, as it had neither enough money to hire a teacher, nor a large enough population of children. The synagogue did, however, play a large role in the Jewish community, hosting festive and social events as well as religious ones. In 1910, a sisterhood was founded. In 1912, the growing congregation purchased cemetery space.

In 1919, Shomrei Emunah became affiliated with the United Synagogue of America and The Jewish Theological Seminary. Beginning in the mid-1920s, rabbinical students in their final year at JTS began coming to lead the congregation on weekends. In 1927, a part-time rabbi from The Jewish Theological Seminary, Morris Goldblatt, began conducting Friday evening services. These services marked a step in Shomrei Emunah's gradual change to the full embrace of Conservative patterns of ritual and worship. Several years later, the congregation acquired a full-time rabbi.

In 1919 the Hebrew school was reorganized, and permanent teachers were hired. It became associated in the 1940s with the Jewish Education Association of Essex County, and strove to raise its academic standards.

In 1949, construction began on a new synagogue building to serve the growing congregation. Located at 67 Park Street in Montclair, the building was dedicated in 1951.

In 1955, Bat Mitzvah observations for girls of the congregation began; at the same time, a constitutional amendment allowing women full membership was proposed. The synagogue also identified itself with the civil rights movement, contributing to the NAACP and making news by withdrawing from a swimming club which refused to admit a black family which belonged to the congregation.

In addition to the many who served as Rabbi in the synagogue, Rabbi Mendelson (1920-1923) conducted both as the synagogue's Rabbi and Cantor.

Dr. Jeshaiia Schnitzer was the rabbi of Congregation Shomrei Emunah for 30 years, from 1951 to 1982. After his retirement Schnitzer stayed on as a mentor. Schnitzer was also a social worker and was a leader in creating a Jewish approach to social work. There are few correspondence and records from the American Jewish Tercentenary in the Rabbi's folder.

(Some information is from the Jewish Theological Seminary site:

http://www.jtsa.edu/Library/Archives/The_Ratner_Center/Papers_of_Conservative_Rabbis_and_Synagogues/Shomrei_Emunah_Montclair_NJ.xml)

Scope and Content:

This collection is comprised of printed documents, including architectural specifications, legal papers, newspaper clippings, synagogue newsletters, and anniversary journals. To see a few records of “Guardians of the Faith Congregation” please see the Bernstein/Mendelson Collection (Acc.# 3-05)

This collection is comprised of paper and photographs and is divided into 9 series as follows:

- I. Administrative
- II. Correspondence
- III. Employees
- IV. Events
- V. Finance
- VI. History
- VII. Legal
- VIII. Press
- IX. Publications

Conservation Notes:

None

Removals:

None

Organization:

The materials are organized alphabetically, then chronologically.