



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

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**A Finding Aid to the  
Marie Syrkin Papers**

**Manuscript Collection No. 615**



## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Marie Syrkin Papers
<b>Dates</b>	1915-1989
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-615
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Syrkin, Marie, 1899-1989
<b>Extent</b>	4 linear feet (10 Hollinger boxes)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English and Hebrew

## Administrative Information

<b>Biographical Sketch</b>	<p>Marie Syrkin was born in Berne, Switzerland, March 22, 1899, the daughter of Labor Zionist leader, Nachman Syrkin. She was brought to the U.S at the age of eight and lived in New York City.</p> <p>While attending Cornell University she met and married Aaron Bodomsky. She had two sons, the oldest died in 1924 after she was separated from Bodomsky and living in New York City teaching high school English. Syrkin taught in the public schools of New York City for 25 years and wrote her first book, <i>Your School, Your Children</i> (1944), from her experiences there.</p> <p>In 1930, she married the poet Charles Reznikoff, and in 1934, she helped found and became a major contributor to the Labor Zionist journal, <i>Jewish Frontier</i>. As a journalist, Syrkin edited the <i>Jewish Frontier</i> from 1948-1971, was editor of <i>Herzl Press</i>, and served on the editorial boards of <i>Midstream</i> and <i>Middle East Review</i>. She became well known as a polemicist and advocate for the Zionist cause and Israel. Following World War II, Syrkin went to Germany as a representative of B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations to find suitable applicants for Hillel scholarships to American universities among survivors of the Holocaust. She traveled to displaced person camps and interviewed numerous survivors. Her book, <i>Blessed Is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance</i> (1957), grew out of these experiences and is believed to be the first work in English about Jewish resistance under the Nazis.</p> <p>Syrkin accepted a position on the faculty of Brandeis University in 1950, teaching humanities and literature, a post she held until she retired in 1966 to become Professor Emeritus. In the 1960's, she served on the World Zionist Executive as the American representative for the Labor Party, and as honorary president of the Labor Zionist movement in the United States. Syrkin was a lifelong friend and confidante of Israel's Prime Minister, Golda Meir, and published her biography, <i>Golda Meir: Israel's Leader</i> in 1969.</p> <p>Throughout the 1970's and 1980's, Syrkin continued to publish articles and book reviews on various political and cultural subjects. She was also in demand as a public speaker. After the death of Reznikoff in 1976, she moved from New York City to Santa Monica, California. In 1979, she published a volume of her poetry, <i>Gleanings: A Diary in Verse</i>, and in 1980, a book about Israel, <i>The State of the Jews</i>. Marie Syrkin died on February 1, 1989 at the age of eighty-nine.</p>
<b>Scope and Content</b>	<p>Papers consist of correspondence, poetry, published and unpublished articles, addresses, translations, class lecture notes, materials pertaining to Syrkin's work as a representative for Hillel seeking out scholarship recipients in displaced persons camps after World War II, and miscellaneous items. Important correspondents include Nachman Syrkin, David Ben-Gurion, Golda Meir, Irving Howe, Felix Frankfurter, Saul Bellow, Diana Trilling and Allen Ginsberg.</p>
<b>Arrangement</b>	<p>This collection is arranged in eight (8) series: A. Correspondence; B. Diary; C. Poetry; D. Articles and Addresses; E. Translations; F. Class Lecture Notes and Syllabi; G. B'nai B'rith Hillel Displaced Persons Scholarships; H. Miscellaneous.</p>
<b>Terms of Access</b>	<p>The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.</p>
<b>Preferred Citation</b>	<p>Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Marie Syrkin Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:</p> <p>[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-615. Marie Syrkin Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.</p>
<b>Provenance</b>	<p>Received from David Brodansky, Seattle, Wash., 1993.</p>

## Index Terms

- Subjects** Holocaust survivors / Jewish educators / Jewish journalists / Jewish women / Poets, American / Refugee camps / Zionism
- Personal Names** Ben-Gurion, David, 1886-1973 / Frankfurter, Felix, 1882-1965 / Ginsberg, Allen, 1926-1997 / Meir, Golda, 1898-1978 / Reznikoff, Charles, 1894-1976 / Syrkin, Marie, 1899-1989 / Syrkin, Nachman, 1868-1924

## Series A. Correspondence, 1915-1988

**Extent** 0.6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Series A consists mostly of personal correspondence with friends and family. There are letters between Marie and her father, Nachman Syrkin (1919-1924) and letters between Marie and a close girlhood friend, Eugenia Shafran (1917-1926) which give insight into Marie's life and concerns as an adolescent and young woman. Another significant group of letters is from Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, written while she took temporary residence in Reno, Nevada, awaiting a divorce from her first husband. Syrkin and Reznikoff exchanged letters almost daily for a four month period, February through May, 1930. Reznikoff's letters to Marie are not part of this collection, but were given by Syrkin's heirs to the University of San Diego where they are part of the Charles Reznikoff Papers. Other correspondence in this series includes letters from Golda Meir's assistant and Meir herself concerning Syrkin's biography of Meir, and two short letters from David Ben-Gurion.

**Arrangement** Correspondence is arranged by correspondent, then chronologically within each file folder.

## Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 1. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin, 1919-1924
- Box 1. Folder 2. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin, undated
- Box 1. Folder 3. Nachman Syrkin to Marie Syrkin [postcards], 1919-1921
- Box 1. Folder 4. Marie Syrkin to Nachman Syrkin, 1919-1920
- Box 1. Folder 5. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, 1917-1918
- Box 1. Folder 6. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, 1919-1926
- Box 1. Folder 7. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, circa 1917-1920
- Box 1. Folder 8. Marie Syrkin to Eugenia Shafran, circa 1917-1920
- Box 1. Folder 9. Eugenia Shafran to Marie Syrkin, 1919-1920
- Box 1. Folder 10. Samuel Roth to Marie Syrkin, 1916-1917
- Box 1. Folder 11. Marie Syrkin to Maurice Samuel, 1917
- Box 1. Folder 12. Maurice Samuel to Marie Syrkin, 1917-1961
- Box 1. Folder 13. Laura Reding (Reichenthal) to Marie Syrkin, 1923-1924
- Box 1. Folder 14. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1915-1924
- Box 1. Folder 15. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1928-1929
- Box 1. Folder 16. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1930 February-March
- Box 1. Folder 17. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1930 April-May
- Box 1. Folder 18. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1933
- Box 1. Folder 19. Marie Syrkin to Charles Reznikoff, 1936

- Box 2. Folder 1. Correspondence from Israel, 1949-1983
- Box 2. Folder 2. Hayon Greenburg to Marie Syrkin, 1937
- Box 2. Folder 3. David Ben-Gurion to Marie Syrkin, 1962-1967
- Box 2. Folder 4. Golda Meir to Marie Syrkin, 1966-1967
- Box 2. Folder 5. Irving Howe to Marie Syrkin, 1976-1985
- Box 2. Folder 6. Asenath Petrie to Marie Syrkin, 1980-1989
- Box 2. Folder 7. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1936-1987
- Box 2. Folder 8. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1987-1988

## **Series B. Diary, 1915**

**Scope and Content Note** Series B is a handwritten journal kept by Syrkin from March to May 1915 when she was 16. In it she relates her feelings and emotions about her future, her work, school, and relationships.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 2. Folder 9. Marie Syrkin's diary, 1915 March-May

## **Series C. Poetry, 1979-1980, undated**

**Extent** 0.6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Series C consists of manuscript, typescript, and copies of published poems written by Syrkin. The poems span her life from early adolescence to old age, but most are undated. Also included in this series is a file of correspondence and reviews pertaining to her book, *Gleanings: A Diary in Verse*, published in 1979, and copies of poems by friends, Samuel Roth and Asenath Petrie.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 2. Folder 10. Poetry - Ithaca, undated
- Box 2. Folder 11. Early poetry - mostly adolescent (not for publication), undated
- Box 2. Folder 12. Light/satirical verse, undated
- Box 2. Folder 13. Poems - juvenile, undated
- Box 2. Folder 14. Poems - love and personal, undated
- Box 2. Folder 15. In Memoriam and other poems, undated
- Box 2. Folder 16. *Gleanings: A Diary in Verse* [typescript], undated
- Box 2. Folder 17. Poems after publication of *Gleanings*, undated
- Box 3. Folder 1. Bound volumes of manuscript verse, 1979
- Box 3. Folder 2. Poems - typescript, undated
- Box 3. Folder 3. Poems - revised, undated
- Box 3. Folder 4. Poems to be revised, undated
- Box 3. Folder 5. Verse - unfinished and unpublished, undated
- Box 3. Folder 6. Miscellaneous poems [German, author unknown], undated

Box 3. Folder 7. Poems by Samuel Roth, undated

Box 3. Folder 8. Poems by Asenath Petrie, undated

Box 3. Folder 9. Reviews and correspondence regarding Gleanings: A Diary In Verse, 1979-1980

Box 3. Folder 10. Marie Syrkin's copy of The Waste Land and Other Poems by T. S. Eliot with notes in the margins, undated

## **Series D. Articles and Addresses, 1925-1989 (bulk 1960-1988)**

**Extent** 1 linear foot (2.5 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Series D is the largest series and consists of Syrkin's writings and lectures. The series reflects her interests in politics, culture, and literature, and her position as an advocate and interpreter of Zionism and Israel in the United States. There are copies of published articles, arranged chronologically from 1925-1988, and undated typescript articles and addresses, mostly from the 1960's through the 1980's. There is a separate file with Syrkin's articles published in the Jewish Frontier (1937-1983) arranged chronologically. Additional materials in this series include Syrkin's letters to the editor of various publications, lectures and resources re: Zionism, typescript copies of book reviews, and a special issue of Jewish Frontier dedicated to Syrkin in 1983.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 4. Folder 1. Published articles by Syrkin, 1925-1969

Box 4. Folder 2. Published articles by Syrkin, 1970-1979

Box 4. Folder 3. Published articles by Syrkin, 1980-1988

Box 4. Folder 4. Published articles by Syrkin, undated

Box 4. Folder 5. Articles in Jewish Frontier by Syrkin, 1937-1983

Box 4. Folder 6. Articles and response regarding feminism, 1985

Box 5. Folder 1. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s

Box 5. Folder 2. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s

Box 5. Folder 3. Typescript articles and addresses, 1960s-1980s

Box 5. Folder 4. Typescript articles - current and recent, 1988-1989

Box 5. Folder 5. Typescript book reviews, 1960s-1980s

Box 6. Folder 1. Lectures and articles regarding Zionism, undated

Box 6. Folder 2. Lectures and articles regarding Zionism, undated

Box 6. Folder 3. Zionism - resources, undated

Box 6. Folder 4. Editing of Golda Meir's speeches, 1966-1971

Box 6. Folder 5. Biblio Press, 1988

Box 6. Folder 6. Letters to the editor, 1966-1983

Box 6. Folder 7. Golda Meir play, 1976-1977

Box 6. Folder 8. Issue of Jewish Frontier, 1942

Box 6. Folder 9. Tribute to Syrkin issue of Jewish Frontier, 1983

## **Series E. Translations, undated**

**Extent** 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Series E consists of three undated files of Syrkin's translations of Russian, German, and Yiddish poetry into English.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 6. Folder 10. Verse, undated

Box 6. Folder 11. Ghetto poetry, undated

Box 6. Folder 12. Russian Poet, Aliger, undated

## **Series F. Class Lecture Notes and Syllabi, undated**

**Extent** 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

**Scope and Content Note** Series F comes from Syrkin's tenure on the faculty of Brandeis University teaching humanities and literature from 1950-1966. The files consist of outlines of lectures, listings of resource materials, copies of exams and course syllabi.

**Arrangement** The files are arranged alphabetically by author and/or course title.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

Box 7. Folder 1. American Jewish literature, undated

Box 7. Folder 2. American Jewish novel, undated

Box 7. Folder 3. Cervantes, undated

Box 7. Folder 4. Chaucer, undated

Box 7. Folder 5. Dante, undated

Box 7. Folder 6. Dickens, undated

Box 7. Folder 7. English 1, undated

Box 7. Folder 8. English 10, undated

Box 7. Folder 9. Dreiser, undated

Box 7. Folder 10. Dostoyevsky, undated

Folder undated, 7 (11)

Box 7. Folder 12. Faulkner, undated

Box 7. Folder 13. Faust, undated

Box 7. Folder 14. Hebrew Literature, undated

Box 7. Folder 15. Hemingway, undated

Box 7. Folder 16. Heroic Age - Greece, undated

Box 7. Folder 17. Homer, undated

Box 7. Folder 18. Humanities 1, undated

## **Series G. B'nai B'rith Hillel Displaced Persons Scholarships, 1934-1982 (bulk 1946-1947)**

**Extent** 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Series G contains materials related to Syrkin's work in German refugee camps following World War II seeking out recipients for Hillel scholarships in American universities. Included is background information, correspondence, applications, notes, writings by displaced person, and a collection of miscellaneous documents and notes pertaining to the Holocaust.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 9. Folder 1. Hillel DP camp scholarships: background, 1965-1982
- Box 9. Folder 2. Hillel Foundation, 1945-1947
- Box 9. Folder 3. Rabbi Phillip S. Bernstein correspondence, 1946
- Box 9. Folder 4. Hillel students, 1946-1947
- Box 9. Folder 5. Hillel students, 1947
- Box 9. Folder 6. Writings of displaced persons [German/Hebrew], 1946-1947
- Box 9. Folder 7. Syrkin's notes on DP camps and students, 1946-1947
- Box 9. Folder 8. Children: conditions and rehabilitation, 1946-1947
- Box 9. Folder 9. Zibbutz (Zionist Youth), 1946
- Box 9. Folder 10. Holocaust: documents and notes, 1934-1961

## **Series H. Miscellaneous, 1919-1986**

**Extent** 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

**Scope and Content Note** Series H includes a Secretary's book of the Zionist Society of Cornell University (1919), a file of resource materials on conservative Jewish women, a brochure from the Brooklyn Jewish Center Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, and materials relating to the Peace Now petition signed by Syrkin, and her Golda Meir Award in 1986.

### **Box and Folder Listing**

- Box 10. Folder 1. Secretary's book of Zionist Society of Cornell University, 1919
- Box 10. Folder 2. Tranced notes and articles, undated
- Box 10. Folder 3. Conservative Jewish Women, 1970
- Box 10. Folder 4. Conservative Jewish Women, 1965-1971
- Box 10. Folder 5. Brooklyn Jewish Center Institute of Jewish Studies for Adults, 1940-1941
- Box 10. Folder 6. Peace Now petition, 1980
- Box 10. Folder 7. Golda Meir Award, 1980
- Box 10. Folder 8. Odds and ends of interest [notes and quotations], undated