



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Albert J. Amateau Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 604



Collection Summary

Title	Albert J. Amateau Papers
Dates	1937-1994
Collection Number	MS-604
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Amateau, Albert J., 1889-1996
Extent	1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)
Abstract	Miscellaneous correspondence and writings, including autobiographical notes, an oral history interview, and materials on Turkish and Sephardic Jews.
Language of the Material	English and Turkish

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Albert Jean Amateau was born on April 20, 1889, in Milas, Turkey; one in a family of six Sephardic brothers and sisters. He grew up in rural Ottoman Turkey, the son of a French-Turkish lawyer. Albert's father had been born in Turkey, during the period when Albert's grandfather served as the French consul in Izmir, Turkey.

In 1908 Amateau began studies at the University of Istanbul Law School, graduating in June 1910. While at the university Albert taught night classes for illiterate adults. His status as a teacher exempted him from military service. But as a result of the "Young Turks" revolution of 1908, the Turkish government changed the law in 1910 and he was expected to serve in the military. Since he did not wish to serve because he believed he would be killed, he decided to leave the country. Not having any money and afraid to contact his father, he had to persuade the captain of a French steamer to take him as far as Naples. He worked in Naples for three months as a dishwasher to make enough money to travel to the United States. He finally arrived in New York in August, 1910.

For the first few years in New York, Amateau worked at a succession of odd jobs, including teaching English and operation of automobiles to new immigrants. In 1913 he began working for the Society of the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf as a social worker assisting deaf Jews to acquire jobs. He had previously (1910-1911) worked in a similar capacity for the Industrial Removal Office.

In 1916 Amateau volunteered for the United States Army and served in World War I until 1918. While in Europe, he was wounded. After he returned from the Army, Amateau was ordained in 1920 at the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he became the first rabbi of a congregation of the deaf. He continued working for the Society for the Welfare of the Jewish Deaf until 1925 when he quit to found an import-export business. For the next 10 years he worked as a lawyer for Travelers Insurance Company in New York. In 1938 he was named Area Director for the Federal Wages and Hours Administration.

In 1940 he moved to Los Angeles and in 1941 started the Albert J. Amateau Foreign Language Service, a service providing translators for lipsync dubbing for the motion picture industry. The business continued in operation until at least 1989.

Amateau had a strong love for his homeland of Turkey. He was given an award by the Assembly of Turkish-American Associations, for his constant defense of Turkey while living in the United States. He wrote numerous letters in response to anti-Turkish references brought to his attention. He also worked hard to try to disprove accusations by Armenians against the Turkish during the days of the Ottoman Empire. In 1992, he helped found the American Society of Jewish Friends of Turkey and was named as its president.

In 1937, Amateau assisted with negotiations between Jews and Arabs of Palestine.

Amateau was instrumental in organizing Sephardic immigrants, organizing the First Sephardic Democratic Club in New York. He was a member and often leader of several other organizations: Brotherhood of Rhodes (New York), Sephardic Brotherhood (New York), National Organization of Jewish Social Workers, Masons and Rotary International.

On July 5, 1914, Amateau married his childhood sweetheart from Izmir, Turkey, Rebecca (Bekita) Nahum; she died in February 1976. In 1923 Albert and Bekita had a son, Rodney. On November 17, 1976, Albert married Edith nee Martin.

Amateau died at his home in Santa Rosa, California on February 6, 1996, at 106 years old.

Scope and Content	The Albert J. Amateau Collection describes the life of Albert J. Amateau as social worker, lawyer, businessman, author, advocate for Sephardic Jewry and a lifelong defender of his Turkish homeland. The collection includes correspondence, a transcript of an oral history interview, autobiographical notes, writings, and materials regarding Palestine and Portugal.
Arrangement	Organized into two (2) series: A. Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers, B. Biographical Information.
Terms of Access	The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.
Preferred Citation	Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Albert J. Amateau Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows: [Description and dates], Box #, Folder #. MS-604. Albert J. Amateau Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.
Provenance	Received from Mrs. Edith Amateau, Santa Rosa, Calif., 1996.
Processing Information	Processed by Kevin Proffitt and Joseph Greer, May 1998.

Index Terms

Subjects	Jews, Turkish / Sephardim
Personal Names	Amateau, Albert J., 1889-1996
Media	Oral histories

Series A. Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers, 1945-1994

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Arrangement

The series is arranged in two (2) subseries: 1. Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers on Turkish Jewry; 2. Correspondence and Papers.

Subseries 1. Miscellaneous Correspondence and Papers on Turkish Jewry, 1945-1994

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 1. Correspondence and papers, 1988-1994
- Box 1. Folder 2. Correspondence and papers, 1989-1993
- Box 1. Folder 3. Correspondence and papers, 1988-1993
- Box 1. Folder 4. Correspondence and papers, 1988-1993
- Box 1. Folder 5. Correspondence and papers, 1945-1993
- Box 1. Folder 6. Correspondence and papers, 1988-1993
- Box 2. Folder 1. Correspondence and papers, 1988-1992

Subseries 2. Correspondence and Papers, 1986-1994

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 2. Folder 2. American Association of Jewish Friends of Turkey, 1989
- Box 2. Folder 3. Assembly of Turkish American Associations, 1986-1990
- Box 2. Folder 4. Ciprut, Michael, 1987
- Box 2. Folder 5. de Vidas, Albert, 1986-1993
- Box 2. Folder 6. Erman, Nihat B., 1988-1989
- Box 2. Folder 7. Jerusalem, Isaac, 1990-1994
- Box 2. Folder 8. Kuzay, Tuncer M., 1987-1989
- Box 2. Folder 9. Levy, Louis N., 1988-1994
- Box 2. Folder 10. Maselin, Simon J., 1988
- Box 2. Folder 11. Nessim, Jose A., 1989-1990
- Box 2. Folder 12. Ott, Jacob M., 1990-1994
- Box 2. Folder 13. Peck, Abraham J., 1988-1994

Series B. Biographical Information, 1937-1991

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 3. Folder 1. "The Americanization of a Sephardic Turk" [oral history interview], 1986
- Box 3. Folder 2. Autobiographical notes, 1991
- Box 3. Folder 3. "David v. the Mighty Goliaths He Conquered.", 1968
- Box 3. Folder 4. Palestine, 1937-1938
- Box 3. Folder 5. Portuguese diary, 1945-1955