



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

FALL/WINTER 2012-2013

THE AJA HOSTS FOURTH SYNAGOGUE ARCHIVES CONFERENCE

From August 26–28, 2012, The Marcus Center hosted 40 synagogue archivists from around the country for *Going Beyond Memory: A Conference on Synagogue Archiving*. This conference, which was sponsored in conjunction with the Union for Reform Judaism, was the fourth such conference hosted by The Marcus Center since 1999.

By all accounts, this was the best and most well received program of the previous three. Designed for laypersons having no experience or training in archival work, our goal was to introduce these hard working volunteers to the basics of archival work – and to establish the AJA as a resource for all synagogues who are interested in the long-term care of their historic records. Our 3-day program consisted of numerous sessions dealing with archival arrangement and description, appraisal of historic records, Jewish genealogy, outreach and programs, as well as the care of digital images and records. The program featured a keynote address from noted scholar and College-

Institute alum, Dr. Marc Lee Raphael, who delivered an entertaining talk on “The Synagogue in America.” The conference also included a guided tour of the Cincinnati campus and the Klau Library, together with a bus tour of historic Jewish Cincinnati, led by Dr. Gary P. Zola that included a visit to the Plum Street Temple.

Attendees came from both coasts, from congregations large and small, from newly formed synagogues as well as from congregations hundreds of years old. In addition to professional instruction we gave the attendees the opportunity to meet others who face the same challenges and to discuss mutual problems and concerns. We also introduced them to the College-Institute, the AJA, and to our hard working staff of professional archivists, administrators, and educators. We examined archival work within the context of the synagogue in American Jewish life to help better understand the role historic records can have in the daily functions and activities of communities, separate from research and scholarship.



Photos (top to bottom): Studying in the Barrows-Loebelson Reading Room; Dr. Zola teaching in the Jewish Foundation of Cincinnati International Learning Center; visiting Plum Street Temple.

AJA RECEIVES RECORDS OF B'NAI B'RITH INTERNATIONAL

The AJA's most important acquisition of 2012 has been the arrival of the records of B'nai B'rith International. Earlier this year B'nai B'rith International—widely considered by scholars and historians to be the most important Jewish membership organization in American Jewish history—announced that the contents of

its archives and its Holocaust and Related Materials Archives will be relocated to The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio. Totaling nearly 500 feet, the B'nai B'rith records contain thousands of manuscripts, charters, medals, letters, memorabilia and other artifacts that demonstrate changing societal needs from the needs of orphans to those of the elderly, from assistance to immigrants to the preservation of Jewish identity in an open society. These archives represent a treasured primary resource for

researchers and extend from former mining towns in the American West to the Jewish presence on the Island of Rhodes. The Marcus Center is deeply honored by B'nai B'rith's decision to entrust its archival treasure trove to the American Jewish Archives. We are fully cognizant of B'nai B'rith's tremendous historical significance. Not only will we preserve these remarkable records in perpetuity, but we are firmly committed to making these records accessible to all those who are interested in making use of them.



The Staff

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(1947-1995)

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Assistant to the Archivists



Archivists unpack treasures from the B'nai B'rith collection.

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

In the past year, the AJA has received 342 new items and a significant number of additions to its current archival collection. The largest bulk of these materials constitute the records of the College-Institute, the Union for Reform Judaism, the Women of Reform Judaism and the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. We accessioned nearly 500 feet of records of the College-Institute records, primarily of the Dean's Office in Cincinnati, together with a sizeable collection of up-to-date records of the Union for Reform Judaism. The URJ records include the papers – both physical and electronic – of Rabbi Eric Yoffie's presidency together with papers of Rabbi Lennard Thal's vice-presidency. We also accessioned a large

collection of audiovisual materials from the Women of Reform Judaism as well as a significant addition to the RAC collection that is already on file here at the AJA.

The AJA has also received significant additions to its growing digital collection. Highlights of these include the digital manuscript collection (with audio recordings) of our beloved colleague and longtime Director of Liturgical Arts, Bonia Shur (z"l), as well as digital video and audio files from the 2011 URJ Biennial. The AJA also recently received the digital files – and original 1980s computer – of Dr. Ben Zion Wacholder and Dr. Martin Abegg which they used during their research in the late 1980s and early 1990s on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

THE AJA IS A LEADER IN PROVIDING SCHOLARS AND RESEARCHERS WITH NEW DIGITAL RESOURCES

The American Jewish Archives Journal

For more than sixty years, the AJA has provided its readers with informative articles, interesting documentary analyses, and helpful review essays relating to the American Jewish experience. We are pleased to present the entire run of our award-winning semiannual publication in a freely accessible searchable database.

The Isaac Mayer Wise Digital Collection



The Marcus Center was awarded a generous grant of \$50,000 from two segments of the Sulzberger Family of New York to digitize the entirety of the Isaac Mayer Wise Papers located at the American Jewish Archives. Visitors to the site can view the documents or search for key words in the text of each digitized letter, sermon, editorial, and monograph. This is the largest digital collection of Isaac Mayer Wise materials found anywhere in the world.



First American Jewish Families

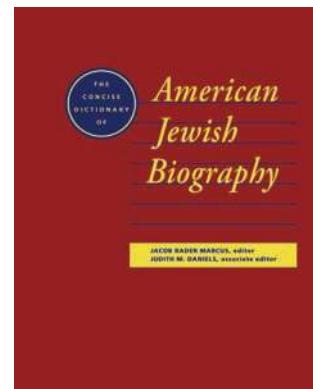
When it first appeared in 1960, Malcolm Stern's *Americans of Jewish Descent* marked a milestone in the study of American Jewish genealogy. The AJA is proud to make the latest edition of this classic text available online.

Researchers now have access to the complete text of this monumental volume that was published in 1991 as the updated and revised 3rd edition titled, *First American Jewish Families: 600 Genealogies, 1654-1988*. Students of American Jewish genealogy utilize this text as a basis for their research. Statistics show that this section of the AJA's website is accessed more than any other.

Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography

The Concise Dictionary of American Jewish Biography, edited by Jacob Rader Marcus and Judith M. Daniels (Brooklyn,

NY: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1994), provides brief biographies of approximately 24,000 American Jews, ranging from Ascher Levy, one of the first Jewish settlers in New York, through Jewish figures who died prior to 1990. Entries are alphabetical, with copious cross-references; brief biographical notes presented in a telegraphic style with citations that direct readers to where further information can be found.



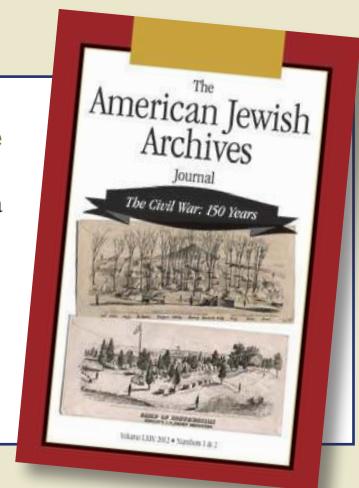
The AJA has scanned this two volume work so that it is now available online in its entirety. Scholars and researchers from around the world can use this digitized version of this remarkable reference work from anywhere in the world.



The AJA Journal, Civil War Issue

The Marcus Center has recently published a special double issue in honor of the sesquicentennial anniversary of the Civil War. This special issue and all back issues are available for downloading and viewing through our website:

www.AmericanJewishArchives.org





The Jacob Rader Marcus Center
of the American Jewish Archives presents

Travels in American Jewish History: Philadelphia, PA

May 1-5, 2013

On May 1-5, 2013, the AJA will be leading a group to study the important history of the Jewish community of Philadelphia, PA. Participants will have the opportunity to interact with leading scholars in American Jewish history and tour some of the sites first hand. We are happy to provide you with some of the highlights:

Featured Scholars

Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna, Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and Chief Historian of the new National Museum of American Jewish History.

Dr. Lance Sussman, Senior Rabbi of Keneseth Israel, Elkins Park, PA and renowned author.

Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the AJA, & Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion

Trips, Tours & Events

- Travel through history as you take a Jewish tour of Philadelphia
- Explore the National Museum of American Jewish History and receive a VIP tour
- Attend services at Keneseth Israel and learn about its rich history
- Participate in interactive study sessions featuring historical documents with renowned scholars and fellow participants

For more information, please contact Lisa Frankel, Director of Programs for the AJA:
by e-mail: lfrankel@huc.edu or by phone at 513-487-3218

Visit our website and save a place on the trip at: AmericanJewishArchives.org

