

Collection #
M1010
OMB0125

CONGREGATION BETH ISRAEL COLLECTION, 1916–1958

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Processed by

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COLLECTION INFORMATION

VOLUME OF COLLECTION: 1 manuscript box, 1 OVA manuscript box, 1 flat file

COLLECTION DATES: 1916–1958

PROVENANCE: Ernest Fruehauf, Munster, Indiana, July 1 2009

RESTRICTIONS: None

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ALTERNATE FORMATS:

RELATED HOLDINGS: Indiana Jewish Historical Society Collection, 1845–2002.
Manuscript Collection: M0743.
Congregation Beth Israel (Hammond, Ind.) Bulletins, 1976–1996. Manuscript Collection: M0923.

ACCESSION NUMBER: 2009.0182

NOTES: This forms part of the collection of the Indiana Jewish Historical Society.

HISTORICAL SKETCH

Kneseth Israel Congregation

Kneseth Israel Synagogue, which later became Beth Israel in 1976, was formed as an Orthodox congregation in 1902 by Sam Abelman and fourteen other men from the Hammond Jewish community. Prior to the congregation's formation, Jews in Hammond had worshipped in private homes and public buildings for decades. This continued into the first years of Kneseth Israel's formation until the congregation purchased a building on Indiana Avenue in 1908, making it Hammond's first synagogue.

A boom in multiple industries in Hammond required an increase in heavy labor, and Jewish immigrants readily supplied it. By 1920, Hammond had reached a population of 64,000, of which approximately 1,000 were Jewish. Immigrants from Eastern Europe began trickling in and divisions within the Jewish community between older and more established German Jews and these new arrivals surfaced.

In 1918 a new synagogue was built and shared with the Beth El Reform congregation (of Hammond) until 1923, when Beth El decided to build their own temple. By 1937 the Jewish population in Hammond reached 1,930 with 190 Jewish owned businesses. In 1958 the Congregation moved again to a new synagogue on Hohman Avenue where it existed until 2004. In 2006 a new temple was dedicated in Munster, Indiana, south of Hammond.

Temple Beth El

Temple Beth El was formed in Gary, Indiana in 1907, when the first High Holiday services were held at the home of Pinchas Mackatinsky. The Temple established its first synagogue at Eighth and Connecticut Avenues in Gary on September 20 1908. This temple was only a temporary structure for the congregation and on August 31 1912, a new synagogue was dedicated. With the new facilities opened, Temple Beth El expanded and in 1913 both the Sisters of Beth El and the Hebrew Educational Alliance (HEA) were formed. In 1918, a building was constructed for the use of the congregation's youth as a part of the HEA.

From 1918–51, Temple Beth El continued to grow, seeing the creation of a tunnel connecting the Temple building and the School building, the creation of a Men's Club and the Men's Club Choral Group, and a general increase in membership and activities. As a result of this growth, a need for newer and larger facilities for both the main Temple building and the HEA emerged. In 1947, Temple Beth El purchased a large plot of land at a cost of \$17,000 (located at Fifth and Roosevelt Avenues in Gary). The first appeal for funds was made during the Holy Days of 1951, and a total of \$120,000 was pledged by Temple members to start a Building Fund. A goal of \$500,000 was established as the amount needed to construct the new Temple and School facilities. During the fundraising process, an architect was chosen and plans were drawn up for the design of the new building. On August 21 1955, the Cornerstone and Dedication Ceremonies were conducted at the new Temple Beth El building.

Temple Beth El merged with the Kneseth Israel Congregation in 1976, forming the Congregation Beth Israel, which is currently located in Munster, Indiana.

The Hebrew Educational Alliance (HEA)

The Hebrew Educational Alliance formed in 1913 as a part of Temple Beth El in Gary, Indiana. The group used the Temple's synagogue until a new building of the Alliance was dedicated on June 2 1918. The laying of the cornerstone and dedication ceremonies of this new building occurred on November 18 1917. The new building was used exclusively for youth events and groups, housing the daily Hebrew School, the Sunday school, the Children's Sabbath and Holiday Services, the gymnasium, library, daily Minyan and the Sabbath afternoon shiur. From 1918 until 1955, when new facilities were opened, average enrollment in the school numbered between eighty and ninety students.

Sources:

Information in the collection.

Congregation Beth Israel (Hammond, Ind.) Bulletins, 1976–1996. Manuscript Collection: M0923. Indiana Historical Society.

Congregation Beth Israel. *Our History*.: <http://www.cbi-nwi.org/our-community.htm>

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

This collection was donated to the Indiana Historical Society by Ernest Fruehauf, Holocaust survivor and former president of the Jewish Federation of Northwest Indiana. The collection contains items which were recovered in July 2009, primarily from the cornerstone boxes of three buildings which played roles in the history of the Congregation Beth Israel of Gary Indiana. The collection is broking into three series accordingly:

Series 1: Kneseth Israel Congregation, 1919–1958: This series contains materials recovered from the cornerstone box of the Kneseth Israel Congregation synagogue, which was dedicated on June 15 1958. Items include the Cornerstone Ceremony program, letters written by the Kneseth Israel Daughters of Israel and the Board of Governors, 1958 congregation membership lists, a newspaper clipping announcing the cornerstone laying ceremony, and 1919 membership lists and Honor Roll. Due to a significant amount of deterioration of some of the documents, the originals have been removed from the collection and replaced by photocopies of these items (1958 membership lists and newspaper clipping).

Series 2: Temple Beth El, 1916–1955: This series contains materials recovered from the cornerstone box of the Temple Beth El Congregation synagogue, which was dedicated on August 21 1955. Items include the Cornerstone and Dedication Ceremonies program, early Temple Beth El pew purchasing agreements, meeting minutes of the Temple Beth El Board and the Temple Beth El Sisterhood from 1951, a booklet sponsored by the New Temple Building Campaign Fund, a Temple Beth El Men’s Club Events Booklet, letters written by the temple’s youth groups to include in the cornerstone, a Hebrew school curriculum, and membership lists. Some of these items are oversized.

Series 3: Hebrew Educational Alliance, 1917: This series contains materials recovered from the cornerstone box of the Hebrew Educational Alliance School building, which was dedicated on November 18 1917. Items include the Cornerstone Ceremony invitation, programs, and readings, two documents written in Hebrew, and a membership list from 1917. These items are all stored in the legal-sized manuscript box.

SERIES CONTENTS

Series 1: Kneseth Israel Congregation, 1919–58

CONTENTS

Kneseth Israel Cornerstone Laying Ceremony Program and Newspaper Clipping, 1958

CONTAINER

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 1

Daughters of Israel and Board of Governors Letters, 1958

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 2

Kneseth Israel Membership Lists, 1958

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 3

Officers of Kneseth Israel Congregation and Honor Roll Lists, 1919

OMB 0125
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Series 2: Temple Beth El, 1916–1955

CONTENTS

Temple Beth El Cornerstone and Dedication Ceremonies Program, 1955

CONTAINER

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 1

Max Nelson Pew Purchasing Agreements, 1916–17

Box 1, Folder 1

Temple Board and Sisterhood Meeting Minutes, 1951

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 4

New Beth El Temple Building Fund Campaign Booklet, 1953

Box 1, Folder 2

Temple Beth El Men's Club Events Booklet, 1955

Box 1, Folder 2

Temple Beth El Youth Groups Cornerstone Ceremony Letters, August 21 1955

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 5

Temple Beth El Hebrew School Curriculum, 1950s

Box 1, Folder 3

Temple Beth El Membership Lists, 1955

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 6

Series 3: Hebrew Educational Alliance (HEA), 1917

CONTENTS

Cornerstone Festival Invitation, Program and Readings, 1917

HEA Membership List, November 18 1917

HEA Hebrew Documents, ca. 1917

CONTAINER

OMB 0125
Box 1, Folder 1

Box 1, Folder 4

Box 1, Folder 5

CATALOGING INFORMATION

For additional information on this collection, including a list of subject headings that may lead you to related materials:

1. Go to the Indiana Historical Society's online catalog:
<http://opac.indianahistory.org/>
2. Click on the "Basic Search" icon.
3. Select "Call Number" from the "Search In:" box.
4. Search for the collection by its basic call number (in this case, M1010).
5. When you find the collection, go to the "Full Record" screen for a list of headings that can be searched for related materials.