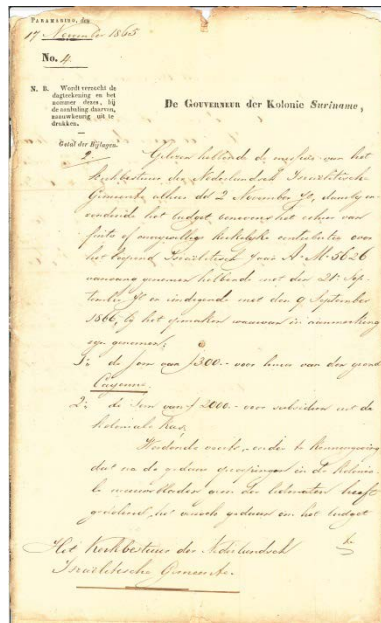




THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Jewish Congregations in the West Indies
Records**

Manuscript Collection No. 581



Collection Summary

Title	Jewish Congregations in the West Indies Records, 1726-1946
Collection Number	MS-581
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Extent	29.8 linear feet (7 Hollinger boxes and 18 oversize boxes)
Abstract	The Jewish Congregations in the West Indies Records consist primarily of minutes, correspondence, ketuboth, and other records kept by Jewish congregations in Suriname and Curaçao.
Language of the Material	Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, and Hebrew

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch Jewish communities began settling in the West Indies during the early years of colonization in the seventeenth century by the English and Dutch. By the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries there were well established Jewish communities throughout the British and Dutch colonies in Suriname, Curaçao, Jamaica, and Barbados.

Jewish life in Suriname had its beginnings under the English in the 1650s and under the Dutch starting in 1667. By the middle of the eighteenth century, Paramaribo, the capital city of Suriname, had a Jewish community with a population of about 1000.

The Jews of Curaçao have the longest continuous history in the Americas. Until 1825, it was the largest Jewish community in the Americas. The first significant settlement of Jewish families arrived in Curaçao with Isaac da Costa in 1659. The immigrants of 1659 were considered founders of the community, significantly called by the earlier settlers Mikvé Israel. The first synagogue building was purchased in 1671. The current Mikvé Israel synagogue, built in 1730 in Willemstad, Curaçao is the oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere.

Scope and Content The Jewish Congregations in the West Indies Records consist primarily of minutes, correspondence, ketuboth, financial statements, and other records kept by Jewish congregations in Suriname and Curaçao. The bulk of materials are Photostat copies. Originals from Nederlandsche Israëlitische Gemeente can be found in Series A. General, Subseries 2. Suriname.

These records from Suriname and Curaçao were collected by Jacob Rader Marcus during an expedition to the West Indies and South America in 1952. The primary purpose of this expedition was to secure copies of Jewish manuscript materials up to the year 1900. Additional details about this expedition can be found in the American Archives Journal, "The West India and South American Expedition of the American Jewish Archives" by Jacob Rader Marcus.

Arrangement This collection is arranged in two (2) series: A. Curac ,ao, 1809-1898; B. Suriname, 1726-1946.

Terms of Access The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Jewish Congregations in the West Indies Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-581. Jewish Congregations in the West Indies Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance Donor unknown.

Index Terms

Subjects Jews -- Curaçao / Jews -- Suriname / Jews -- West Indies

Media Marriage records / Minutes

Series A. Curac ,ao, 1809-1898

Extent 1.1 linear feet (2.75 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note This series consists of minute books (libro de minutas), correspondence, and other records primarily from Mikve´ Israel Congregation in Willemstad, Curac,ao.

Arrangement Arranged alphabetically

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Extent 28.7 linear feet (4.25 Hollinger boxes and 18 oversize boxes)

Scope and Content Note his series consists of financial records, minutes (notulen), correspondence (brieven), Ketuboth, and other records from congregations of the Dutch Jewish community in Suriname, referred to as Nederlandsche Israëlitische Gemeente.

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