

JHSSA DESCRIPTIVE LEVEL RECORD

TITLE: House of Israel fonds

No.: HOI

DATE RANGE: 1926-1980, predominant 1953-1962

EXTENT: 8cm of textual records. –1 object

ADMINISTRATIVE HISTORY:

In 1912, the Jewish residents of Calgary elected a Council (*Va'ad Hair*) to coordinate its religious and educational institutions. Many of the functions of the council were reconstituted with the establishment of the House of Israel in 1929.

The House of Israel Association was incorporated and registered on October 14, 1929. The signatories were Abraham S. Horwitz, Samuel Gurevitch, Harris W. Zemans (recorded as 'Jincuos' in the 1929 documents), Jack Bercuson (recorded as "Bercuson" in the 1929 documents), Samuel Segall, Jacob J. Wise and Barnet Groberman, witnessed by A.I. Shumiatcher. The stated aims of the Association were to promote religious and charitable work; to provide instruction in Hebrew and Yiddish language, as well as Jewish literature and history; to establish and maintain libraries to support that instruction; to offer space for public meetings, classes and conferences that would "advance the cause of such education as aforesaid", and to support the intellectual, physical and spiritual activities of the Young Men's and Women's Hebrew Association.

The House of Israel building served as the gathering place for Calgary's Jewish community from 1930 until 1979. Planning and fundraising for a Jewish community building began in 1926, and with the help of a sizable contribution from the Calgary Hebrew School (Talmud Torah), a site was purchased on Centre St South, between 17th and 18th Avenues.

Construction on the building, located at the south end of the purchased property, began in 1930, and the foundation level, which included a social hall and kitchens, was completed that same year. Plans for the main level included a large auditorium, chapel, meeting and classrooms, but construction was halted after its shell was erected, due to a lack of funds. The Talmud Torah began its long-term tenancy despite the un-usability of the main floor, as did the new Beth Israel Congregation. The House of Israel building also became home to B'nai Brith and its associated groups, several women's organizations, and the Joint Jewish Administrative Office, which represented Calgary Zionist Association, Calgary Jewish Welfare Fund, Histadrut, and the House of Israel Association itself.

A major fundraising drive was undertaken after WWII and construction of the building's upper level was completed in 1949, providing additional space for community events that included meetings, banquets, youth functions and weddings. Charitable organizations used the building as a drop-off site for clothing drives, and a skating rink was sometimes flooded in winter for community use.

With the increasing suburban development of the 1950s, Calgary's Jewish community began moving away from the inner city and the location of the House of Israel, by then often referred to as the Jewish Community Centre, became increasingly inconvenient. Its major tenants relocated (Calgary Hebrew School in 1959, Beth Israel Congregation in 1960), and use of the aging building was greatly reduced. The vacant (north) part of the property was leased (and later sold) to the Shaarey Tzedec Congregation, and in 1962, after negotiating an agreement with the Calgary Jewish Community Council, the board of directors of the House of Israel Association was replaced with a new board consisting of representatives of some 20 Calgary Jewish organizations, and the Community Council took over responsibility for the building.

In 1979 a new community building, the Calgary Jewish Centre, was opened in the south part of the city, and the House of Israel building was sold to a developer, who converted the space to condominiums.

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The fonds consists of minutes, correspondence, financial records and public appeals, as well copies of the bylaws, constitution and certificates of title for the House of Israel, and an inscribed sterling silver trowel in a velvet-lined wooden box.

The fonds has been arranged into the following series: Governance; Minutes; Correspondence; Financial; Communications.

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of fonds

SOURCE OF ACQUISITION: Yale Joffe; Joe Spier; Bev Walker

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access

ACCRUALS: no further accruals expected

RELATED GROUPS OF RECORDS: Calgary Hebrew School, Beth Israel Congregation

GENERAL NOTE: Includes the following accessions: 98-004, 99-024, 2000-006, 2001-006, 2002-018

Series Title: Governance

No.: .01

Date Range: [192-?]- 1980

Extent: 1cm of textual records

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The series consists of copies of the certificates of title (some certificates copied 1981, some certificate copies not dated) for the land owned by the House of Israel Association; copies of the 1929 bylaws, application for Incorporation and certificate of incorporation of the House of Israel Association (photocopied 1950); annotated (draft) copy of the Constitution of the Calgary Jewish Community Centre (undated, late 1950s); building rental policies (undated, late 1950s); outline of the purpose and activities of the "Calgary Jewish Community Centre" including a proposed budget and weekly schedule (undated, late 1950s); drawn plan for the proposed connecting structure of the Shaarey Tzedec building (undated, late 1950s); 1958 Revised By-Laws of the House of Israel Association; an unsigned (draft) copy of the 1958 agreement between the House of Israel Association and the Shaarey Tzedec Congregation.

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of series

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access

Series Title: Minutes

No.: .02

Date Range: 1926-1928, 1944-1962

Extent: 4cm of textual records

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The series consists of minutes and reports regarding the business and activities of the House of Israel, arranged chronologically.

The 1926-1928 minute book includes lists of founding members and organizations; later minutes sometimes include member lists and financial information.

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of series

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access

Series Title: Correspondence

No.: .03

Date Range: 1948-1962

Extent: 2cm of textual records

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The series consists of correspondence regarding the business and activities of the House of Israel, arranged chronologically, as well as member lists, a fundraising campaign brochure and 3 printed envelopes.

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of series

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access

Series Title: Financial

No.: .04

Date Range: 1952-1962

Extent: 1cm of textual records

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The series consists of ledger pages from a Stag Dinner (1952), financial statements (1953), a suggested budget and estimated expenses (1954), a report on the 1958 Joint Hebrew School / House of Israel Campaign, financial statement and list of accounts payable (1961), and a Banking Resolution passed in 1962 by the House of Israel Association.

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of series

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access

Series Title: Objects

No.: .05

Date Range: 1936

Extent: 1 object

SCOPE AND CONTENT:

The series consists of a velvet-lined wooden box containing a sterling silver trowel, inscribed "PRESENTED TO MORRIS GROBERMAN, ESQ. ON THE OCCASION OF LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL CALGARY ALTA SEPT 16TH 1936"

NOTES:

SOURCE OF TITLE: title from content of series

ACCESS CONDITIONS: no restrictions on access