



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Aaron Family Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 621

Collection Summary

Title	Aaron Family Papers, 1896-1990
Collection Number	MS-621
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Aaron family
Extent	1.8 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes and 1 small box)
Language of the Material	English

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Louis Israel Aaron (1840-1919)

Louis I. Aaron was born in Moschin, Province Posen, Prussia, on October 18, 1840. He came to the United States in 1857, living first in New York, then Atlanta, Georgia, in New York again, and finally settling in Pittsburgh in 1861.

Louis Aaron's first jobs were in dry goods. He was then engaged in the grain and malting business in Pittsburgh from 1879 until 1896. In 1897 he purchased an interest in the Homer Laughlin China Company. He served as president of that company from 1898 until 1910 and was an active director until his death in 1919. He and his associates established the town of Newell, West Virginia, which became one of the important pottery centers of the country. In addition to his business activities, Aaron was a leader in local and regional Jewish communal organizations as well as serving as Trustee of Congregation Rodef Shalom in Pittsburgh. Some of the organizations he was affiliated with were the Hebrew Benevolent Society of Pittsburgh, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, Jewish Free Loan Society, National Farm School, Guskay Orphanage and Home, and the Hebrew Institute of Pittsburgh.

In 1866, he married Mina Lippman. The Aarons had two sons, Marcus (1869-1954) and Charles I. Aaron (1873-1947). Louis Aaron died on December 31, 1919.

Marcus Aaron (1869-1954)

Marcus Aaron was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 14, 1869, son of Louis Israel Aaron and Mina (Lippman) Aaron.

Aaron was a lifelong resident of Pittsburgh. He was educated in the public schools and attended the preparatory department of the University of Pittsburgh. An illness affecting his eyesight caused him to withdraw before graduating, and although he never returned to study, he was deeply interested in education throughout his life.

Marcus Aaron entered the grain and malting business with his father, and in 1897, joined the elder Aaron in the Homer Laughlin China Company. Aaron succeeded his father as President of the company in 1910, serving in that capacity until 1940 when he became Chairman of the Board until his death in 1954.

In 1911, Aaron was appointed a member of the Board of Public Education of the School District of Pittsburgh. Through successive reappointments, he served as a member of the Board for 36 years. He became Vice-President of the Board in 1920, and President from 1922 until 1942. Throughout his tenure on the Board, he was a leader in the cause of public education, seeking wider public support for schools and fighting for professional integrity and autonomy of teachers as well as honesty and efficiency in school administration. As President of the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education, Aaron also served as a Trustee of the Carnegie Institute and of the Carnegie Library and the Carnegie Institute of Technology.

Marcus Aaron taught in the Religious School of Rodef Shalom Congregation in Pittsburgh and served on the Board of Directors of the congregation for fifty-six years. He was Vice-President from 1910-1930, President from 1930-1941, and Honorary President until he died in 1954. Aaron was a member of the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College from 1917-1930. He served also on the Executive Board of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and as a Trustee of the Jewish Publication Society of America.

In 1898, Marcus Aaron married Stella Hamburger. They had two children, Marcus Lester Aaron (1900-1994) and Fannie Hamburger Aaron (Mrs Louis Kossuth Friedman). He died in Pittsburgh on June 21, 1954.

Marcus Lester Aaron (1900-1994)

Born in Pittsburgh on October 8, 1900, the son of Marcus and Stella (Hamburger) Aaron, Marcus Lester Aaron was educated at Princeton University and Harvard Law School. Following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, Aaron was involved with the Homer Laughlin China Company for more than sixty-five years while devoting a lifetime of service to Rodef Shalom.

Aaron was elected to the Board of Trustees of Rodef Shalom in 1943. In 1946 he was elected vice-president and also served as chair of the Worship Committee. In 1953, he was elected Temple president, serving in that capacity until 1972 when he retired and was named a trustee for life. During his years of tenure, Aaron was a driving force behind the construction of a major addition and improvements to the Temple, and under his leadership, membership of Rodef Shalom also vastly expanded.

Aaron was active in the leadership of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, serving on UAHC's Committee on Revision of the Prayer Book and on the Board of Managers for the Department of Synagogue and School Extension. Throughout the 1930's, he served as the UAHC's representative to the World Union for Progressive Judaism's International Youth Committee and was a member of the World Union's governing body. Aaron also served on the Board of Governors of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion from 1930 until 1975 and as an honorary governor from 1975-1994.

Marcus Lester Aaron died in Pittsburgh on April 2, 1994.

For additional papers and more information on the Aaron family, please visit the Rauh Jewish Archives <https://www.jewishfamilieshistory.org/entry/aaron-family/>

For additional Marcus Lester Aaron correspondence, please visit the Princeton University Library https://findingaids.princeton.edu/catalog/AC420_c2

Scope and Content The Aaron Family papers is comprised of correspondence and other papers relating to Louis, Marcus, and Marcus Lester's involvement in the activities of major Jewish organizationsDLthe bulk involving their leadership in Rodef Shalom Congregation.

Arrangement This collection is arranged in Five (5) series:
Series A. Louis Aaron
Series B. Marcus Aaron
Series C. Marcus Lester Aaron
Series D. Rodef Shalom Congregation (Pittsburgh, Pa.)
Series E. Miscellaneous

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

Preferred Citation Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Aaron Family Papers and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:
[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-621. Aaron Family Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance The Aaron Family Papers were received from Frances Aaron Hess of New York, NY in 1996.

Processing Information Processed by Dorothy Smith and Eleanor Lawhorn, November 1997. Reprocessed by Joe Weber in October 2021.

Index Terms

Subjects Jews -- Pennsylvania -- Pittsburgh / Synagogues -- Pennsylvania -- Pittsburgh
Personal Names Aaron, Louis I. (Louis Israel), 1840-1919 / Aaron, Marcus Lester, 1900-1994 / Aaron, Marcus, 1869-1954 / Freehof, Solomon Bennett, 1892-1990 / Goldenson, Samuel H. (Samuel Harry), 1878-1962 / Hamburger, Phillip / Jacob, Walter, 1930- / Krauskopf, Joseph, 1858-1923 / Lippman, Abraham / Montagu, Lilian Helen, 1873-1963
Corporate Names Aaron family / Congregation Rodef Shalom (Pittsburgh, Pa.) / National Farm School (Doylestown, Pa.) / Union of American Hebrew Congregations / World Union for Progressive Judaism

Series A. Louis Aaron, 1899-1922, undated

Extent .2 linear feet (.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note This series contains correspondence and addresses relating to Louis Aaron. A bulk of the series is comprised of Aaron's involvement with the National Farm School and includes correspondence with Rabbi Joseph Krauskopf.

Arrangement This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Addresses, undated

Box 1. Folder 2. American Jewish Historical Society, 1913, 1922

Box 1. Folder 3. General correspondence, 1899

Box 1. Folder 4. The Jewish Agricultural and Industrial Aid Society. Jewish Settlement in Wyoming, 1907, 1911

Box 1. Folder 5. National Farm School (Doylestown, Pa.). Correspondence, 1899-1918

Box 1. Folder 6. National Farm School (Doylestown, Pa.). Board minutes and reports, 1906-1918, undated

Series B. Marcus Aaron, 1899-1954, undated

Extent .2 linear feet (.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note This series contains correspondence, addresses, and other papers relating primarily to Marcus Aaron's involvement with Rodef Shalom and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC). Also included are letters relating to the Pittsburgh Board of Education and material relating to antisemitism in Pittsburgh and the antisemitic policies of hotels.

Arrangement This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 7. Addresses and notes, 1921-1938, undated

Box 1. Folder 8. Antisemitism and antisemitic hotel policies, 1899-1906, undated

Box 1. Folder 9. General correspondence, 1916-1949

Box 1. Folder 10. Miscellaneous, 1922-1954

Box 1. Folder 11. Union of American Hebrew Congregations Biennials, 1925-1927

Series C. Marcus Lester Aaron, 1922-1990, undated

Extent .6 linear feet (1.5 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note This series contains correspondence, addresses, and other papers relating to Marcus Lester Aaron's involvement with Rodef Shalom, Hebrew Union College, the UAHC, and the World Union of Progressive Judaism including several letters from Lily Montagu. The series also documents Aaron's long friendship with Rabbi Samuel Goldenson, even after he left Rodef Shalom for Temple Emanu-El in New York.

Arrangement This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 12. Addresses and writings, 1925-1932, undated
- Box 2. Folder 1. Addresses and writings, 1959-1979, undated
- Box 2. Folder 2. General correspondence, 1922-1953
- Box 2. Folder 3. General correspondence, 1953-1963
- Box 2. Folder 4. General correspondence, 1964-1967
- Box 2. Folder 5. General correspondence, 1968-1990, undated
- Box 2. Folder 6. National Federation of Temple Brotherhoods and National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, 1924-1929, undated
- Box 2. Folder 7. "Reasons for Confirmation" notebook, undated
- Box 2. Folder 8. Seventieth birthday, 1970
- Box 2. Folder 9. Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) biennials, 1925-1927
- Box 3. Folder 1. UAHC and Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion Development Fund for American Judaism, 1960-1961
- Box 3. Folder 2. UAHC. Proposed resolutions, 1963
- Box 3. Folder 3. UAHC. Revision of Union Prayerbook, 1929-1934
- Box 3. Folder 4. World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ), 1930-1934
- Box 3. Folder 5. WUPJ, 1935-1937
- Box 3. Folder 6. WUPJ, 1938-1939, undated

Series D. Rodef Shalom Congregation (Pittsburgh, Pa.), 1896-1984, undated

Extent 1.5 Hollinger boxes

Scope and Content Note This series contains papers relating to Rodef Shalom, its boards and committees, rabbis, and congregation membership. While a few of the items are from Marcus Aaron's presidency, most of the series is from Marcus Lester Aaron's tenure as vice-president and president of the congregation.

Arrangement This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 3. Folder 7. Annual and special meetings of the congregation, 1917-1974, undated
- Box 3. Folder 8. Board of Governors and Board of Trustees, 1904-1969, undated
- Box 3. Folder 9. Capital Fund Campaign and financials, 1953-1970, undated
- Box 3. Folder 10. Centennial and building dedication, 1953-1956
- Box 3. Folder 11. Committees, 1900-1969, undated
- Box 4. Folder 1. Freehof, Solomon, 1933-1972, undated
- Box 4. Folder 2. General correspondence, 1963-1971
- Box 4. Folder 3. Goldenson, Samuel, 1918-1978, undated
- Box 4. Folder 4. History of Rodef Shalom, 1954-1976, undated
- Box 4. Folder 5. Letters to congregation membership, 1956-1964

Box 4. Folder 6. Letters to congregation membership, 1965-1971

Box 4. Folder 7. Miscellaneous, 1896-1984, undated

Box 4. Folder 8. New rabbi search and selection of Walter Jacob, 1966

Box 4. Folder 9. New rabbi search and selection of Walter Jacob, 1966

Box 4. Folder 10. New temple dedication, 1901

Series E. Miscellaneous, 1910-1976, undated

Extent .2 linear feet (1 small box)

Scope and Content Note This series includes newspaper clippings relating to the Aarons and Rodef Shalom, as well as tributes and memorials for members of the extended family who were also heavily involved with Rodef Shalom.

Arrangement This series is arranged alphabetically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 5. Folder 1. Abraham Lippman tributes, 1910

Box 5. Folder 2. Newspaper clippings, 1922-1976, undated

Box 5. Folder 3. Phillip Hamburger memorial, 1921