



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

**A Finding Aid to the
Felson and Raphaelson Family
Papers**

Manuscript Collection No. 849



Collection Summary

Title	Felson and Raphaelson Family Papers, 1900-2011, undated (bulk 1943-1975)
Collection Number	MS-849
Repository	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
Creator	Felson Family
Extent	1.2 linear feet (3 Hollinger boxes)
Language of the Material	English and Hebrew

Administrative Information

Biographical Sketch

Walter Felson was born in Newport, Kentucky, on 12 September 1908. He became a general practitioner and opened a medical practice in Greenfield, Ohio. In 1932 Walter married Roslyn Marcus. Walter left his medical practice in September 1942 in order to enlist in the US Army. He entered the US army as a captain and medical doctor, company commander of Company C, in the 310th Medical Battalion of the 85th Infantry Division. His unit went overseas first to Morocco, and then Algeria, before eventually going to Italy. During his time abroad, Walter wrote detailed letters to his wife and family. Walter came back to the US in late 1945 and resumed his medical practice. Walter and Roslyn had three children, Judy, Elaine, and Jerry. Walter died in 1980.

Benjamin Felson was born on 21 October 1913. In his early childhood his family moved from Kentucky to Cincinnati. He attended the University of Cincinnati and its medical school, earning his medical degree in 1935. It was during his time at the University of Cincinnati that he met his future wife, Virginia 'Ginny' Raphaelson.

Virginia 'Ginny' Raphaelson was born on 12 October 1914, in Newport, Kentucky to Jacob and Ida (Berman) Raphaelson. She had two older sisters: Nettie (1903-1933) and Selma (1906-1978). Ginny attended Hughes High School and during her senior year she met Ben Felson at a school dance. The couple got married in 1936. Ginny graduated with her undergraduate degree in sociology in the summer of that year, with Ben completing his residency at Cincinnati General Hospital. Ginny continued her graduate studies in social work.

In the early years of their marriage, the couple moved around for Ben's job as a radiologist. In 1942, Ben entered the U.S. Army Medical Corps and started his army training. During his time as chief of radiology at the 28th General Hospital in Europe, Ben managed to write his wife and family frequently. The Felson family letter chain between siblings and their spouses kept all members up to date about the brother's various activities.

At the time of Ben's discharge from the U.S. Army in 1945, his rank was major and he had been recognized numerous times for his leadership and bravery. Ben went on to accept a full-time position in radiology at Cincinnati General Hospital and at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. By 1951, Benjamin Felson became the director of radiology at Cincinnati General. Ben had a major interest in the development of radiology in Israel. From 1973 until his death in 1988, Felson continued actively teaching as professor emeritus of radiology. Benjamin Felson died on 22 October 1988. Ben and Ginny had five children: Steven, Nancy, Marcus, Richard, and Edward.

Ginny was an active participant and volunteer in programs such as the American Red Cross and Cincinnati Public Schools. Ginny died on 30 June 2016 at the age of 101.

Jacob Raphaelson was born in the 1876 in Yanova, a township in Lithuania to an Orthodox Jewish family. He came to the United States in 1892 and initially settled in Fall River, Massachusetts before moving to Toledo, Ohio. For several years, Raphaelson traveled around the Midwest selling and fitting eyeglasses. In 1899, he attended Northern Illinois College of Ophthalmology and Otology, where he earned his optical diploma in 1900. He was an early pioneer in research of myopia (nearsightedness) prevention. In 1920, he received a diploma with the title Doctor of Optometry from the Needles Institute of Optometry. In 1956, he formed a nonprofit corporation called the Research Foundation for the Prevention of Myopia. Raphaelson published several books and articles on the topic. During his life and after his death, Selma and Virginia were both active in advocating for their father's medical work. He died in March 1970.

Jacob Raphaelson married Ida Berman of Newport, Kentucky on 6 May 1902. Ida was born in Newport, Kentucky around 1883/1884. Her father was a cantor, a shochet, and a mohel in the Jewish community of Newport, in addition to his being a successful businessman. Jacob and Ida had three daughters: Nettie, Selma and Virginia. Ida died in 1963.

Selma Raphaelson, was born on 26 December 1906 in Newport, Kentucky, to Jacob and Ida Raphaelson. She was one of the first women to graduate from the University of Cincinnati's College of Law, in 1929, having completed her bachelor's in 1927, and soon became the associate and law partner of former Judge Chester R. Shook. Throughout her law career, she worked extensively in the area of civil rights, domestic relations, and consumer frauds. Selma retired from the law practice in 1960. She then traveled and was a dean of students, an ombudsman, a teacher, a legal aid volunteer and employee, a juvenile court officer, and a tribal lawyer for Native Americans and also Alaskan Natives. She spent the last few years of her life in Israel, before coming back to Cincinnati. Selma died on 18 September 1978 at the age of 71. Selma was briefly wed to Albert Loeb, whom she married in March 1941.

Scope and Content

This collection consists primarily of correspondence between various family members of the Felson and Raphaelson families. The bulk of the material centers around Benjamin and Virginia (Raphaelson) Felson and Jacob Raphaelson, with assorted materials pertaining to other family members.

For additional Benjamin Felson material, please visit the University of Cincinnati at <http://rave.ohiolink.edu/archives/ead/OhCiUWC0042>

For additional information on the extended Felson family and for access to digitized versions of Walter and Ben Felson's WWII letters, please see Judy Duchan's website at <http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~duchan/>

Arrangement

This collection is arranged in two (2) series: A. Felson Family Materials, 1910-2011, undated; B. Raphaelson Family Materials, 1900-2008, undated.

Terms of Access

The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

Preferred Citation

Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Felson and Raphaelson Family Papers and the American

Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

[Description], [Date], Box #, Folder #. MS-849. Felson and Raphaelson Family Papers. American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Provenance The Felson and Raphaelson Family Papers were received from Virginia Felson, Cincinnati, Ohio in various installments from March 1993 to May 2003. Additional material donated from Nancy Felson in 2015 and [most likely] Judy Duchan in 2016.

Processing Information Initial processing by Michelle Wirth Detroit, December 2011. This collection was arranged and described according to minimal-processing standards. Processing was made possible through a grant from the National Historic Publications and Records Commission.

Additional processing by Aliza Spicehandler, October-November 2021.

Index Terms

Subjects Armed Forces / Jewish women / Jews -- Kentucky -- Newport / Jews -- Ohio -- Cincinnati / Optometrists / Physicians / Radiologists / World War, 1939-1945

Personal Names Felson, Benjamin / Felson, Virginia (Raphaelson) / Felson, Walter / Raphaelson, Ida (Berman) / Raphaelson, Jacob, approximately 1876-1972 / Raphaelson, Selma

Media Autobiographies / Family histories / Photographs

Series A. Felson Family Materials, 1910-2011, undated

Extent 0.8 linear feet (2 Hollinger boxes)

Language of the Material English

Scope and Content Note This series is comprised of correspondence files to and from the Felson family, family genealogical research, and photographs. Notable items include the extensive correspondence to Virginia from her father, Jacob Raphaelson, and the World War II correspondence from Walter and Benjamin Felson. When the Felson brothers were abroad in Europe, the Felson family created a letter chain system with the received war correspondence. There is a mixture of original letters and typescript copies of letters, with some duplicates. For the majority of Leon Felson's war correspondence, please refer to MS-349.

Arrangement Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box and Folder Listing

- Box 1. Folder 1. Abramson, David and Louise Felson, 1988-2002
- Box 1. Folder 2. Condolence letters for Ben Felson, 1988-1989, undated
- Box 1. Folder 3. Correspondence. Ben Felson. General, 1942-2003, undated
- Box 1. Folder 4. Correspondence. Ben Felson. WWII letters, 1943- 1944 April, undated
- Box 1. Folder 5. Correspondence. Ben Felson. WWII letters, 1944 May-December, undated
- Box 1. Folder 6. Correspondence. Ben Felson. WWII letters, 1945, undated
- Box 1. Folder 7. Correspondence. Ben to Virginia, 1932-1953, undated
- Box 1. Folder 8. Correspondence. Family, 1985-2004, undated
- Box 2. Folder 1. Correspondence. Jacob and Ida Raphaelson to Virginia, 1940-1955, undated
- Box 2. Folder 2. Correspondence. Leon Felson. WWII letters, 1944-1945
- Box 2. Folder 3. Correspondence. Virginia Felson. General, 1942-2005, undated
- Box 2. Folder 4. Correspondence. Walter Felson. WWII letters, 1942, 1943, undated
- Box 2. Folder 5. Correspondence. Walter Felson. WWII letters, 1944, undated
- Box 2. Folder 6. Correspondence. Walter Felson. WWII letters, 1945, undated
- Box 2. Folder 7. Family biographical materials, 1978, 2000, undated
- Box 2. Folder 8. Family photos, 1910-2011, undated
- Box 2. Folder 9. Unidentified poetry, Undated

Media

Family histories / Photographs

Series B. Raphaelson Family Materials, 1900-2008, undated

Extent 0.4 linear feet (1 Hollinger box)
Language of the Material English and Hebrew

Scope and Content Note The Raphaelson Family series focuses on Virginia Felson's parents, Jacob and Ida, and her sister, Selma. Notable items include the correspondence between Jacob and Ida in the months leading up to their marriage in 1902, and a partial memoir by Jacob Raphaelson. Raphaelson's memoir consist of stories about various encounters with small Jewish communities in the Midwest during his travels as an optometrist from 1899 to 1908. Also included, is Raphaelson's work on diagnosing and treating myopia (nearsightedness) and related myopia materials.

Arrangement Arranged alphabetically by subject.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 3. Folder 1. Correspondence. Jacob and Ida Raphaelson, 1901-1902, 1941-1955, undated

Box 3. Folder 2. Correspondence. Jacob Raphaelson. General, 1900-1967

Box 3. Folder 3. Correspondence. Selma Raphaelson, 1950-1978, undated

Box 3. Folder 4. Funeral book for Ida Raphaelson, 1963

Box 3. Folder 5. Memoirs of Jacob Raphaelson, 1958, undated

Box 3. Folder 6. Myopia work of Jacob Raphaelson, 1909-2002, undated

Box 3. Folder 7. Myopia. Maurice Brumer, 1976-1978, 2008, undated

Media

Biographies