A Finding Aid to the
Congregation Bene Israel/Rockdale Temple
(Cincinnati, Ohio) Records

Manuscript Collection No. 24
Collection Summary

Title
Congregation Bene Israel (Cincinnati, Ohio) Records

Dates
1829-1960 (bulk 1920-1960)

Collection Number
MS-24

Repository
The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives

Other/Variant Title
Rockdale Temple Records.

Creator
Congregation Bene Israel (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Extent
19 linear feet (25 Hollinger boxes and 9 oversize boxes)

Language of the Material
English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch
On January 18, 1824, a group of ten Orthodox Jews of English origin organized the Congregation Bene Israel (Children of Israel) the oldest congregation west of the Allegheny Mountains. Joseph Jonas, one of the founders, became the first president and six years later the congregation received its charter from the General Assembly of Ohio (January 8, 1830).

During the period from 1824 to 1835, the congregation worshiped in small rented rooms. When the decision was made to build a synagogue, appeals for funds were sent out to other cities in the east and even to England. Money was secured for a temple on Broadway between Fifth and Sixth and the new building, the first synagogue in Ohio, was dedicated on September 9, 1836. In 1852 the congregation moved into a new building constructed in the traditional Spanish style, which was located next to the old synagogue on Broadway.

Until 1855, the congregation had been served by Hazans and visiting rabbis. In that year Max Lilienthal, then head of the educational institute in New York, was elected rabbi. Under the influence of Rabbi Lilienthal and Dr. Isaac M. Wise, who had come to Cincinnati in 1854, Bene Israel became more liberal. Prior to this time the congregation had been strictly Orthodox, even to the extent of employing its own Shochet, and operating its own matzot ovens. The final break with Orthodoxy came on September 19, 1875 when a resolution was passed abolishing the second day Rosh Hashanah observance. Family pews, a mixed choir with organ accompaniment, prayers and sermons recited in English, and a new Americanized prayerbook had already been accepted by the Congregation.

In 1869 the congregation moved into a new building at 8th and Mound Street. The Mount St. Temple was used until the gradual movement of the Jewish population in Cincinnati to the hill top suburbs of Avondale and Walnut Hills led to the building of a new temple at Rockdale and Harvey Avenues (Rockdale Temple) in 1906. In 1970, again in response to the Jewish migration to the suburbs, the congregation dedicated a new temple in Amberley Village, a northern Cincinnati suburb.

After Dr. Lilienthal's death in 1882, Raphael Benjamin succeeded to the pulpit and served until 1888. In that year the congregation called David Philipson from Baltimore to serve as rabbi. He served until 1938, when he retired after 50 years of service. Rabbis who succeeded Philipson were Victor Emanuel Reichert (1938-1962), Murray Blackman (1956-1967), David S. Hachen (1968-1969) and Harold Hahn (1969- ).

Bene Israel Congregation was active in Jewish religious education in Cincinnati. Beginning in 1842, it established the first Jewish school under the supervision of Mrs. Louis Symonds as well as a talmud torah. In 1855 the Noyoth School was established by the congregation. The school later merged with the Talmud Yelodim Institute which was in existence until 1866.

Scope and Content
The collection documents the activities of the oldest Jewish congregation (1825) west of the Allegheny Mountains. The collection consists of correspondence (primarily that of David Philipson), reports, vestry records, minute books of the Board of Trustees and the School Board, business and financial records, roll of members, burial records, pew deeds, records of the Hebrew Relief Association, numerous committees, and miscellaneous materials.

Arrangement

Terms of Access
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Preferred Citation
Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Congregation Bene Israel (Cincinnati, Ohio) Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-24. Congregation Bene Israel (Cincinnati, Ohio) Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance
Received on permanent loan from Congregation Bene Israel, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1949-1977.

Processing Information

Index Terms

Subjects
Congregation Bene Israel (Amberley, Ohio) / Jews -- Ohio -- Cincinnati / Reform Judaism / Synagogues -- Ohio -- Cincinnati

Personal Names
Philipson, David, 1862-1949

Corporate Names
Congregation Bene Israel (Cincinnati, Ohio) / Hebrew Relief Association (Cincinnati, Ohio)

Media
Death registers / Deeds / Minutes

Series A. Correspondence, 1901-1949

Extent
3.4 linear feet (8.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note
Consists of letterbooks, telegrams, and general correspondence concerning the business of the congregation. Rabbi David Philipson conducts most of the communication within this series.

Arrangement
The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Lilienthal, Max, 1868
Box 1. Folder 2. Letterpress book, 1901 December-1906 August
Box 1. Folder 3. Letterpress book, 1906 September-1908 December
Box 1. Folder 4. Letterpress book, 1908 December-1912 March
Box 2. Folder 1. Organ, 1905-1907
Box 2. Folder 2. Dedication of Rockdale Temple [congratulatory letters and telegrams], 1906
Box 2. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1907-1909
Box 2. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1916 February-December
Box 2. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1917 February-December
Box 2. Folder 6. Correspondence, 1918 January-October
Box 2. Folder 7. Correspondence, 1918 November-December
Box 2. Folder 8. Correspondence, 1919 January-February
Box 2. Folder 9. Correspondence, 1919 March-May
Box 2. Folder 10. Correspondence, 1919 June-August
Box 2. Folder 11. Correspondence, 1919 September-December, undated
Box 3. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1920 January-June
Box 3. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1920 July-December, undated
Box 3. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1921 January-December
Box 3. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1922 January-March
Box 3. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1922 April-August
Box 3. Folder 6. Correspondence, 1922 September-December
Box 3. Folder 7. Correspondence, 1923 January-October
Box 3. Folder 8. Correspondence, 1923 November-December
Box 3. Folder 9. Correspondence, 1924 January-April
Box 4. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1924 May-December
Box 4. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1925 January-December
Box 4. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1926 January-December
Box 4. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1927 January-October
Box 4. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1927 November-December
Box 4. Folder 6. Correspondence, 1928 January-September
Box 4. Folder 7. Correspondence, 1928 October
Box 4. Folder 8. Correspondence, 1928 November-December
Box 4. Folder 9. Correspondence, 1929 January
Box 5. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1929 February-March
Box 5. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1929 April-May
Box 5. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1929 June
Box 5. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1929 July-August
Box 5. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1929 September
Box 5. Folder 6. Correspondence, 1929 October
Box 5. Folder 7. Correspondence, 1929 November
Box 5. Folder 8. Correspondence, 1929 December
Box 5. Folder 9. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1929, undated
Box 5. Folder 10. Correspondence, 1930 January
Box 5. Folder 11. Correspondence, 1930 February
Box 5. Folder 12. Correspondence, 1930 March
Box 6. Folder 1. Correspondence, 1930 April-May
Box 6. Folder 2. Correspondence, 1930 June
Box 6. Folder 3. Correspondence, 1930 July-August
Box 6. Folder 4. Correspondence, 1930 September-October
Box 6. Folder 5. Correspondence, 1930 November-December
Box 6. Folder 6. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1930, undated
Box 6. Folder 7. Correspondence, 1931 January-June
Series B. Financial Records, 1830-1927

Extent  7.5 linear feet (5.5 Hollinger boxes and 5 1/3 oversize boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Consists of cashbooks, ledgers, bills, notes, receipt books, treasurer's records, and other accounts. Financial records of the Sabbath/Religious school and the Committee on Sinking Fund are included in this series. The Committee on Sinking Fund was concerned with the mortgages held on the Rockdale Avenue Temple. Because the majority of the material in this series is bound in volumes the chronology is often broken or overlapped.

Arrangement  The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 10. Folder 1. Broadway Temple (bills and notes), 1849-1860
Box 10. Folder 2. Reports, 1846-1973
Box 10. Folder 3. Bonds, 1852
Box 10. Folder 4. Broadway Temple (accounts), 1854-1855
Box 10. Folder 5. Broadway Temple (ledger), 1855
Box 10. Folder 6. Broadway Temple (sale of matzos) 2 vols., 1856-1858
Box 10. Folder 7. Bills and receipts, 1856-1881
Box 11. Folder 1. Broadway Temple (ledger), 1856-1869
Box 11. Folder 2. Broadway Temple (dues book), 1865-1868
Box 11. Folder 3. Broadway Temple, Mound St. Temple (treasurer's book), 1851-1883
Box 11. Folder 4. Mound St. Temple (cashbook), 1869-1880
Box 12. Folder 1. Mound St. Temple (cashbook), 1860-1887
Box 12. Folder 2. Mound St. Temple (treasurer's book), 1883-1907
Box 12. Folder 3. Mound St. Temple (bond book), 1885
Box 12. Folder 4. Mound St. Temple, Rockdale Temple (treasurer's receipts), 1890-1916
Box 13. Folder 1. Mound St. Temple (bond ledger), 1903-1907
Box 13. Folder 2. Mound St. Temple (cashbook), 1903-1907
Box 13. Folder 3. Mound St. Temple (ledger), 1906
Box 13. Folder 5. Mound St. Temple (cashbook), 1906-1907
Box 13. Folder 6. Mound St. Temple--Sabbath School (checkbook), 1867-1879
Box 13. Folder 7. Mound St. Temple--Religious School (accounts), 1869-1879
Box 13. Folder 8. Mound St. Temple--Religious School (payments), 1871-1897
Box 14. Folder 1. Mound St. Temple--Sabbath School (treasurer's receipts), 1869-1897
Box 14. Folder 2. Rockdale Temple (cashbook), 1916-1917
Box 14. Folder 4. Committee on Sinking Fund (proceedings), 1908-1917
Box 14. Folder 5. Committee on Sinking Fund (proceedings), 1918-1926
Box 14. Folder 6. Committee on Sinking Fund (proceedings), 1915-1926
Box 14. Folder 7. Committee on Sinking Fund (proceedings), 1915-1923
Box 14. Folder 8. Bequests [numerous funds], 1882-1953
Box X-10. Folder Treasurer's book (1 volume), 1907-1919
Box X-108. Folder Cashbooks (3 volumes), 1887-1915
Box X-109. Folder Ledgers (2 volumes), 1850-1869
Box X-110. Folder Ledgers (1 volume), 1869-1885
Box X-120. Folder Ledger containing list of members and their dues payments and a pew register, 1889-1903
Box X-119. Folder Record of dues payments, 1949
Series C. Minutes, 1835-1941

Extent 2.8 linear feet (4.5 Hollinger boxes and 1 oversize box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of the Board of Trustees minutes, the School Board records, congregational minutes, and Vestry records.

Arrangement The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 14. Folder 10. Vestry records, 1835-1857
Box 15. Folder 1. Vestry records, 1858-1888
Box 15. Folder 2. School Board minute book, 1854-1866
Box 15. Folder 4. Mound St. Temple congregational minutes, 1864-1890
Box 16. Folder 1. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1845-1869
Box 16. Folder 2. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1869-1889
Box 17. Folder 1. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1889-1904
Box 18. Folder 1. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1913-1918
Box 18. Folder 2. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1918-1924
Box 18. Folder 3. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1925-1931
Box 18. Folder 4. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1931-1936
Box 19. Folder 1. Board of Trustees (minute book), 1936-1941
Box X-2. Folder Congregational minutes (1 volume), 1893-1927

Series D. Committees, 1842-1957, undated

Extent 1.3 linear feet (2.5 Hollinger boxes and 1/3 of oversize box)

Scope and Content Note The Hebrew Relief Association and miscellaneous committees are at the end of this series. Additional reports of the presidents and vice presidents may be found in the Yearbook (1903-1960) in the Miscellaneous series.

Arrangement The series is arranged alphabetically by type of committee.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 19. Folder 2. Building Committee, 1849-1907
Box 19. Folder 3. Building Committee, 1846-1907
Box 19. Folder 4. Building Committee, 1903-1913
Box 20. Folder 1. Building Committee, 1915-1922
Box 20. Folder 2. Building Committee, 1923, 1957, undated
Box 20. Folder 3. Burial reports, 1853-1896
Box 20. Folder 4. Centenary Committee, 1923
Box 20. Folder 5. Charter and by-laws, 1842-1843
Box 20. Folder 7. Financial Committee reports, 1851-1860, 1916-1919
Box 20. Folder 8. Membership, 1850-1859
Box 21. Folder 1. Membership, 1860-1869
Box 21. Folder 2. Membership, 1870-1879
Box 21. Folder 3. Membership, 1880-1889
Box 21. Folder 5. Membership (ledger), undated
Box 21. Folder 6. President’s reports, 1852-1877
Box 21. Folder 8. Secretary’s reports, 1855-1872, 1918
Box 21. Folder 9. Sites and construction records, 1903-1907
Box 21. Folder 10. Treasurer’s reports, 1852-1881
Box 21. Folder 11. Vice-President’s reports, 1867-1886
Box 21. Folder 12. Hebrew Relief Association, 1870-1876
Box 21. Folder 13. Miscellaneous committee records, 1852-1867
Box X-10. Folder Roll of members (1 volume), 1867-1881

**Series E. Pew Deeds, 1836-1919**

**Extent** 0.7 linear feet (1 Hollinger box and 1/3 of oversize box)

**Scope and Content Note** Consists of records of seat holders at the Temple.

**Box and Folder Listing**

Box 22. Folder 1. Pew records, 1836-1855
Box 22. Folder 2. Pew deeds, 1852-1860
Box 22. Folder 3. Pew deeds, 1869-1895
Box 22. Folder 4. Miscellaneous pew records, 1853-1855, 1873, 1894, 1911, 1917, 1949, undated
Box 22. Folder 5. Miscellaneous pew records, 1853-1855, 1873, 1894, 1911, 1917, 1949, undated
Box X-10. Folder Pew deeds (1 volume), 1907-1919

**Series F. Miscellaneous, 1829-1960, undated**

**Extent** 3.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes and 2 oversize boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** The series is composed of an assortment of records, manuscripts, letters, printed material, and other items such as deeds, bonds, insurance policies, and lawsuits. Also, in this series are some of David Philipson's addresses and information on his estate which may be of interest. Among the printed items is the Yearbook for the congregation (1903-1960) and copies of the congregational Bulletin (1923-1931).
Box and Folder Listing

Box 23. Folder 1. Business letters, 1857-1896
Box 23. Folder 2. Bonds, deeds, and lawsuits [warranty deeds for lands on the south side of 8th St. east of Mound St. deeded to the New Jerusalem Society of Cincinnati, Ohio 1859 and 1860], 1859-1911
Box 23. Folder 3. Deeds and insurance policies, 1850-1890, 1960
Box 23. Folder 4. Notes, circa 1917
Box 23. Folder 5. Petitions, 1856-1919
Box 23. Folder 6. Philipson, David [addresses], 1889, undated
Box 23. Folder 7. Philipson, David [estate], 1849
Box 23. Folder 8. Staff, 1855-1887
Box 23. Folder 9. Printed material.
Box 23. Folder 10. Printed material.
Box 23. Folder 11. The Jewish Youth [used in the Bene Israel religious school], 1894
Box 23. Folder 12. Photostat copy of a legal agreement between K.K. Bene Yeshurun allowing members of the latter congregation to bury their dead in a cemetery owned by the former, 1853
Box 23. Folder 13. Photostat of the first three pew deeds for Bene Israel's first building on Sixth and Broadway [Broadway Temple], 1836
Box 23. Folder 14. Photostat copy of deed for land at corner of Sixth and Broadway, purchased by John Wood and later deeded to Bene Israel Congregation, 1829
Box 24. Folder 1. Rockdale Avenue Temple Bulletin, 1923-1931
Box 24. Folder 2. Yearbook [scattered issues], 1903-1936
Box 25. Folder 1. Yearbook [scattered issues], 1937-1960
Box X-37. Mortuary records (1 volume) [see also MF-2594], 1895-1942
Box X-111. Journal (1 volume), 1915-1917
Subject Tracings

Note: The following list of subjects is a selective index to many of the topics and individuals in the CORRESPONDENCE series of the CINCINNATI, OHIO--CONGREGATION BENE ISRAEL RECORDS. It is selective in that it only attempts to draw attention to the more significant items in the collection. It does not attempt to list every subject or individual nor does it try to indicate all places that a listed subject or individual appears in the collection. When used in conjunction with the Box and Folder List, the Subject Tracings should help the researcher locate topics. References are to boxes and folders: e.g., 7/2 means Box 7, Folder 2.

Adler, Cyrus 7/2
Anti-Semitism 4/5; 7/2, 3, 5, 7
Anti-Zionism 2/7
Calisch, Edward N. 3/5
Chestnut St. Cemetery 2/7
Ford, Henry 3/4
German Jewry 7/2
Gratz, Rebecca 5/1
Hebrew Union College 2/7; 3/4, 8; 8/4
Immigrants and Immigration [1924] 3/9; 4/2
Jewish Publication Society of America 6/1
Johnson, David I. 6/6
Kahn, Julius 3/5
Ku Klux Klan 3/7, 8
Levy, Clifton Harby 5/3
Marcuson, Isaac E. 4/2
Marshall, Louis 2/6
National Conference of Jews and Christians 7/1
Nazi Boycott 7/3
Subject Tracings

Palestine 2/6, 7
Reichert, Victor E. 4/3
Religious Education 3/8, 9; 4/1, 5; 6/1; 7/1, 3, 4; 8/5
Rosenau, William 2/4, 6, 7; 4/2; 6/9
Schulman, Samuel 3/3
Senior, Max 2/6, 7, 10
Singer, Isadore 3/5; 6/10; 7/8, 9
Social Welfare Activities 4/2
Taft, William Howard 2/7, 10
Union Prayer Book 3/6; 5/12
Wise, Stephen S. 5/3
Wolf, Simon 3/4
Wolsey, Louis 4/2; 7/6
World Union for Progressive Judaism 7/7
Zionism 2/4, 6, 7, 8, 9; 3/2, 5; 6/4, 5; 7/4; 8/8