

Temple B'nai Abraham
Jewish Historical Society of MetroWest Archives
Prepared by Jill Hershorin (5/4/09)

Record Group:

1

Collection Number:

16-09

Creator:

Temple B'nai Abraham

Inclusive Dates:

1923-2008

Extent:

1.5 cf

Abstract:

Historical records of Temple B'nai Abraham

Acquisition information:

Acquired by the Society from several sources. Numerous documents were discovered in the archive with no provenance. Records in the collection were donated by Janet Lowenstein, Kenneth Bernstein, and Phillip Drill (see container lists).

Preferred Citation:

Temple B'nai Abraham 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:

In 1853, a small group of Jewish émigrés from Poland decided to form their own congregation that followed Eastern European ritual rather than the German liberal approach of Newark's Temple B'nai Jeshurun. This budding congregation met in the home of Abraham Newman, a founder and a member of B'nai Jeshurun, until

a hall could be rented at 107 Market Street, Newark. By 1855 they acquired land for a cemetery and were incorporated under New Jersey law as "Congregation of the Sons of Abraham -- B'nai Abraham," in honor of benefactor Abraham Newman and in recognition of Biblical tradition's first Jew.

In 1861, the congregation purchased a former Baptist Church at the corner of Halsey and Academy Streets. In 1870, the Temple members built a synagogue on Bank Street only to lose it in a mortgage foreclosure. Moving into rented space on Market Street until 1884, the congregation then leased larger quarters in a two story Washington Street building, only 25 feet wide and 75 feet deep. The cornerstone of a new synagogue with a seating capacity of 900, at High Street and 13th Avenue, was set in 1897. In 1924, the congregants dug deeply into their pockets to raise the huge sum of \$1,250,000 to build their last Newark home, the magnificent edifice at Clinton and Shanley Avenues.

Rabbi Julius Silberfeld became the rabbi of Temple B'nai Abraham in 1902. Retaining the Orthodox ritual, which had been followed from 1853, he edited a new prayer book, adding English translations. In 1939, Rabbi Silberfeld retired and was succeeded by [Dr. Joachim Prinz](#), who modernized the ritual and introduced his own prayer book.

In 1973, the congregation moved into its newly-built home in Livingston. Dr. Prinz retired in 1976, and Rabbi Barry Friedman, who came to the Temple in 1968 as Associate Rabbi, became Senior Rabbi in 1977. Rabbi Friedman introduced further innovations in the services and wrote and edited our prayer book *Siddur Or Chadash*. He retired in 1999 having served the congregation as rabbi for thirty-one years. In 1999 Rabbi Clifford Kulwin became the synagogue's fourth religious leader in 98 years.

(Taken from the synagogue's website: <http://www.tbanj.org/history.htm>)

Scope and Content:

This small amount of material has been pieced together by the archivist from several donations by individuals. Please note that the Rabbi Joachim Prinz's papers and the synagogue's collections are the American Jewish Archives.

Note that the architectural drawings have been separated and are located in an area that holds all synagogues blueprints and oversized materials.

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

- I. Architectural Drawings
- II. Artifacts
- III. Education
- IV. Events
- V. Programs
- VI. Publications

Conservation Notes:

N/A

Removals:

N/A

Organization:

The materials are organized alphabetically, then chronologically within the series