

# Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford

## Guide to the Collections

### Introduction

This guide is an introduction to the archives and manuscript collections at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford. The guide features a brief description of each collection of materials for which we have at least one fourth of a cubic foot of documents. Therefore, the guide does not list each and every organization, synagogue, or family of note in the Greater Hartford area. Those smaller collections for which we have only a few folders are grouped together in vertical files in alphabetical order.

Each guide entry contains the name of the collection, the approximate size of the collection, highlights of the organization or family's history to help researchers put the collection in context, and information on the collection's strengths or weaknesses for research. When an organization has existed through several name changes, the name given to the document collection for that organization is generally the most recent name by which the organization is known. For example, the Hebrew Old People's Home documents are part of the Hebrew Home and Hospital Collection. The size of each collection is given in standard archival measurement units such as cubic feet.

Because the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford receives new materials on a regular basis, researchers should call the Director if in doubt about whether we have information that will meet specific research needs. We currently have inventories for each of the collections listed here and are building a computerized index to topics and names. In the future, the Society will also have a web site featuring our finding aids on-line. Researchers are always welcome to use these collections, but we urge you to call us first to arrange an appointment for your research. You must use all materials on the Historical Society premises and must abide by standard archival rules for use. The Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford holds the ownership rights to its materials, and all publication must be cleared with the Director, with the Society appropriately credited in the publication.

### **Agudas Achim, Congregation (West Hartford)**

2 1/2 cubic feet

Congregation Agudas Achim Anshe Sfarad was founded in 1887 to provide members, primarily immigrants from Romania, with the "minhag Sefard." It was also known as the "Romanische Shul." Agudas Achim's earliest rabbi was Isaac Hurewitz who concurrently served this and several other congregations from the time of his arrival in Hartford in 1893 until his death in 1935. In the early years, the majority of the congregation's members were "extremely poor" and they met in the homes of members. In 1900, however, they were able to acquire a lot with a house on it on Market Street. In 1928, responding to the growth of the Jewish community and its movement to the north, the congregation moved to Greenfield Street. Then, again responding to a population shift to the west, Agudas Achim moved into its current synagogue building in West Hartford in 1969.

Another important figure in the history of Agudas Achim is Rabbi Abraham AvRutick who led the congregation for thirty-six years, beginning in 1946, and who also served as president of the Rabbinical Council of America in 1962. Along with the move to the suburbs, the appointment of Rabbi AvRutick represented the continuing evolution of the congregation from a very traditional East European group to an American orthodox community. Although this collection does not contain a large run of records for any particular facet of its history, it gives a well-rounded view of congregational activities and history.

### **American Coal Company**

2 cubic feet

The American Coal Company was founded in 1908 by Ekehile Sheketoff, an immigrant from Kiev, and his sons Charles and Maurice. The company eventually expanded its line to gasoline and oil products for automobiles, becoming the largest independent petroleum distributor in Hartford. In 1947, it also acquired twenty-six Cities Service gas stations in the Hartford area. Circa 1955, the company changed its name to Automatic Comfort. All of these holdings, including the real estate, were sold by the family in the early 1990s. This collection contains clippings related to the history of the American Coal Company, records of stock issued by the company, and many examples of its advertising. There are no comprehensive financial records or minutes.

### **American Jewish Congress**

1 cubic foot

The American Jewish Congress was founded in 1918 in response to Jewish concerns arising out of WWI. Its missions were to fight racism and discrimination and to provide a vehicle for Zionism. The Hartford chapter was founded in the same year. They saw themselves as a collective, "a permanent body of Jewish organizations, to carry out the work of the [C]ongress in this city....," with delegates from the other Jewish groups in town. The Women's Division was formed in 1943. The American Jewish Congress is important for its interracial and interfaith

activities, "Americanization" related issues, and its work in fostering Jewish identity. This collection is fairly complete for only a small window of time around the 1950s.

### **American Medical Center at Denver/Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society**

1/2 cubic foot

The local chapter of the Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society was probably founded circa 1921 to aid the funding of the small-but-growing hospital facility built in Denver in 1904. Despite the name, this hospital provided free treatment for indigent patients of all creeds. Activities of the local group, which spun off several auxiliaries for men, women, and juniors, were all centered on fundraising. Although this collection is too small to provide more than general historical materials for the group, there are documents of interest to researchers of women's activities and fundraising roles.

### **Bess Israel, Congregation (Hartford)**

1 cubic foot

Little is known at this point about the history of Bess Israel. It was established in 1918. In 1923, it was located at 92 Barbour Street and became known as the "Barbour Street Shul." In 1966, the congregation sold 92 Barbour Street and moved to 96 Hebron Street. The year in which the congregation disbanded is unknown. The strength of this collection is the run of minutes from 1929 to 1958, but the weakness of the collection is that almost all of the records are in Yiddish.

### **Beth David Synagogue (West Hartford)**

3/4 cubic foot

Beth David Synagogue began in 1943 when a group of parents in West Hartford met to establish a religious school for their children and to conduct High Holiday services. The following year, the congregation purchased a house at the corner of Farmington Avenue and Dover Road and enlarged it to enable services to be held there, establishing it as the first Orthodox congregation in West Hartford. In its early years, the congregation used the name "West Hartford Jewish Center." In 1946, Rabbi William Cohen was hired; he officiated for five decades. He joined with other local Orthodox rabbis to form the Hartford Institute for Jewish Studies. Much of the current synagogue was completed on the site of the original house in 1954; the sanctuary was added and dedicated in 1968. In 1993, Teferes Israel of Bloomfield merged with Beth David. The strongest portion of this collection is the record of Sisterhood activities over the course of more than three decades. Otherwise, the collection is comprised primarily of information on milestones in the history of the congregation.

### **Beth El Temple (West Hartford)**

1 1/2 cubic feet

Beth El is a Conservative synagogue founded in 1953. The founders were originally members of Emanuel Synagogue when it was located in Hartford. During the 1950s, many younger members of Emanuel moved west to the suburbs, especially to West Hartford. They wanted Emanuel to move west, as well, but older members of the congregation, remembering the hard work involved in gathering the money for the large Emanuel facility on Woodland Street, declined. Consequently, the West Hartford residents established Beth El, maintaining cordial and cooperative relations with Emanuel. The Beth El congregation constructed its auditorium and school in 1956, followed by the large sanctuary in 1963. Beth El's first rabbi, Stanley Kessler, led the congregation for nearly forty years. This collection contains useful information on milestones in the history of the congregation but relatively little depth.

### **Beth Hillel Synagogue (Bloomfield)**

2 1/2 cubic feet

Beth Hillel Synagogue in Bloomfield is the result of a merger of two congregations, Beth Sholom (of Hartford) and Beth Hillel (of Bloomfield), in 1969. Beth Sholom began as a small Orthodox congregation called the Blue Hills Synagogue or the Blue Hills Congregation Kehilath Israel in 1950. As new members joined, the congregation switched to Conservative affiliation and re-named itself Beth Sholom. Beth Hillel began in 1952 when a group of new Bloomfield Jewish residents started the Bloomfield Jewish Community Center. In 1955, the congregation re-named itself Beth Hillel and affiliated with the Conservative movement. In 1966, Beth Hillel moved to its current building on Wintonbury Avenue. The strongest portion of this collection is the early newsletters (late 1950s to 1980) of Beth Hillel. Otherwise, the collection contains useful information on milestones in the history of the congregation but relatively little depth.

### **Beth Israel, Congregation (West Hartford)**

1 1/2 cubic feet

Congregation Beth Israel is the oldest congregation in Hartford and one of the two oldest congregations in Connecticut. The precise date of founding is unknown and has been celebrated as both 1843, the year that Jews were first allowed to form congregations in this state, and as 1847, the date of the first written evidence of the congregation's existence. Beth Israel was founded by German Jews as an Orthodox congregation. In 1876, the congregation erected the first synagogue building in Connecticut built especially for that purpose on Charter Oak Avenue in Hartford. Two years later Beth Israel joined the Reform movement's Union of American Hebrew Congregations. With the westward movement of the Jewish population, the current building in West Hartford was dedicated in 1936.

Mention should be made of Beth Israel's distinguished rabbi, Abraham J. Feldman, who served from 1925 until retirement in 1968. Rabbi Feldman occupied a position of national prominence in the Reform movement and helped to lead changes in the movement, most notably the Reform view of Zionism. (See also the Rabbi Abraham J. Feldman Collection.)

This collection provides useful basic information on congregation milestones and key figures but does not contain in-depth data for research. Additional information on this congregation may be found in the Congregation Beth Israel archives at its synagogue in West Hartford.

### **Beth Sholom, Temple (Manchester)**

1 cubic foot

Beth Sholom Synagogue, a Conservative congregation in Manchester, was founded in 1937. Its origins may be found in the Manchester Jewish Community Club, a social group founded in 1935. The Club disbanded in 1937, and the congregation was founded immediately thereafter. The first synagogue, at the corner of Myrtle and Linden Streets, was completed in 1940. A school building was added in 1946. In order to accommodate the growing congregation, the present synagogue building on East Middle Turnpike was constructed in 1963. This collection contains an excellent run of newsletters from the late 1960s to the present, as well as general information on other activities of the congregation.

### **B'nai B'rith**

2 1/2 cubic feet plus 3 large scrapbooks

B'nai B'rith Ararat Lodge #13 of Hartford, founded in 1851, is considered the oldest continuously existing chapter of B'nai B'rith in the world. Founded as a fraternal and philanthropic organization by the German Jews of Hartford, it was the center of the early cultural and social life of the community. More importantly, it provided vital sick and death benefits to members and their families and gave charity when non-Jewish crises rose, as well. Although most of the early members were congregants of Beth Israel, the organization also provided an opportunity for non-practicing Jews in the community to maintain their Jewish identity. In more recent years, the organization has continued its promotion of Jewish identity through sponsorship of social organizations for youths, including Hillel chapters at local colleges and universities, and sponsorship of Holocaust commemoration programs. The Ararat Lodge #13 and its spin-offs and auxiliaries are important windows on the cultural assimilation of the Jewish community and on the relations between the early German Jews and the later East European immigrants. Unfortunately, early minutes of the chapter were transferred to national headquarters, and policy documents are sparse. The best documented part of the collection is the "Woman of the Year" award selection by the Ararat Chapter which is useful in the study of interracial and interfaith activities.

### **B'nai Israel, Temple (New Britain)**

1/2 cubic foot

Congregation B'nai Israel, a Conservative congregation in New Britain, was originally founded in 1896 as an Orthodox congregation called Achenu B'nai Israel. In 1903, the congregation was able to purchase its first building, the former Swedish Evangelical Church at the corner of Elm and Chestnut Streets. Finding that the traditional Yiddish-speaking rabbis that it hired for

holidays did not attract young people, the congregation hired a Jewish Theological Seminary-trained rabbi in 1919 to conduct Shabbat services. However, they did not formally affiliate with the Conservative movement until 1925 or 1926, at which time some members seceded to form Tephareth Israel. The current synagogue on Main Street was built in 1940. This collection is primarily useful for documenting the milestones of the congregation.

### **Chabad**

1/4 cubic foot

The Chabad Center in West Hartford was organized in 1977 by Rabbi Joseph Gopin. It is an outreach program of the Lubavitch movement. A house on Farmington Avenue was acquired in 1980, and the present facility on Albany Avenue was built in 1988. As part of its educational activities, the center created a children's summer camp, Gan Israel. Activities which have spun off from the West Hartford center include Chabad of the Valley in Avon and a day school in Avon. Most of this collection is comprised of documentation of recent educational and social activities.

### **Chase Family**

1/4 cubic foot

David Chase, born David Cielsa in 1929 in Kielce, Poland, is an outstanding representative of the Holocaust survivors who came penniless to this country and made their way successfully in their new homeland. Trying his hand at a number of educational opportunities and businesses, Chase ultimately created a business empire in real estate development and communications. Chase's wife Rhoda and their children are also partners in the family businesses. The entire family has distinguished itself for its community philanthropy. This small collection is comprised of news clippings that document some of these business interests and charitable endeavors and an oral history interview.

### **Chesed Shel Emeth**

2 cubic feet

Chesed Shel Emeth was also known as the Hebrew Funeral Home Association. It was founded in 1900 and purchased land for a cemetery on Mahl Avenue around 1905. It maintained a funeral chapel and provided the necessary details of burials for the community. The Association dissolved around 1987. The collection contains minutes running from 1904 to 1986 (with a gap from 1953-1962); almost all of these records are in Yiddish. There are also substantial runs of financial records and various types of materials that list the burials.

### **Chesed Shel Emeth Auxiliary**

1/2 cubic foot

The Chesed Shel Emeth Auxiliary, organized in 1914, was also known as the Independent Ladies' Chesed Shel Emeth Society, the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society, and Hachnosot (or Achnosis) Orchim. One of its duties was to maintain the funeral chapel of the Chesed Shel Emeth, but it also took on the duty of providing appropriate food and lodging for transient Jews plus clothing and help with employment if they were destitute. By 1921 it had raised the funds necessary to purchase part of a house and soon incorporated itself as the Hebrew Ladies' Sheltering Home. The group maintained a house for transient lodging until 1969 and finally disbanded in 1976. At this time, the organization began to provide scholarships to Jewish college and graduate students. This collection supplies information on the role of women in providing community services and on the changing nature of the provision of social services in the 1960s and after. It is comprised mostly of minutes and financial journals from the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Chevry Lomday Mishnayes, Congregation (Hartford)**

1/2 cubic foot

Congregation Chevry Lomday Mishnayes was founded in 1918 by a group of East European and Russian immigrants under the name of Chevre Mishnayot of Hartford (roughly translated as Fellowship of the Mishnah). After seven years with no permanent home, they built a shul on Bedford Street. In 1934, the congregation re-incorporated under the name Congregation Chevry Lomday Mishnayes (roughly translated as Fellow Students of the Mishnah). In response to the mass movement of the Jewish population to the northwest part of Hartford and to West Hartford, the congregation purchased the Young Israel shul at 191 Westbourne Parkway in 1964. By 1983, however, attendance declined so much that the congregation merged with Teferes Israel. This collection contains important information on the turning points and general nature of the congregation, but it lacks material that would provide an internal view of the policy-making or activities of the shul.

### **Cohen, Esther Sima**

1/4 cubic foot

Esther Sima Cohen (b. 1913) is an artist and teacher who worked in ceramics in both New York City and Connecticut. She learned pottery as a child at the Henry Street Pottery, part of the settlement system of neighborhood centers. Following her training at New York University, Cohen taught at the Lenox Hill Pottery, another settlement, and at her own studio, The Pottery Workshop.

From 1949 to 1978, Cohen taught art at Willimantic State Teachers' College, now Eastern Connecticut State College. Cohen was selected for *Who's Who in World Jewry*, *Who's Who in American Art*, *American Jews: Their Lives and Achievements*, and several other directories. She exhibited in many shows including the 1940 World's Fair and juried shows at Cooper Union and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In addition to documenting Cohen's career, this collection documents some of the work of the settlements in New York and their interaction with neighborhood residents.

**Cohen, Dr. Morris N. and Emma P.**

1/2 cubic foot

Morris Cohen (1898-1988) was born in Poland, and arrived in the United States in 1900. He became a dentist and entered public service by establishing a free dental care program for the Bloomfield School system. He became active in town politics and eventually was elected to the State Assembly where he sponsored a variety of health-related inquiries and legislation, including containment of hospital costs, the right to "die with dignity," the banning of public smoking, and water fluoridation. His most visible project is sponsorship of the University of Connecticut Health Center. Emma Perlstein Cohen (b. 1904 in Hartford) owned a bookstore and was a founder of the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford. She was active in many organizations, especially the American Jewish Congress. This collection consists primarily of Morris Cohen's legislative files, especially those related to the UConn Health Center and the controversies surrounding its establishment. There is also a rather comprehensive Perlstein family genealogy.

**Community Relations Committee/Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford**

7 cubic feet

The Community Relations Council (CRC) originated as the Community Affairs Committee of the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford in 1945. Its task was to watch for anti-Semitism in the community, but it gradually expanded its purview. With the name change in the early 1950s to the Community Relations Committee, the CRC took an interest in prejudice in all sectors of the local community. It also developed policy on local Jewish response to general issues and promoted advocacy on Israel's behalf. Today, the CRC continues its work as the public affairs arm of the Federation, representing the Jewish community and encouraging "awareness and consensus within the Jewish community." This collection is comprised of background information on various groups or movements that challenge Jewish interests and CRC press releases and information on its programs and projects.

**Congregation Agudas Achim -- See Agudas Achim**

**Congregation Bess Israel -- See Bess Israel**

**Congregation Beth Israel -- see Beth Israel**

**Congregation Chevry Lomday Mishnayes -- See Chevry Lomday Mishnayes**

**Education Vertical File**

4 cubic feet

In addition to the Hartford Yeshiva/Hebrew Academy Collection and the Midrasha Collection described elsewhere, the JHSGH holds lesser amounts of material on a variety of other educational institutions. These include two other Jewish day schools (Solomon Schechter Day School and Hebrew High School), early Talmud-Torahs, supplemental Jewish schools such as

Yachad, local colleges and universities that have Hillel Societies, and local organizations which provide Jewish learning to adult audiences. This collection also includes materials from the Hartford public schools that educated large numbers of Jewish students.

### **Emanuel Synagogue (West Hartford)**

6 cubic feet

Founded in 1919 as B'nai Israel, Emanuel was the first congregation in Connecticut to be established as a Conservative congregation. Throughout its history it was served by outstanding leaders, including Rabbi Morris Silverman who became a nationally known leader in the Conservative movement during his thirty-eight years at Emanuel, and Cantor Arthur Koret who became a national figure in Jewish liturgical music. In 1962, Emanuel became the first Conservative congregation in the nation to alter its constitution to allow the election of women to its Board of Trustees.

Emanuel Synagogue is also interesting because of the difficulties it faced as many members moved out of the city into the suburbs. As the only local Conservative synagogue, Emanuel had grown very rapidly. By the 1950s, many of its members were younger families living in West Hartford. As a compromise for parents who had to drive their children to Hartford for religious school, the congregation began planning for a school and auditorium in West Hartford. Discouraged by the lack of plans for a move of the sanctuary, a group of Emanuel members formed their own Conservative congregation, Beth El, in West Hartford in 1953.

Within two years of the establishment of Beth El, however, the majority of Emanuel congregants came to see the necessity of moving to West Hartford where most of the congregation now lived, and a new synagogue building was completed in West Hartford in 1959.

The strengths of this collection include the minutes of the congregation from 1920 to 1953 (except for a gap between 1936 and 1948), a large collection of materials on the activities of the Brotherhood and Sisterhood over the decades, and a good general collection of historical materials on nearly all aspects of the synagogue.

### **Farband Labor Zionist Order**

1/2 cubic foot

In 1914, the Hartford Branch of the Jewish National Labor Alliance was formed as a fraternal organization providing insurance and other benefits to its members. It later took the name of Farband Labor Zionist Order #61. Together with other labor Zionist organizations, the Farband raised funds to supply Palestine with tools and to support Histadrut institutions. It also co-sponsored many lectures by famous Zionist leaders and programs on politics and Jewish and Yiddish culture. Most of the records in this collection date from recent decades; it is not complete enough to enable a study of the organization but would support research on fraternal groups and Zionism.

## **Farming**

2 1/2 cubic feet

This research collection reflects Jewish agricultural efforts in Connecticut, ranging from small immigrant farms in central Connecticut supported by the Baron de Hirsh Fund to tobacco farms owned by established families in Hartford. The materials include copies of American Jewish Historical Society records for the Baron de Hirsh Fund, records of the Connecticut Historical Commission survey of Jewish farming communities, and data collected by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford on farms and boarding houses in Colchester and eastern Connecticut. There are also photographs and oral histories of Jewish farming families in Connecticut.

## **Feldman, Abraham J.**

1/4 cubic foot

Abraham Jehiel Feldman, (1893-1977) was one of the leading Reform rabbis in the country. He received his ordination from Hebrew Union College and served for two years under Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. Following that, Feldman became the assistant of Joseph Krauskopf for five years in Philadelphia. Rabbi Feldman commented on the influences of these two extremely prominent rabbis who were so different in approach. From Wise, he learned about using the pulpit as a "completely free forum" for the rabbi to espouse whatever views he held without control from the congregation. Under Krauskopf, he learned from a master the skills for building and maintaining a congregation.

Feldman was selected in 1925 to lead at Beth Israel in Hartford. He was an ardent Zionist and spoke out on the matter from the Beth Israel pulpit to his non-Zionist congregation. During the next few decades, Feldman was not able to convert many of his congregants to Zionism, but he did neutralize opinion and prevent them from joining anti-Zionist groups. As Feldman acquired a national reputation as a major leader of Reform Judaism, he played a leading role in changing the general attitude about Zionism among Reform leaders nationally.

Rabbi Feldman was a prolific author of numerous books and articles and in 1929 co-founded the *Jewish Ledger* which he edited for forty-eight years. Rabbi Feldman was also very active in the local secular community, especially in building interfaith relations. This is far too small a collection to provide an in-depth look at Rabbi Feldman's life and profession, but, together with material in the Beth Israel Collection, it provides insight into his relationship with the non-Jewish community.

## **First Hebrew Ladies' Free Loan Association**

1/2 cubic foot

Little is known about this group; no records have surfaced from its early years. A note in the collection indicates that the group was probably founded in 1904 and disbanded in 1967. During its later years, most of the activity seems to have centered on making small loans to relatives of

the group's members and making charitable donations to local Jewish organizations. Although not useful as a primary research topic, these records may offer supporting information to anyone studying the rise and decline of such fraternal aid groups.

### **Fisher, Annie**

1 cubic foot

Annie Fisher (1883-1968) devoted her life to public school education in Hartford, instituting many reforms aimed at aiding immigrant children. Although a graduate of Wesleyan University and better educated than the majority of teachers, Fisher had to start at the bottom of the scale and received her first full-time position at Barnard School only because she could speak the language of the large immigrant population there. Realizing that students of vastly different ages were being put in class together without testing or special help, Fisher evaluated students and designed programs that fit their skills. To meet special needs, she created a work-study program, a student banking program, mental health testing, a pre-school, and had the school build showers for her new twice-weekly shower requirement. Students also received free dental care, free glasses, and daily cod liver oil. Fisher wrote two English textbooks and introduced "Americanization" classes. She became Hartford's first female principal and first female district superintendent, but had to suffer the prejudices of colleagues who didn't want to accept a female or a Jew in these positions. Gradually, however, she won many reforms for both female teachers and teachers in general. An elementary school in Hartford was named in Fisher's honor. A religiously observant woman, Fisher established the Sisterhood at Emanuel and served as its first president. This collection does not have a large amount of primary source material, but there is a great deal of biographical material from organization tributes and news clippings. This collection is important for the study of immigrant life, "Americanization" efforts, and women in leadership roles.

### **Fox Family (Louis, Jacob L., and Lewis)**

2 cubic feet plus 1 cubic foot of artifacts

Louis Fox (dates unknown) was the brother of Gerson and Isaac Fox. All three owned retail establishments: Gerson and Isaac as partners in what would become G. Fox & Co. in Hartford, and Louis on his own in Maine and Massachusetts. Louis's son, Jacob L. (1856-1936), joined Gerson's store and eventually became vice president. He was very active in local organizations and philanthropies. Jacob L.'s son, Lewis (1904-1976), chose law as his profession and made the Hartford community his career. Probably no one else in the history of Hartford has been more loved or more respected for integrity, idealism, and citizenship than Lewis Fox. His service included thirty-seven years on the Hartford Board of Education, the establishment of the Fox scholarships which have furthered the education of many outstanding local leaders, forty years as a teacher at Beth Israel, and a lengthy list of memberships on the boards of local organizations. Fox Middle School in Hartford was named for him. The collection has relatively little correspondence or personal material but is nevertheless very informative regarding the life of Lewis Fox. See also the Fox family photographs in the Fox-Auerbach Family Collection.

## **Fox-Auerbach Family**

6 cubic feet

In 1847, Gerson Fox (1811-1880), an immigrant from Germany, founded the "fancy goods" store that eventually became the largest family-owned retail operation in the country, G. Fox & Co. He was a member of the German Jewish elite of the 1840s that was responsible for the passage of the 1843 petition granting Jews the right to publicly congregate.

Retailing was clearly the family occupation; many members of the Fox family not only participated in the business, but also married into other prominent retailing families. Among the many family members that participated in the operation of the company were Moses Fox (1850-1938), who rebuilt the store after a disastrous fire in 1917, and his daughter Beatrice Fox Auerbach (1887-1968), who became a retailing legend during her tenure as president. Her personal oversight of every detail of the business, from greeting customers to inspecting every corner of the store, sent the company to a new level of excellence in service. Years later, people still recall stories of extraordinary efforts on the part of the company to please customers and meet their needs. This in turn contributed to the growth of the company into a major chain.

In addition to business service, the family also provided exemplary public service. Beatrice in particular was tireless in her efforts, personally and financially, on behalf of the community. Among her efforts is the Service Bureau for Women's Organizations which provided training and programming to promote female leadership in the community.

It is unfortunate that this collection holds few documents from the family or the business, for the history of this family provides research opportunities in several areas. These include the study of German Jewish immigrants and the patterns of their business and social circles, the role of women and women's groups in shaping the community, American retailing history, private philanthropy and its role in shaping a community, and the dynamics of the acceptance of an independent Jewish woman into the top ranks of a very traditional early 20th century male-dominated community. At best, this collection and materials from other collections at the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford can offer supporting materials for these studies. The great strength of this collection is its family photographs which are extensive. Additional Beatrice Fox Auerbach materials may be found at the Connecticut Historical Society.

## **Free Sons of Israel Judith Lodge**

3/4 cubic foot

Judith Lodge #33 of the Independent Order Free Sons of Israel was founded in Hartford in 1871. Similar to other fraternal organizations, its focus appears to have been primarily social. It also distributed sick benefits and offered insurance to members. The records end in 1938 at the time of the group's merger with or name change to Benjamin N. Cardozo Lodge #171. The minutes, although there are significant gaps, cover a span of sixty-eight years and are useful documentation of the nature and concerns of fraternal organizations.

**Garber, M. Delott**

1/2 cubic foot

Dr. Meyer Delott Garber (1908-1991) was for several decades one of Hartford's leaders in promoting interracial and intercultural understanding. As both professional educator and volunteer board member of many local organizations, Garber worked tirelessly for the reduction of "intergroup tensions" locally and nationally. This work appears to have been done in the context of his Jewishness; inclusion of spiritual values in public education was one of his interests. A large part of this collection consists of workbooks for the "Hillyer College (now The University of Hartford) Workshop in Intergroup Education" in the 1950s. Much of the remainder consists of news clippings related to Garber's numerous activities. The material in this collection would be useful in support of research on intergroup relations but would not supply enough material for research on Garber himself.

**G. Fox & Co.**

1/4 cubic foot plus 1/2 cubic foot of artifacts

Founded in 1847 as a "fancy goods" store, the department store chain eventually known as G. Fox & Co. became the largest family-owned department store in the country and the preeminent retail establishment in Hartford. In 1880, the well-known location on Main Street was purchased and a four-story building constructed. In 1917, an eleven-story building was built there that embodied the major changes in retail shopping that were occurring in America. Unlike the old-fashioned store that one did not enter without a purpose, where merchandise was hidden in cupboards until the clerk brought it out, this new store offered many new services especially for these women who now shopped as much for entertainment as for the accomplishment of an errand.

The founder's grand-daughter Beatrice Fox Auerbach, who had joined the store in 1927 at the death of her husband, took over its leadership in 1938. She expanded both the store and its offerings to the shopper and set extraordinary new standards for service to customers. In 1965, G. Fox & Co. was sold to the May Company, and in 1992, the May Co. retired the G. Fox name after 117 years of service and converted those stores to Filene's. This collection is comprised primarily of secondary source material.

**Goldstein, Abraham**

1 cubic foot

Abraham Goldstein (1893-1953) was a very gifted leader and orator who devoted his talents to the promotion of Zionism. After arriving from Russia in 1918, he joined with Zionists in Brooklyn and was sent the following year to Hartford as Director of the Connecticut Zionist Bureau for the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA). Through his natural talents and visits by very prominent Zionists, local ZOA membership grew quickly. Although a few years later

Goldstein chose to become a (highly successful) insurance agent, he continued his activities on behalf of Zionism, earning high level positions in major national organizations and the friendship and deep respect of the organization leaders.

Goldstein also published widely, especially in Yiddish. In addition to publishing his own Yiddish monthly and a book on fishing, he contributed numerous letters, articles, and columns to national publications.

This collection is an essential primary resource for anyone studying Zionism. It gives a behind-the-scenes look at the ZOA and other Zionist organizations and the sense of excitement that must have permeated the Zionist world during the period in which Goldstein worked. Goldstein is also an interesting figure worth biographical study. The collection features correspondence received by Goldstein. Perhaps forty per cent of the collection is in Yiddish.

### **Greater Hartford Jewish Community Center**

4 1/2 cubic feet

The Hartford Jewish community has been concerned about activities for its youth since the 19th century. As early as 1878, there was a Young Men's Hebrew Association, and in 1881, a Young Women's Hebrew Association. The local "Y" groups, however, disbanded in the late 1930s. Concerned for local youth, B'nai B'rith proposed in 1938 the formation of a community center, but it was not until 1942 that a Jewish Center Association was organized. Under the sponsorship of the United Jewish Social Service and the Community Chest, recreational programs were provided on Vine Street.

In 1948, the Jewish Federation, which had been organized in 1945, purchased a building on Asylum Avenue for the Community Center. Initially the Center concentrated on youth recreation at the Center itself, but gradually it expanded to a summer camp and activities for adults of all ages. In 1959, with an expanding membership and the westward movement of the Jewish population, the Community Center began planning for a new home. The current Jewish Community Center on Bloomfield Avenue was completed in 1962, and an addition was added in 1990.

This collection contains records and photographs of the Jewish Community Center from 1955 to the present. It is strongest in documenting the various social, recreational, and educational programs that it offers. There are relatively few minutes or financial records.

### **Greenberg Family / Coleco**

1/4 cubic foot

In 1932, Maurice Greenberg founded the Connecticut Leather Company, a wholesale distributor of shoe repair supplies. In the 1950s, the company expanded into toys. With the move away from shoe supplies, the company name changed to Coleco and it went public. By the early 1980s, Coleco was known for above-ground pools and video games, but its best-seller was the

Cabbage Patch Doll line which set off intense competition among shoppers from 1983 to 1985. Maurice's sons, Leonard and Arnold, both of whom led the company, left Coleco in the late 1980s and gave their attention to community service and philanthropy at the local and national levels. This collection is comprised of news clippings that document Coleco and some of the family's many charitable endeavors and an oral history interview.

### **Hadassah**

3/4 cubic foot

Hadassah was originally founded in 1912 by Henrietta Szold. Appalled by health conditions she saw in a trip to Palestine in 1909, Szold wanted to help raise the health standards there and develop Jewish life in the United States. Szold visited Hartford in 1914 and addressed a group of women here. At some point thereafter (both 1914 and 1918 have been cited as the date), the Hartford Chapter was founded. Over time, this chapter became one of the largest and most influential in the country. Throughout the decades, it has grown and split into several smaller chapters, offering a flexibility that has enabled the group to attract a wide variety of women. The primary activity of the chapter is to raise funds for Hadassah projects.

The most complete section of this collection is its newsletters which are fairly complete from 1968 to the present. There is also a set of meeting invitations from the 1930s. Together these give a view of organization activities over several decades. Unfortunately, however, there are no minutes or policy documents.

### **Hartford Workingmen's Sick Benefit Association**

2 cubic feet

The Hartford Workingmen's Sick Benefit Association, which existed from 1896 until the mid 1960s, provided income to members in the event that they were unable to work due to illness and provided a cemetery for members and their families. Unlike many fraternal organizations that provided some benefits as a sideline to primarily social activities, the Association was created for the purpose of insuring income and spreading this risk across the pool of members. However, because the group did consider itself a fraternity, there were some social benefits such as gifts for weddings or milestone anniversaries, and parties were held to raise funds. The Association also made charitable donations to other Jewish organizations.

The Hartford Workingmen's Sick Benefit Association was an economic necessity for many members of the community until the 1940s. With the economic prosperity and changing working conditions which followed WWII, however, the Association became much less of a necessity and much more of a social organization.

This collection offers an excellent opportunity to study the ways in which local Jews met communal needs and the ways in which communal organizations interacted. The complete run of minutes for forty-seven years (1919-1966) provides data for the study of important social changes occurring in America during the 20th century.

### **Hartford Yeshiva / Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford**

1 cubic foot

Hartford Yeshiva, founded in 1940 by members of the Orthodox community, was the second Jewish day school established in New England. It was also notable as one of the relatively few Jewish schools in the country that offered girls a Jewish education equal to that of boys. Although the school was open to children from all branches of Judaism and the secular curriculum was supervised by the Hartford Board of Education, the Yeshiva immediately became the center of controversy as critics who favored acculturation branded the school as "un-American" and a perpetuation of ghetto segregation. In response, the Yeshiva instituted a continuing program of patriotism to foster "Americanism" among the students. To counter lingering doubts on the part of some critics about the modernity of the school, the Yeshiva responded by focusing on the quality of the secular education that the students receive. The school's history is important for the window it offers on the controversy between maintaining strong Jewish identity versus acculturation into the mainstream. The collection is strongest in materials that reflect the need for constant fundraising and in modern documents; there are few policy documents.

### **Hebrew Funeral Home Association -- see Chesed Shel Emeth**

### **Hebrew Home and Hospital**

1 cubic foot plus 15 framed oversized documents

The Hebrew Home and Hospital originated in 1898 when women of the Jewish community banded together as the Hebrew Ladies' Sick Benefit Association. By collecting nickels door-to-door each week, carrying them in their handkerchiefs (hence the name "the handkerchief brigade"), these women raised enough money by 1907 to purchase a large home on Wooster Street to create the Hebrew Old People's Home. Decade by decade the Home expanded and evolved as community needs changed, gradually producing the modern facility in West Hartford known as the Hebrew Home and Hospital. The Hebrew Home and Hospital history offers an excellent opportunity to study the role of women in community philanthropy, leadership, and the solution of community problems. Although the JHSGH collection contains relatively little early Hebrew Home and Hospital material, its materials from the mid-century and later show the active role of women in the Home's operation. There are also materials regarding Sophie Tucker's fundraising activities on behalf of the Home.

### **Hebrew Ladies' Sheltering Home -- see Chesed Shel Emeth Auxiliary**

### **Hirshberg, Dr. Manuel and Beatrice**

1/2 cubic foot

Dr. Manuel Hirshberg (1903-1985) was a pediatrician and epidemiologist in Bloomfield. He was also the physician to the Bloomfield Public Schools. He served as president of Mt. Sinai Hospital. His wife Beatrice (1906-1997) was a social worker and was very active in local charities, especially those for children. This collection would not directly serve as a research topic, but some of its materials could be useful supporting material for a study of the roles of women in the 20th century.

### **Hoffenberg, Samuel**

1/2 cubic foot

Samuel Hoffenberg, son of the very respected Orthodox rabbi Cemach Hoffenberg, was a prominent local Zionist leader and an active force in creating many communal organizations. He founded the Maccabaeans, a Zionist youth group, and later served as head of the local ZOA branches. In his concern for the quality of Jewish life in Hartford, Hoffenberg helped to found and lead local Jewish community institutions such as the Yeshiva, Mt. Sinai Hospital, and the Hebrew Home. He also worked to inspire strict standards of observance when appropriate through involvement with kashrut standards at Mt. Sinai and with the Hartford Mikveh. Hoffenberg appears to have had a significant impact on the local community, but this collection contains only a small group of his papers. There are documents significant for the study of local standards of ritual observance, the formation of community "umbrella" organizations, and Zionism.

### **Husinsky, Dr. Moses J.**

1/4 cubic foot

Dr. Moses J. Husinsky (1867-1927) was a Russian immigrant who graduated from Yale and eventually brought his medical practice to Hartford in 1897. He was a founding physician and the first chairman of the medical staff at Mt. Sinai Hospital in 1923. This small collection consists primarily of three manuscripts by Husinsky concerning his interest in aesthetics.

### **Individuals, Families, and Businesses Vertical File**

18 cubic feet

This collection contains the records of local individuals, families, and businesses for which there is less than 1/4 cubic foot of material per file.

### **Israel and Zionism Subject Collection**

4 cubic feet

The Israel and Zionism Subject Collection is comprised of a variety of materials concerned with Palestine in the early 20th century, the creation of the state of Israel, financial activities in

Hartford in support of the country, and settlement there ("aliyah") by local residents. In essence, this is the vertical file of materials that do not fit into the larger established collections of local Zionist organizations. Its strengths include fine photographs of families that settled in Israel and materials on local residents who were members of Aliyah Bet, Machal, or the Israeli armed forces.

### **Jewish Association for Community Living**

1/2 cubic foot

The Jewish Association for Community Living (JCL) was founded in 1981 "to develop and operate community residences for developmentally disabled persons and to promote for them full integration into community life in every possible way." It was an outgrowth of the Committee on the Developmentally Disabled formed by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford in 1979. In its first year, the JCL was able to obtain three grants that enabled the purchase of a lot and the construction of a home in West Hartford for six developmentally disabled adults. Unfortunately, there are no minutes or other records that document policy or decision making activities. There are many news clippings and newsletters that successfully document the growth of the organization, its auxiliary, and their work.

### **Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford**

30 cubic feet

The earliest root of the modern Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford is found in the local Hebrew Benevolent Association or Society. The Association described itself in directories as having been "reorganized" in 1866. It found itself especially busy in dispensing aid during the two decades surrounding the turn of the century as members worked to help the new immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe. In 1901 the Jewish community began discussions for creating a new central, federated agency that would dispense charitable funds, but this agency would not come into being for another decade. In 1912, the United Jewish Charities formally organized under the slogan "the greatest good for the largest number with the least waste," and the Hebrew Benevolent Association was incorporated into it.

Although the purpose of the UJC was to unify fundraising for local organizations, the UJC spun off several groups during the next several decades to achieve its aims. In the 1930s, it created the Hartford Jewish Council to coordinate existing fundraising campaigns among various institutions. In 1938, the UJC created the Hartford Jewish Welfare Fund to create a unified fundraising campaign for local, national, and overseas causes. In 1940, the UJC created the Jewish Community Council to address problems facing the local community. Much of UJC's work had been involved in providing direct social services to the community, and in 1940, the UJC changed its name to United Jewish Social Service Agency to reflect this focus. The Agency eventually evolved into Jewish Family Service. (It is interesting to note that one early superintendent of the UJC in Hartford was Rebecca Affachiner, 1920-1927, who later became known as the "Betsy Ross of Israel" when she flew her home-made Israeli flag in 1948.)

During the war years, the Jewish Community Council was active through its Army-Navy Committee, but in 1944 it transferred its assets to the United Service Organization/Jewish War Board (USO/JWB) Army-Navy Committee. In 1945, the Jewish Community Council and the Hartford Jewish Welfare Fund merged to form the Hartford Jewish Federation. During the next few decades, Hartford developed a national reputation for its philanthropy based upon the high per capita donation average. This average was high partially due to a substantial number of large gifts from local successful businessmen. However, a recession in the 1980s along with the opening up to Jews of the boards of non-Jewish organizations took their toll on Hartford's exceptional record.

### **Jewish War Veterans**

3 cubic feet plus 3 cubic feet of artifacts

This collection consists primarily of records of the local chapters of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States but also contains accretions of the records of other Jewish military-related endeavors. The Jewish War Veterans of the United States ("JWV") was founded by Civil War veterans to counter the perception that Jews had failed to shoulder their duty on either side of the Civil War. This perception may have persisted; a similar group formed after the Spanish-American War (and merged with the JWV) and each subsequent war provided additional membership. Hartford Post #45 was founded in 1931 or 1933. Concern for their reputation as "slackers" led the JWV to institute various programs to combat anti-Semitism in general. These included promotion of interfaith relations, patriotism in schools, "Americanization," and leadership in a world-wide boycott of Hitler's government in 1933.

From its origin, the Hartford Post participated not only in fighting anti-Semitism but also in support of war efforts and veterans' needs. War-related fund-raising, visitation of hospitalized veterans, and advocacy for families of deceased soldiers were all carried out without regard to the religious creed of the recipients.

Other military and WWII materials in this collection document the activities of the local Army/Navy Committee of the Hartford Jewish Community Council and the Army/Navy Committee of the United Service Organization/Jewish War Board. These groups provided numerous social and religious activities for soldiers stationed at Bradley Field during WWII. There are also clippings on the war activities of locally-born Jewish soldiers. All of these materials together provide substantial material related to WWII, but relatively little material for other wars. Another portion of this collection features oral histories of women who volunteered for war-related activities in WWII or who served in the military. Their interviews include material on difficulties they may have encountered as Jews in the military.

### **Kaplan, Louis "Kid"**

3 large scrapbooks plus miscellaneous documents and photographs

Louis "Kid" Kaplan (1901 or 1902-1970) was born in Russia. When he was a boy, his family came to Meriden, CT where his father became a junk dealer. After a grade school education,

Kaplan entered boxing and had his first professional match at the age of nineteen. He became boxing's World Featherweight Champion in 1925. He was considered by *Ring Record Book* to be one of the ten best featherweights of all time. In addition to his skill, he became known for his sportsmanship and integrity, refusing to "throw" matches for money. Retiring undefeated in 1933, Kaplan became an insurance agent under Abraham Goldstein and opened a restaurant in Hartford. This collection consists primarily of news clippings covering Kaplan's boxing career.

### **Kashmann Family**

1/4 cubic foot

The Kashmann family were prominent retailers who came originally from Germany. Joseph (1850-1917) was a meat market owner. He was married to Henrietta Katzenstein. His brother Isaac (1858-1933) was a clothing merchant for fifty years and was married to Clara Katzenstein. This collection is comprised of memorial tributes, autograph books, miscellaneous clippings, and early family photographs.

### **Kone, Samuel C.**

1/2 cubic foot

Samuel C. Kone (1880-1951) distinguished himself early in life for his intelligence, energy, diligence, ingenuity, and oratorical skills. He worked as an attorney and real estate broker and donated a great deal of time to community and fraternal organizations. Much of his volunteer work was inspirational oratory for which he was known throughout New England. One interesting feature of his work was his support of the "Americanization" campaign for immigrants organized by the International Order of Brith Shalom. The materials in this collection are in poor condition and often undated, but they provide interesting material from the 1920s regarding the activities of local organizations and a glimpse of the social life enjoyed by a man of comfortable means.

### **Kopplemann, Herman P.**

1/2 cubic foot

Herman P. Kopplemann (1880-1957) was a leading businessman and politician in Hartford. At the age of eight, he became a newsboy. He later dropped out of school and became a highly successful news agent, eventually becoming the leading distributor of newspapers and magazines in the state. At the age of twenty-one, Kopplemann became active in politics, serving five terms on the City Council, terms in the State House of Representatives and State Senate, and five terms in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was a New Dealer who specialized in working for the improvement of living and working conditions for the poor and working class. Kopplemann was also interested in water distribution and eliminating water pollution. He served as chair of the Metropolitan District Water Commission from 1929-1957. Kopplemann was active in Jewish communal affairs. He served as an officer and board member of Emanuel Synagogue and many major organizations and fraternities. Most of the material in this collection relates to

Kopplemann's political activities, with many clippings related to his elections and his political stances. The collection is a useful starting point for research on his career.

### **Midrasha**

2 1/2 cubic feet

Although synagogues in the Hartford area often had programs for high school-aged members during the first half of the 20th century, few had actual classes for these youths. In the 1960s, local Conservative rabbis and educators became concerned with the lack of standard classes for this age group and made that concern a top priority. In 1963, they founded Midrasha as a "joint Conservative high school" for after-school Judaic studies. The first class graduated in 1967. By the following year, the program began to attract Orthodox students, as well. In 1970, following successful discussions with the Jewish Federation, Midrasha rededicated itself as a school for, and supported by, the entire Jewish community. As the school grew, many subjects were added as choices within the curriculum, from film and archaeology to Talmudic studies. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, student enrollment declined severely, due partially to demographics and partially to the establishment of a new Reform movement supplemental high school, Beit Noar, in 1991. In 1995, Midrasha and Beit Noar were merged under the name Yachad as a supplemental school for students in the 8th through 12th grades from all Jewish affiliations. This collection contains an excellent set of minutes, correspondence, and program files of Midrasha from the early 1970s to the early 1990s.

### **Mizrachi and Mizrahi Women**

1/2 cubic foot

The Hartford Chapter of Mizrachi was founded circa 1939 by Rabbi I. Solomon Rosenberg, spiritual leader at Beth Hamedrash Hagodol (the Garden Street Synagogue). He made "aliyah" with his family in 1951, changing his name to Israel Shelomoh Ben Meir. He won a seat in the Knesset and served for many years. Mizrachi, also known as the Religious Zionists of America, is "dedicated to building the Jewish state based on principles of Torah." It conducts educational programs and raises funds for religious educational institutions in Israel. Mizrachi's sister organization, Mizrahi Women, also known as AMIT, raises funds for social services in Israel provided by institutions based on traditional Judaism. The Hartford Mizrachi Chapter is represented mostly by very incomplete bank records and a file of news clippings of their events. The AMIT chapter is better represented, with minutes from the 1970s and extensive publicity files from the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Mt. Sinai Hospital**

2 cubic feet plus 2 oversize scrapbooks

In the early part of the 20th century, Jewish physicians were not permitted the same hospital privileges that other physicians received. They were kept out of the network of referrals, forced to put patients on admittance waiting lists in hope that a gentile colleague would admit them (and

take over control of the treatment), and eliminated from policy-making. If admitted, Jewish patients often found themselves in an environment where they could not speak the language or obtain kosher food. Also, Jewish interns could not find internships in Hartford.

To correct this situation, local citizens and physicians banded together to create a Jewish hospital in 1918. WWI delayed progress in the project, but Mt. Sinai Hospital opened in 1923. In 1925, the hospital established a nursing school to address the problem of nurses being unwilling to visit Jewish patients.

Mt. Sinai moved with the Jewish community into the north end of Hartford, but when the Jewish population moved west and northwest out of the city in the mid 1960s, Mt. Sinai chose to commit itself to the North End neighborhood. Although this decision was beneficial to the people of Hartford, growing reimbursement problems were financially disastrous for the hospital. In the face of mounting deficits, Mt. Sinai was forced to merge with St. Francis Hospital in the 1990s.

This collection is important for its aspects of anti-Semitism and the Jewish communal response to it. It also documents important aspects of the Jewish move out of the city into the suburbs. The collection contains early minutes, annual reports, and staff memos that provide a continuous narrative of the hospital's growth and decline.

### **National Council of Jewish Women**

9 cubic feet plus 1 cubic foot of artifacts and 2 1/2 linear feet of oversized materials

The Hartford Section of the National Council of Jewish Women was formed in 1910, primarily by German Jewish women concerned with aiding new East European Jewish immigrants. However, from the start most NCJW programs were non-sectarian in their philanthropy. These early programs included meeting nutritional and health care needs of children through milk stations and home visits by nurses, finding lodging, jobs and providing weekly personal contact with young women to keep them from prostitution, and Americanization programs and religious schools to help immigrants adjust to their new community.

Early in its existence, the NCJW recognized the need to battle social problems not only through hands-on work with their constituents, but through legislative activism as well. Members produced research on social ills which they then used in their lobbying for child labor laws, low income housing, food and drug laws, and efforts to promote world peace.

In the mid-20th century, the NCJW moved into new community activities such as the improvement of interfaith relations and in the establishment of scholarship funds. However, the group found it necessary to continue many of its earlier programs for immigrants, such as Americanization classes, job placement, and children's aid, as a new wave of Europeans fled from Hitler. NCJW also instituted war-time projects such as knitting, rationing board work, war bond sales, and an index to aid families in finding their displaced relatives.

After WWII, as women began to work outside of the home, NCJW added evening meetings to its schedule. As immigration slowed, programs for immigrants closed and volunteers were reallocated to projects related to new societal challenges. With the advent of McCarthyism and censorship, the NCJW instituted the Freedom Campaign and Freedom to Read project. The group's research showed a need for programs to provide recreation services for elders and intervention programs for troubled youths; both programs were initiated.

In the 1970s, a new wave of immigrants needed NCJW's help, the Soviet Jews. NCJW lobbied for their free passage and aided in subsequent settlement efforts. In the present, NCJW continues its non-sectarian work through volunteering in soup kitchens, "Meals on Wheels," and various types of advocacy.

The NCJW collection is clearly important for the study of women's roles of leadership and activism in the community. It shows the flexibility of the group in meeting both social needs and the needs of the volunteer. The collection also provides a window on the life of the more financially and socially secure Jewish woman of this century. A long run of minutes and a sampling of newsletters through many decades provide a continuous view of this group's priorities and activities.

### **New Britain Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society**

1/2 cubic foot

The New Britain Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society was founded in 1916 to assist needy Jews and do general charitable work. Little is known about the Society in its early days. By the mid 1960s, the Society had shifted its focus to aiding Jewish students with their educational expenses. Most of the records in the collection date from the 1960s and 1970s. The group disbanded in 1989. Although not useful as a primary research topic, these records may offer supporting information to anyone studying the rise and decline of similar women's charitable groups.

### **Oral History**

This collection contains almost 600 taped interviews and JHSGH programs pertaining to all aspects of Jewish history in Greater Hartford. Summaries are available, but most tapes have not yet been indexed or transcribed. Special topics include women in military service, Colchester farmers, Zionism, personal memoirs, Holocaust survivors, the immigrant experience, and histories of local organizations, businesses, and synagogues.

### **Organizations Vertical File**

4 cubic feet

This collection contains the records of local organizations for which there is less than 1/4 cubic foot of material per file. A list of these will be found in the appendices.

## **Periodicals**

17 cubic feet

The periodical collection contains both local and national publications concerning the Jewish community. Highlights include the *Connecticut Hebrew Record* (issues from 1920 to 1923), the *Jewish Daily Bulletin* (issues from 1927 to 1935), and back issues of the *Connecticut Jewish Ledger* from the last two decades.

## **Photograph Collection**

40 cubic feet

The Photograph Collection contains all of the photographic images held by the JHSGH. They are organized with the same divisions and headings as the document collections.

## **Pioneer Women**

1/4 cubic foot

The Hartford Chapter of Pioneer Women was founded in 1947 to raise funds for a variety of social services in Israel and for educational programs in the United States. Golda Meir visited the chapter several times. Although the material in this collection documents the birth and presence of this organization, the collection tells us very little about its activities.

## **Probus Club**

1/2 cubic foot

The Probus Club, a national Jewish service organization serving the mentally and physically challenged, was founded in 1921 in New Haven. Originally a club for men, the name derived from the fact that members were recruited from the professional and business sectors. The Greater Hartford chapter formed in 1955. Today the Probus Club is non-sectarian, though it remains primarily Jewish, and women are an integral part of the organization. The Club sponsors group homes, scholarships, special education programs, field trips and special activities, and summer camps for children. The Probus Club collection is useful in demonstrating how a later generation continued the Jewish tradition of taking care of societal needs through charitable activity. The collection is weak in early materials but very strong in materials from the 1970s and 1980s.

## **Ribicoff, Abraham**

1/4 cubic foot

Abraham Ribicoff (1910-1998) was the first Jew to become governor of Connecticut. He also served in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate. He aided John F. Kennedy in his bid to

become President and became part of his cabinet. In the course of these activities, Ribicoff opened up state and national politics to candidates of any background.

Born into a very poor family in New Britain, Ribicoff began working to aid the family at the age of eight. After working his way through law school, he opened a practice and began his political career in the state legislature in 1938. Ribicoff entered national politics in 1948 with his election to the House of Representatives. He won the gubernatorial bid in 1954; after two terms, Ribicoff accepted the position of Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare under President Kennedy. Following that were eighteen years as U.S. Senator. Although asked to be the running mate of George McGovern, Ribicoff declined. Throughout his career, Ribicoff was known for candor and standing up for his beliefs in spite of attempts at intimidation.

This collection is comprised largely of news clippings, articles by Ribicoff, and photographs. It provides an overview of Ribicoff's career and valuable material for understanding his political stances but is only a starting point for serious research.

### **Rome, John J.**

1/4 cubic foot

John J. Rome (dates unknown) was best known for his association with the Honiss Oyster House, located for more than 130 years across from the Old State House in Hartford. Rome started out with the company around 1927. In 1949, he became its president. In 1974, Rome sold most of his interest and retired. This collection consists of scrapbook items kept by Rome concerning his career as a restaurateur.

### **Rose, R. Philip and Rebecca Cole**

1/4 cubic foot

R. Philip Rose (1899-1982) worked at the Hartford Courant for forty-five years (1920-1965), completing his tenure there as News Editor. Throughout the years he earned the respect of his colleagues for his kindness and the quality of his work. He was married to Rebecca Cole Rose (d. 1986), a sculptor. Following his retirement, Rose donated so many hours as a volunteer at Hartford Hospital that he became the first man elected to the membership of the Women's Auxiliary. This collection will aid anyone researching Jewish members of the news media, but it is not large enough to be the primary focus of research.

### **Silverman, Rabbi Morris and Althea**

1/2 cubic foot

Rabbi Morris Silverman (1894-1972), born in Newburgh, NY, earned an M.A. in American History from Columbia University and was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary in 1922. In 1923, Silverman took over the pulpit of the four-year-old Emanuel congregation and continued to serve there for thirty-eight years until his retirement in 1961. During these years,

membership rose from 178 families to more than 1,000 families, and attendance at services also rose as Silverman instituted innovations such as late Friday evening services, the Bat Mitzvah ceremony, Junior Congregation services, and other youth programs. Rabbi Silverman also became well-known throughout the greater Hartford community for his interfaith and civil rights support.

In addition to his local work, Rabbi Silverman served the Conservative movement nationally by editing numerous prayer books and other publications. His *Sabbath and Festival Prayer Book* became the official siddur of the movement, and his edition of the *High Holiday Prayer Book* is still in common use today. Rabbi Silverman also put his degree in history to use by writing a series of newspaper articles on the history of Hartford Jews which then evolved into his book *Hartford Jews 1659-1970*.

Rabbi Silverman's wife, Althea (1897-1977), was also very active in the synagogue and community. Her own love of writing was demonstrated by the many pageant scripts that she wrote, her book *The Jewish Home Beautiful* which arose from her Sisterhood programs on holiday and shabbat entertaining, and her books on Jewish themes for children.

This collection documents many of the activities of Rabbi Silverman and members of his family. However, it does not contain many working papers from the Rabbi's editing and writing.

### **Sons and Daughters of Herzl**

1/4 cubic foot

The Sons and Daughters of Herzl was organized in 1909 as a Zionist club for young people. Its meetings were conducted in Yiddish. This collection contains the club's minutes in Yiddish from 1915 to 1922.

### **Spitz, Rabbi Leon**

1/2 cubic foot

Rabbi Leon Spitz (1891-1959) was notable for his work in establishing Conservative congregations. Spitz grew up locally and was ordained by the Jewish Theological Seminary. During a break from his work as a WWI chaplain, he was asked to come home to organize what became the Emanuel Synagogue, the first introduction of Conservative Judaism to Connecticut. He was also assigned to set up Conservative congregations in numerous other eastern communities. Spitz was an ardent Zionist and officer of the Zionist Organization of America, the American Jewish Congress, and the Connecticut/Rhode Island division of United Palestine Appeal.

Rabbi Spitz was a prolific author of historical fiction for children and adults. Most of this collection is comprised of manuscripts and copies of his publications. There is also a notable letter dated 1923 from Mordecai Kaplan in which Kaplan mentions the criticism he has been

receiving for his approach to Judaism. Kaplan suggests that he and his supporters would all be better off to say that they are neither Reform nor Orthodox but rather a third party.

### **Synagogue and Congregation Vertical File**

4 cubic feet

This collection contains the records of local synagogues and congregations for which there is less than 1/4 cubic foot of material per file. A list of these will be found in the appendices.

### **Temple Beth Sholom -- See Beth Sholom**

### **Temple B'nai Israel -- See B'nai Israel**

### **Touro Club**

1/2 cubic foot

The Touro Club was established in 1901 by members of Hartford's German Jewish population. Unlike other fraternal organizations which usually had sick benefit provisions, the Touro Club was formed exclusively for social purposes. Typical activities included dinners, dances, poker games, and billiards. In 1922, the Touro Club became the Tumble Brook Country Club, with a clubhouse and nine-hole golf course in Bloomfield. This collection contains the Club minutes, but they contain relatively little information about the club other than names of new members and lists of bills paid.

### **Tucker, Sophie Abuza**

1/2 cubic foot

Sophie Abuza Tucker (1889-1966) was a singer known as "the First Lady of Show Business" and "Last of the Red-Hot Mamas." She began her career as a youth singing outside of her father's kosher restaurant in Hartford. She progressed to burlesque, vaudeville, theater, musical comedy, radio, television, and movies over the course of her sixty years on the stage. She became an international star, giving command performances for three generations of English royalty. Despite her busy career, she returned annually to Hartford, often giving benefit performances to aid the Hebrew Old People's Home, for which her mother was an active volunteer. Tucker was charitable in other ways as well, donating more than \$2 million to establish programs for underprivileged children, a health clinic, and two youth centers in Israel. This collection contains a few recordings, news clippings, copies of her autobiography *Some of These Days*, and an excellent selection of photographs.

### **Wise, Isidore**

1/4 cubic foot plus a scrapbook and architectural plans

Isidore Wise (1866-1956) left school at the age of eleven for his first job in retail and opened his own dry goods store by the age of twenty-one. Eventually Wise and his partners built a six-story department store that he operated from 1898 to 1950. Wise was both popular and greatly respected. He held several public offices and received numerous public honors. In 1907, he founded the Hartford Businessmen's Association which eventually became the Hartford Chamber of Commerce. He was also president of Congregation Beth Israel for thirty-seven years, and a founder and president of United Jewish Charities in Hartford. Wise and his wife were extremely fond of travel; in 1949, they established a foundation to provide travel scholarships for two public school students each year.

The Isidore Wise collection consists largely of information on the various tributes paid to Wise. Although full of biographical information and useful for general histories of retail development in Hartford, this collection is insufficient for specific, in-depth retail or biographical research.

### **Workmen's Circle**

1/2 cubic foot

The Workmen's Circle was one of a number of fraternal organizations founded by Jewish immigrants to cope with the many economic and labor problems that they faced after arrival in this country. In its early years, the Circle provided extensive services for its members, including medical care, burials, adult education, and children's schools and camps. As Jews became more financially secure, the Circle shifted its outlook from strident Socialism to a more moderate focus on creating a "better and more beautiful world." The first Circle branch in Hartford was organized in 1901, with at least six more branches organized during the following two decades. The branches joined together in 1918 as the Workmen's Circle Educational Alliance to purchase a headquarters. During the 1960s and 1970s the local organization contracted and eventually dissolved.

This collection is very small and is comprised primarily of materials from the later years of the organization. The heart of the collection, minutes of branch #15 from 1952 to 1971, is in Yiddish. Although difficult to use as a primary research topic, these records may offer supporting information to anyone studying the rise and decline of fraternal groups.

### **Young Men's Hebrew Association / Young Women's Hebrew Association**

1/2 cubic foot

The Hartford Jewish community has been concerned about activities for its youth since the 19th century. As early as 1878, there was a Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) chapter which may have been reorganized in 1890. A Young Women's Hebrew Association (YWHA) chapter was formed in 1881. These organizations were primarily utilized by local Jews of German descent, whereas the East European immigrants formed the Hartford Hebrew Association in 1891. Little is known of the activities of the early "Y" chapters.

Little documentation of these groups exists from before 1915, by which time the YMHA and YWHA served local Jews of all backgrounds from headquarters first on Winthrop Street and later on Ann Street (between 1928 and 1935). These organizations sponsored a wide variety of recreational and educational activities for youth and young adults, including a Sunday School and other courses on Jewish topics, theater productions, a magazine, and sports teams. There also existed a social group for young men, the Lyric Club, which sponsored sports teams and theatrical productions; in 1919 they affiliated with the YMHA. It is not clear, however, if they were a part of the YMHA chapter on Winthrop Street, as they retained their rooms on High Street and their minutes show no change of membership.

The local "Y" groups disbanded in the late 1930s. There was no equivalent until the organization of the Jewish Center Association in 1942. This collection documents the social and sports activities of the "Y" groups primarily during the 1920s. There is also a book of Lyric Club minutes from the period when it changed over to affiliation with the YMHA in 1919 to 1920.

### **Zionist Organization of America**

1 1/2 cubic feet

The Hartford Zionist District of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) probably was organized in 1917 in response to the Balfour Declaration. Two years later, the ZOA appointed Abraham Goldstein as the paid director of the Connecticut Zionist Region or Bureau. Goldstein, intelligent and highly gifted as an orator, led local ZOA activities to stunning success as one of the most active and influential local districts in the United States. A highlight in local ZOA history was the visit to Hartford in 1921 by Chaim Weizmann, head of the World Zionist Organization, and Albert Einstein to raise funds for the Keren Hayesod (Palestine Restoration Fund). Local ZOA leaders gave to the Keren Hayesod wholeheartedly.

This collection by itself is small and offers the researcher only the Hartford Zionist District minutes from 1919 to 1923 which are very useful. It is sometimes difficult to separate the activities of the ZOA from other Zionist activities because of the overlap in members of the various groups, so researchers need to examine the Israel and Zionism Subject Collection and other related collections for their possible ZOA content.

## **Appendix A**

### **Files of Organizations in the Vertical File**

These are the files of organizations for which we have less than 1/4 cubic feet of documents. Files refer to the local chapters of national organizations.

American Jewish Committee  
Anti-Defamation League  
Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists  
B'naith Zion of Hartford  
Brahilover Benevolent Association  
Brandeis University Women's Committee  
B'rith Abraham, Independent Order of  
Charter Oak Cultural Arts Center  
Credit Unions and "Oxies"  
Daughters of Zion Society  
Deborah Hospital Foundation  
Deborah Society  
Eleven Club  
Fifteen Club  
Florence Nightingale Club  
Fraternal Organizations (including the Masons, Knights of Columbus, John Hay Lodge, Jonathan Lodge, Princess Rebekah Lodge, Upsilon Lambda Phi Fraternity)  
Goodwill Club  
Greater Hartford Rabbinic Fellowship  
Hartford Bible Society  
Hartford Mutual Society  
Hartford Shalom  
Havurah Movement  
Hebrew Peddlers Protective Association  
Israel Bonds  
Jewish Association of New Americans, Hartford  
Jewish Continuity Community Council  
Jewish Family Service  
Jewish Genealogy Society  
Jewish National Workers Alliance  
Jewish Pioneers in Palestine  
Jewish Registered Nurses  
Jewish Social Service Agency of Hartford  
Jewish Welfare Board  
Kashrut Commission of Greater Hartford  
Ludmir Young Men's Benevolent Association  
Mikveh Bess Israel  
Mosaic Mountain Club  
National Conference of Christians and Jews  
National Conference of Synagogue Youth

Ohr Samayach Institution  
Piaterer Verein of Hartford  
Scouts  
Society of Israel Philatelists  
Solomon Schechter Day School  
Thirteen Club  
Torah Treks  
Tumblebrook Country Club  
Tzivos Hashem  
United Order of True Sisters  
United Synagogue Youth  
Va'ad HaKashruth  
Vendors' Mutual Benefit Association  
Wolkowysker Society  
Women's League for Conservative Judaism

## **Appendix B**

### **Files of Synagogues and Congregations in the Vertical File**

These are the files of synagogues and congregations for which we have less than 1/4 cubic feet of documents.

Ados Israel (Hartford)  
Adath Israel (Middletown)  
Ateres Israel (Hartford)  
Ateres Knesset Israel (Hartford)  
Am Segulah (West Hartford)  
Ahavath Achim (Colchester)  
Beth Ahm (Windsor)  
Beth El (Torrington)  
Beth El (Waterbury)  
Beth Hamedrash Hagodol (Hartford)  
Beth Hillel (South Windsor)  
Beth Jacob Congregation (Hartford)  
Beth Tefilah (East Hartford)  
Beth Torah (Wethersfield)  
B'nai Israel (Rockville)  
B'nai Sholom (Newington)  
B'nai Sholom (Waterbury)  
Beth Sholom, Congregation (Deep River)  
Farmington Valley Jewish Congregation  
Kehilat Chaverim (West Hartford)  
Kneseth Israel (Ellington)  
Knesset Israel (Hartford)  
Kol Haverim (Glastonbury)  
Ohave Zedeck (Hartford)  
Ohavei Shalom (West Hartford)  
Rodfe Zedek (East Haddam)  
Shaarey Torah (Hartford)  
Sons of Jacob (Torrington)  
Teferes Israel (Hartford/Bloomfield)  
Temple B'nai Abraham (Meriden)  
Temple B'nai Israel (Willimantic)  
Temple Sinai (Newington)  
Tephereth Israel (New Britain)  
Tikvoh Chadoshah (Bloomfield)  
United Synagogues (West Hartford)  
Young Israel of Hartford (West Hartford)  
Young Israel of West Hartford (West Hartford)

Additional Databases:

Organizations

Synagogues

Individuals & Families

Obituaries

Businesses & Professions

Books

Cemeteries

Photographs

Miscellaneous Data