Collection Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>United Order of True Sisters Records, 1864-1979</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection Number</td>
<td>MS-638</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repository</td>
<td>The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creator</td>
<td>United Order of True Sisters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>5.8 linear feet (9 Hollinger boxes, 1 small Hollinger box, and 2 oversize boxes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language of the Material</td>
<td>English and German</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

The Unabhängiger Orden des Treue Schwestern or the United Order of True Sisters (UOTS) was founded in 1846 by a dozen women led by Henrietta Bruckmann, wife of New York physician Dr. Phillip Bruckmann. In order to strengthen the credibility of the group, Henrietta sought the support of her husband as well as Temple Emanu-El associate rabbi, the Rev. Dr. Leo Merzbacher, and Dr. James Mitchels, an early B'nai B'rith leader. The original members of the order all belonged to Temple Emanu-El. They were of German Jewish ancestry and formed this secret order devoted to charity.

The UOTS followed the typical organization of the time period, with written constitutions and by-laws adopted by the membership. Their objectives were "to unite its members in sisterly affection and esteem" in addition to charitable work. Their male advisors helped them to develop the first installation ceremony. Rituals and degrees were also formalized and published. In 1883, the publication of the newsletter, The Echo began. This publication gave information about the different activities of the chapters, the charity recipients, and details of the ritualized ceremonies.

The UOTS has retained the Jewish, if not German, part of their identity. In 1892, the first English speaking chapter was formed. In 1918, the last chapter meeting in German was conducted. The UOTS's chief charitable concerns now have to do with cancer and cancer treatment centers.

Growth in the number of chapters continues, although the overall membership has declined since 1945. The first chapter was the Immanuel Lodge #1 (so named because its membership consisted of members of the Emanu-El congregation), and in 1851 the UOTS created the national Grand Lodge. Immanuel was the first chapter to sign the Grand Lodge charter. Philadelphia also opened a lodge in 1851 and, in 1874, Johanna Lodge No. 9 became the first Midwestern chapter, located in Chicago, Illinois. In the early 1960s, the United Order formalized its commitment to expansion by creating a National Expansion chairman for membership. As recently as 1978, a new chapter was formed in Suffolk County, New York.

Scope and Content

The United Order of True Sisters Records describe the governance and activities of the fraternal organization between 1864-1979. The collection contains executive minutes, convention records, programs, publications, ritual books, financial records and photographs.

Arrangement


Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the United Order of True Sisters Records and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-638. United Order of True Sisters Records. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance

Received from Rita Lipkin, president of the United Order True Sisters, Albany, N.Y., October 1999.

Processing Information


Index Terms

Subjects: Jewish women / Jews -- Societies, etc.

Corporate Names: United Order True Sisters
Series A. Constitutions, 1855-1894

Scope and Content Note  Consists of a handwritten copy of the first constitution and the roll-call vote accepting it. The constitution was later used as a membership book and contains a listing of members, chapters, and some addresses.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Constitution with membership rolls having various dates, 1855-1894

Series B. Annual Meeting of the Grand Lodge/National Conventions, 1864-1979

Extent  2.4 linear feet (6 Hollinger boxes)

Scope and Content Note  Consists of minutes of meetings of the Grand Lodge (national organization). Minutes prior to 1894 are in German. There is a break in the series between 1922 and 1940. After this time, the series contains the programs and addresses of the national convention in addition to the minutes of the Grand Lodge.

Arrangement  The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 2. Grand Lodge meeting minutes [German], 1864-1876
Box 1. Folder 3. Minutes, 1876-1880 January
Box 1. Folder 4. Minutes, 1876 March-1880 January
Box 1. Folder 5. Minutes, 1880 December-1885 December
Box 1. Folder 6. Minutes, 1885 December-1896 December
Box 2. Folder 1. Minutes, 1907 January-1916 January
Box 2. Folder 2. Minutes, 1916 February-1922 March
Box 2. Folder 3. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1940
Box 2. Folder 4. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1941
Box 2. Folder 5. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1942
Box 2. Folder 6. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1943
Box 2. Folder 7. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1946
Box 2. Folder 8. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1947
Box 2. Folder 9. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1948
Box 2. Folder 10. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1949
Box 3. Folder 1. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1950
Box 3. Folder 2. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1951
Box 3. Folder 3. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1952
Box 3. Folder 4. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1953
Box 3. Folder 5. Meeting program and convention minutes, 1953
Series C. Financial Records, 1927-1951

Extent 0.5 linear feet (0.5 oversize box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of a board of subscribers book which contains information concerning financial donors to the national headquarters of the UOTS, known as “the clubhouse.”

Box and Folder Listing

Box X-404. Folder 1. Board of subscriber books [names, addresses, amounts], 1927-1951

Series D. Publications, 1884-1975

Extent 2.3 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes, 1.5 oversize box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of the run of The Echo, the official newsletter of the United Order. The publication varies from monthly to three times yearly. Reports of the meeting of the Grand Lodge in an abbreviated fashion are included.

Arrangement This series is arranged chronologically.
Box and Folder Listing

Box X-404. Folder 2. The Echo [German], 1884-1905
Box X-405. Folder 1-3. The Echo, 1906-1924
Box 7. Folder 1-7. The Echo, 1931-1951
Box 8. Folder 1-10. The Echo, 1952-1975 November

Series E. Ritual Books and Prayers, 1895-1953

Extent 0.2 linear feet (0.5 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Consists of ritual books, manuals of degrees, prayers for the death of a sister, and lodge installation services. Earlier material is in both German and English.

Arrangement The series is arranged chronologically.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 9. Folder 1. Manual of degrees, 1895
Box 9. Folder 2. Ritual book [German], 1901
Box 9. Folder 6. Prayers for the death of a sister [German and English], undated
Box 9. Folder 7. Installation of lodge service, undated

Series F. Programs and Photographs, 1939-1971

Extent .4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)

Scope and Content Note Contains anniversary programs and photographs. Of special interest is a scrapbook of photographs from the 1945 convention.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 9. Folder 8. True Sisters Day at World Fair program, 1939
Box 10. Folder 1. Scrapbook of photos [mostly from Grand Lodge meeting and convention], 1945