
Guide to the Emanu-El Congregation, San Francisco Records, 1849-1995

Collection number: 67/6

Western Jewish History Center

Berkeley, California

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Emanu-El Congregation, San Francisco Records,

Date (inclusive): 1849-1995

Collection number: 67/6

Creator: Emanu-El Congregation

Extent: 2.5' and two oversize folders

Repository: The Western Jewish History Center.

Berkeley, California 94705

Language: English

Access

Collection is open for research by appointment only every Monday-Thursday, except for those Jewish and Federal holidays when it is closed.

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Biography

The Emanu-El Congregation claims the title of first Synagogue in San Francisco. The first Jewish services were held in San Francisco in 1849 and major holidays were celebrated in various locations. Money was first acquired to build a permanent site in 1851 but disagreements split the group and on April 8, 1851 two congregations were formed: Temple Emanu-El and Sherith Israel. Emanu-El, originally Orthodox in

orientation was drawn towards the emerging Reform Movement, guided in part by a series of rabbis with impressive reform credentials. Over the years Emanu-El became a temple of San Francisco's Jewish elite, listing many of the top mercantile, banking, and political families on its membership rolls.

Emanu-El's first building was built on Broadway between Powell and Mason in 1854 at the same time they acquired their first full-time, ordained Rabbi, Julius Eckman who served in his post one year. The congregation did not regain a full-time rabbi until 1860 when Rabbi Elkan Cohn was hired. Cohn was Emanu-El's longest serving rabbi, staying until his death in 1889.

Rabbi Cohn reorganized the congregation, revitalized the religious school (first organized in 1858), and inaugurated the Confirmation Program which graduated its first class on Shavuot 1862. In 1864 a group broke away from Emanu-El to form the more Orthodox Ohabai Shalome in protest of changes to the prayerbook.

By 1864 the congregation had expanded significantly and the Sutter Street temple was built and became a local landmark. Destroyed by the 1906 fire and earthquake, the temple was rebuilt on the same site and rededicated in 1907. In 1926 the congregation, again expanding, moved to its current home, another architectural landmark, on Lake Street.

Cohn was succeeded by Jacob Voorsanger, of Holland, who had become Assistant Rabbi in 1886, and served from Cohn's death in 1889 until his own death in 1908. Voorsanger was a "scholar, teacher, preacher and publicist." He founded the weekly Jewish paper, also called the Emanu-El in November 1895, which eventually became the San Francisco Jewish Bulletin.

Martin Meyer who served 13 years (1910-1923), oversaw the continued expansion of the Religious School including the creation of a Correspondence School for isolated Jewish children (1912) and a branch school in San Mateo (1915). The School's literary magazine, The Scroll, was started in 1913 and originally published up to six issues a year. Meyer also oversaw the formation of numerous clubs: the Women's Guild (1917), Emanu-El Men's Club (c. 1920), and the Pathfinders (1921). Two of his most lasting contributions were the organization of Boy Scout Troop #17 under leader Arthur "Pie" Myer and the hiring of Cantor Reuben Rinder in 1913.

Cantor Rinder, who retired in 1959 but stayed active in the congregation until his death in 1966, was a stabilizing force during a period of revolving rabbis. His dedication to Jewish liturgical music resulted in grand musical events at the temple starting in 1922, and the commissioning of pieces from major composers including Ernest Block (1938), Darius Milhaud (1949), and Marc Lavry (1955). Both Yehudi Menuhin and Isaac Stern contributed to the program commemorating Cantor Rinder's 45th year of service to the Temple (1958).

Martin Meyer, who had been instrumental in the push for the new Lake Street temple, died suddenly shortly before the ground breaking. He was replaced by Louis Newman who served from 1924-1930 before returning to New York. Newman oversaw the building of the Lake Street Temple, instituted the Temple Chronicle (a weekly bulletin of activities and information), formed the Temple Players whose professional quality plays included the 1928 production "The Dybbuk." The religious school staged their own dramas and contributed to elaborate festival celebrations.

Later rabbis include: Irving F. Reichert (1930-1947), Alvin Fine (1948-1964), Meyer Heller (Asst. 1950-1963), Irving Hausman (1964-1967), Joseph Adler (1968-85), Robert Kirschner (Asst. 1982-1985, Head 1985-1992), and Stephen Pierce (1993-)

Scope and Content

The documents in the Emanu-El Congregation, San Francisco collection were donated to WJHC in 1967 by Marshall Kuhn and other Emanu-El congregants. Additional documents have been added over the years, including copies of The Scroll (a publication of the Emanu-El Religious School) through 1995. Also included in the collection are microfilm copies of documents still held by the congregation. Collection was reprocessed in 1999.

This collection documents Congregation Emanu-El from its inception through the 1960s with scattered records to 1995. Due to the artificial (coming from a variety of sources) and unofficial nature of the collection it is very uneven in its documentation of the institution. The collection includes some corporate materials (bylaws, minutes, financial and other official records), as well as clippings, programs, correspondence, marriage certificates, photos and publications. The bulk of the collection consists of materials pertaining to Emanu-El's active and vigorous Religious School including information on Confirmation Classes (1866-1975) and copies of the school's publication, The Scroll (1921-1995). The next largest series covers Services and Special Events (religious services, special events including concerts, plays, and anniversary celebrations), and information on several Emanu-El associated clubs (including Boy Scout Troop 17). Also included are a few early marriage certificates, Home of Peace Cemetery records, and information on rabbis and other people associated with Emanu-El (including sermons and speeches), as well as Emanu-El's various buildings. Photographs include a number of stereopticon views of the Sutter Street Temple both before and after the 1906 earthquake. The collection also contains a complete issue of the September 21, 1906 Emanu-El. The majority of the records consist of scattered items within the date ranges listed.

This collection also includes three reels of microfilm and a video tape all housed in box 7. Two reels consist of several volumes of minutes, a scrapbook, and cemetery records which are not otherwise represented in the collection. The third reel includes 8 folders of documents some of which are otherwise represented in the collection. A copy of the microfilm inventory is included at the end of the Series/Folder List, and some items are cross-referenced within the Series/Folder List as well.

Condition Report

Overall, the collection is in relatively good condition. Many of the older documents are photocopies and some are faint.

Related Collections

WJHC has a large number of related collections including the papers and oral histories of rabbis, cantors and other officials/congregants, and records of associated institutions, and events, as well as periodicals, monographs.

Collections include:

- Fine, Alvin (77/2) -- Rabbi.
- Heller, Meyer (73/4) -- Rabbi and Education Director.
- Kuhn, Marshall (79/3) -- Principle of Religious School?
- Lienthal Family (71/11, 73/79) -- includes Sunday School Sermons.
- Newman, Louis I (72/10) -- Rabbi.
- Reichert, Irving (67/5) -- Rabbi.
- Rinder, Reuben R. (70/5) -- Cantor.
- Voorsanger, Elkan (77/1) -- Rabbi.
- Voorsanger, Jacob (69/20) -- Rabbi.
- Walters, Abraham (69/14) -- Vice-President of Congregation in the 1850s.
- Emanu-El Sisterhood for Personal Service (70/11).
- Eureka Benevolent Society (78/11).
- Ohabai Shalome Congregation, San Francisco (69/2).
- The Dybbuk (67/39) -- Production by the Temple Emanu-El Players.

Oral Histories include:

- Fleishhacker, Mortimer,
- Koshland, Daniel E. Sr.,
- Kuhn, Marshall H.,
- Rinder, Rose,
- Bibel, Bassya Maltzer.

Periodicals:

- The Emanu-El -- 1895 - present,
- Temple Emanu-El Chronicle -- 1924-1947, 1951-1958, and 1995-1999.

Books:

- Rosenbaum, Fred. Architects of Reform: Congregational and Community Leadership of Emanu-El of San Francisco, 1849-1980.
- --- Visions of Reform: Congregation Emanu-El and the Jews of San Francisco, 1849-1999.
- Voorsanger, Jacob. The Chronicles of Emanu-El: Being and Account of the Rise and Progress of the Congregation Emanu-El Which Was Founded in July 1850 and Will Celebrate it's Fiftieth Anniversary December 23, 1900.
- Kahn, Edgar. Centennial Booklet.

Corporate Records 1849-1963

Physical Description: 10 folders, 1 oversize and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains constitution and by-laws (1905-1961), minutes from meetings of the board of directors (1849-53), financial records (1884-1961), and annual reports (1931-1963). Most of the bylaws and minutes are on microfilm. Only the microfilmed board minutes are complete. This series also contains membership (1950, 1960, and n.d.) and officers lists (1854-63), and organizational histories (including a 1906 version by Rabbi Voorsanger, a 1958 version by Reuben R. Rinder, a 1968 Tour script, one letter and clippings), as well as an inventory of the records held by Emanu-El c. 1967.

Marriages and Conversions, 1855-1892, c. 1910

Physical Description: 1 folder and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains a few early marriage certificates and licenses. Also one blank conversion form from the 1910s. See also Microfilm Roll 3, folder 2.

Home of Peace (Cemetery), 1895-1953

Physical Description: 2 folders and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains records pertaining to the cemetery jointly owned by Emanu-El and the Eureka Benevolent Society that was started at 18th and Dolores in the Mission District in 1860. Emanu-El took full ownership of the cemetery after it was moved to Colma in 1895 at a time when all graves were being removed from within the city limits. Folders contain a newspaper clipping on an apparently abandoned grave (1896), a plot deed from 1899, and receipt for payment on a plot from Adolph Sutro (1895). Also included are expansion and promotional materials from 1936 and 1956. Microfilm consists of a notebook showing grave sites and occupancy at the Colma cemetery.

Religious Education, 1866-1995

Physical Description: 26 folders and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains information on the Emanu-El Religious School and on Confirmation Services. School materials include order of prayers (1860), early Board of Directors duties (1866), Sunday School medals (1877-1879), announcements, correspondence, curriculum materials, and regulations (1911-1954). Copies of the school's publication, *The Scroll*, which evolved over time from a literary magazine into a yearbook, are also included. Holdings include scattered issues from 1921-1939 and an almost complete run from 1940-1995 (1944, 1989, and 1992 are missing). Also included are flyers and programs for various children's services and plays.

Confirmation services material includes lists of confirmants from 1866 to 1950 (fairly complete with married names and other added information), Confirmation service programs (1861-1975, bulk 1924-1967) and booklets (1948-1975). Programs list order of events and participants. Booklets include text of speeches given at services. Also included is a Confirmation Certificate from 1902, material on the 1949 annual Confirmation Class Midnight Hike, programs on the 1950 and 1951 Confirmation dances, and several Confirmation Reunion Services (1950-1970). A formal portrait of the Confirmation Class of 1955 is in the Photograph Series.

Services, Programs and Events, 1891-1988

Physical Description: 14 folders and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains programs, bulletins, and other materials documenting services held by the congregation, special musical and dramatic presentations, art exhibits and anniversary observations. Anniversaries range from the 50th to the 125th with the bulk of the material pertaining to the 100th anniversary celebration in 1950 including the script for a historical pageant. The 1897-98 Directory for the Year, includes a calendar, list of officers, and information on services. Sporadic card-sized Weekly Calendars and two copies of Bulletins document 1922-1923, and scattered issues of the Temple Chronicle (1925-1981) include some missing from the bound copies available in the reading room.

Events of special note include: The Union Thanksgiving Services held jointly with the First Unitarian Church, Premieres of compositions by Darius Milhaud (1949) and Marc Lavry (1955). Interesting documents include two addresses by Dr. Monroe E. Deutsch, Vice-President and Provost of the University of California -- "Faith and Freedom" given at the Emanu-El's 90th Anniversary Celebration (1940), and "The Status of the American Jew" at the 95th Anniversary (1945), as well as a description of the 1896 Yom Kippur service written by a gentile member of the chorus. Also see items in Scrapbook (Microfilm Roll 1/Volume 4).

Clubs, 1864-1965

Physical Description: 8 folders

Scope and Content Note

This series contains files relating to various clubs sponsored or associated with Emanu-El including the Hebrew Youth's Library and Debating Association (HYL&DA), Emanuel-Lites (a club primarily for singles founded in 1947), the Men's Club, the Women's Club, the Pathfinders (an all male club for Post-Confirmants which expanded to include college students which was active from 1921-1939), and Boy Scout Troop #17 which met at Emanu-El starting in 1918. The earliest club, HYL&DA, is represented by a newspaper clipping dated 1864. Records for the Emanuel-Lites, Men's Club and Women's Club consist primarily of bylaws. The Pathfinders records are the most extensive including minutes, correspondence, and financial records. The Boy Scout records includes programs, correspondence and clippings. Of special note are Chapter Three of "The Scoutmaster's Wife," by Ethel Myer (c. 1955), lists of former scouts serving in World War II, reunion materials, and the troop's 40th anniversary gift to the Scoutmaster and his wife, a trip to Hawaii (1956).

People, 1858-1992

Physical Description: 16 folders, videotape and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains speeches, sermons, articles by and about important members of the Emanu-El congregation including Rabbis, Cantors, and others. Also included with this series is a videotape of a number of long-time Emanu-El Congregants discussing the meaning of the Congregation. Also see items in Scrapbook (Microfilm Roll 1/Volume 4).

Buildings, 1854-1940

Physical Description: 6 folders, 1 oversize and microfilm

Scope and Content Note

This series contains materials on the congregation's various buildings. Materials include dedication services, and information on architectural details or additions. See also Photographs Series for pictures of the buildings.

Photographs, 1854-1955

Physical Description: 6 folders and oversize

Scope and Content Note

This series includes photographs and drawings of the various buildings owned by Emanu-El from the Broadway Synagogue (1854-1863) to the current Lake Street Temple (1926-). The majority of images represent the first Sutter Street Temple both before and after the 1906 Earthquake, including a large number of stereopticon images. A print showing the second Sutter Street Temple is found in the oversize materials. A small photograph is found in the rededication service program in Series VIII: Buildings. Also included are pictures of Cantor Stark (c. 1909), pictures from the 1949 Confirmation Class Midnight Hike, and the 1951 Confirmation Class. Several oversized Photographs are housed separately.

Corporate Records

- Box-folder M 3/f3* **By-laws, Certificates of Incorporation 1851-1892**
- Box-folder M 1/v1* **Constitution and Bylaws 1905**
- Box-folder 1/1 **By-laws 1908, 1921**
- Box-folder 1/2 **By-laws -- Revisions 1952-1961**
- Box-folder oversize** **First Quarterly Meeting Notice -- Framed Certificate 1859**
- Box-folder M 3/f1* **Minutes/Reports -- Early years 1850-1851**
- Box-folder 1/3 **Minutes/Correspondence -- Early Years 1949-1853**
- Box-folder M 1/v2* **Minutes and Yahrzeit Lists 1906-1925**
- Box-folder M 2/v5-9* **Board of Directors Minutes 1906-1940**
- Box-folder M 3/f3* **Congregational Correspondence 1863**
- Box-folder 1/4 **Financial -- Seat Receipts/Deeds 1884-1886**
- Box-folder M 3/f4* **Expense Report and Audit 1928-1929**
- Box-folder 1/5 **Bills and Receipts ("A") 1937**
- Box-folder 1/6 **Financial Appeals 1955-1961, n.d.**
- Box-folder M 3/f4* **Annual Reports 1926+**
- Box-folder 1/7 **Annual Reports 1931-1963**
- Box-folder 1/8 **Officers' List c. 1854-1863**
- Box-folder M 3/f4* **List of Congregational Presidents 1931-1935**
- Box-folder 1/9 **Congregation and Staff Lists 1950, 1960, n.d.**
- Box-folder M 1/v1* **Membership List c. 1906**
- Box-folder M 3/f3* **Historical Sketches 1896, 1906**
- Box-folder 1/10 **Institutional Histories and Tour Guide 1906, 1958, 1968**
- Box-folder 1/11 **Inventory of Materials at Congregation Emanu-El c. 1967**

Marriages and Conversions

Box-folder 1/12 **Marriage Certificate Copies 1855-1892**
Box-folder M 3/f2* **Marriage Certificates 1862**
Box-folder 1/13 **Blank Conversion Form c.1910**

Home of Peace Cemetery

Box-folder 1/14 **Early Materials 1896, 1899**
Box-folder M 1/v3* **"General Burial" Book 1895-1949**
Box-folder M 3/f3* **Cemetery Material c.1865**
Box-folder 1/15 **Home of Peace Literature 1936, 1953**

Religious Education

Box-folder 1/16 **Order of Prayers for Hebrew School 1860**
Box-folder 1/17 **Duties and Powers of the Board of School Directors 1866**
Box-folder 1/18 **Sunday School Medals for Charlotte Cerf 1877-1879**
Box-folder 1/19 **Regulations, etc. 1911-1925**
Box-folder M 3/14* **Religious School Reports 1931-1935**
Box-folder 1/20 **Correspondence, Curriculum 1931-1954**
Box-folder 1/21 **Children's Services 1937-1950, n.d.**
Box-folder 1/22 **High School Graduation 1951, 1957**
Box-folder 1/23 **Confirmation Class Events 1949-1952**
Box-folder 1/24 **Confirmation Class Lists and Updates 1866-1950**
Box-folder 2/1 **Confirmation Programs 1861-1975**
Box-folder 2/2 **Confirmation Booklets 1948-1958**
Box-folder 2/3 **Confirmation Booklets 1959-1975**
Box-folder 2/4 **Confirmation Services, misc. 1932, 1945**
Box-folder 2/5 **Confirmation Reunion Materials 1950-1970**
Box-folder oversize** **Confirmation Certificate for Alice Kaufman 1902?**
Box-folder 2/6 **The Scroll -- Draft Article n.d.**
Box-folder M 1/v4* **The Scroll 1917**
Box-folder 2/7 **The Scroll 1921-1925**
Box-folder 2/8 **The Scroll 1926-1939**
Box-folder 2/9 **The Scroll 1940-1943, 1945-1949**
Box-folder 3/1 **The Scroll 1950-1959**
Box-folder 3/2 **The Scroll 1960-1964**
Box-folder 3/3 **The Scroll 1965-1969**
Box-folder 4/1 **The Scroll 1970-1974**
Box-folder 4/2 **The Scroll 1975-1979**
Box-folder 4/3 **The Scroll 1980-1984**
Box-folder 4/4 **The Scroll 1985-1988**
Box-folder 4/5 **The Scroll 1990-1991, 1993-1995**

Services, Programs and Special Events

Box-folder 5/1 **"Directory for the Year" 1897-1898**
Box-folder 5/2 **"Weekly Calendars" 1922-1923**
Box-folder 5/3 **"Bulletins" 1922-1923**
Box-folder 5/4 **"Temple Chronicle" 1925-1981**
Box-folder 5/5 **Programs (2 Passover, 1 Purim) 1894-1911**
Box-folder 5/6 **Program for Cornerstone Laying -- Old People's Home of the Pacific Hebrew Orphan Asylum and Home Service
1891**
Box-folder 5/7 **"Yom Kippur in the Temple Emanu El" [S. Homer Henley?] [1896+]**
Box-folder 5/8 **Services, Prayerbooks 1925-1955, n.d.**
Box-folder 5/9 **Anniversary Materials 1900-1960**
Box-folder 5/10 **Centennial 1950**
Box-folder 5/11 **125th Anniversary/Biblical Plant Walk 1975**
Box-folder 5/12 **Music Programs 1935-1984**
Box-folder 5/13 **Plays, Art Exhibits, Lectures 1932-1988**
Box-folder 5/14 **Union Thanksgiving Service 1938-1977**
Box-folder M 1/v4* **Scrapbook [services, events, bulletins] 1906-c.1923**

Clubs

Box-folder 5/15 **Emanu-El Men's Club 1925-1956**
Box-folder 5/16 **Women's Guild of Emanu-El n.d.**
Box-folder 5/17 **Emanuel-Lites 1947-1952**
Box-folder 5/18 **Hebrew Youth's Library and Debating Association (HYL&DA) 1864**
Box-folder 5/19 **Pathfinders -- Minutes, Correspondence 1921-1931**
Box-folder 5/20 **Pathfinders -- Minutes 1932-1939**
Box-folder 5/21 **Pathfinders -- Financial Records 1929-1940**
Box-folder 6/1 **Boy Scouts Troop 17 1941-1965**

People

Box-folder 6/2 **Eckman, Rabbi Julius 1858, n.d.**
Box-folder M 3/f6* **Eckman, Rabbi Julius 1860-1872**
Box-folder 6/3 **Cohn, Rabbi Elkan 1885, 1925**
Box-folder 6/4 **Cohn, Rabbi Elkan -- "In Memorium" by Rabbi Jacob Voorsanger 1889**
Box-folder 6/5 **Cohn, Rabbi Elkan 1929**
Box-folder M 3/f5* **Cohn, Rabbi Elkan 1860-1889**
Box-folder 6/6 **Meyer, Rabbi Martin 1910-1923**
Box-folder 6/7 **Meyer, Rabbi Martin. "Jesus and the Thought of The World" 1914**
Box-folder 6/8 **Meyer, Rabbi Martin. "Jew and Non-Jew" n.d.**
Box-folder M 3/f7* **Meyer, Rabbi Martin. "God is One" historical pageant n.d.**
Box-folder M 3/f7* **Meyer, Rabbi Martin Jewish Times and Observer 1923**
Box-folder 6/9 **Voorsanger, Rabbi Jacob -- Papers 1889-1908**
Box-folder 6/10 **Voorsanger, Rabbi Jacob -- Memorials 1908**
Box-folder M 3/f8* **Voorsanger, Rabbi Jacob -- Biographical Funeral, and Memorial 1885-1908**
Box-folder 6/11 **Newman, Rabbi Louis. "The Bridge Between Two Lands" (Poems) 1929**
Box-folder 6/12 **Reichert, Rabbi Irving F. "One Reform Rabbi Replies to Ludwig Lewisohn" and "Where Do You Stand?" 1936-1943**

Box-folder 6/13 **Heller, Rabbi Meyer. Radio Scripts 1936-1943**
Box-folder 6/14 **Adler, Rabbi Joseph. "An Exchange of Correspondence" with Frank H. Sloss 1968-1985**
Box-folder 6/15 **Miscellaneous Rabbis 1953-1993**
Box-folder 6/16 **Rinder, Cantor Reuben 1953-1966**
Box-folder 6/17 **Sloss, Louis -- Obituaries 1902**
Box-folder 6/18 **Miscellaneous People 1985-1992**
Box-folder M 3/f4* **World War II Honor Roll n.d.**
Box-folder M 1/v4* **Scrapbook 1906-c.1923**
Box-folder Video*** **"Thine Elders..... They Will Tell Thee" 1984**

Buildings

Box-folder 6/19 **Broadway Synagogue -- Dedication 1854**
Box-folder 6/20 **First Sutter -- Dedication/Cornerstone 1864**
Box-folder oversize** **Emanu-El --- Rehabilitation and Rosh Hashona Issue 1906**
Box-folder 6/21 **Second Sutter -- Rededication 1907**
Box-folder 6/22 **Lake Street Temple -- Dedication 1926**
Box-folder 6/23 **Lake Street Temple -- Floorplan n.d.**
Box-folder 6/24 **Lake Street Temple -- Additions 1928, 1939-1940**
Box-folder oversize** **Lake Street Temple -- Cover of California Living 1969**

Photographs

Box-folder 6/25 **Drawing, Broadway Synagogue 1854-1863**
Box-folder 6/26 **First Sutter Temple -- Stereopticons 1864-1906**
Box-folder 6/27 **First Sutter Temple -- Before the Quake 1864-1906**
Box-folder 6/28 **First Sutter Temple -- After the Quake 1906**
Box-folder oversize** **First Sutter Temple -- After the Quake (2 views) 1906**
Box-folder oversize** **Second Sutter Temple -- Etching or Print 1919**
Box-folder 6/29 **Lake Street Temple (interior and exterior) 1926-1927**
Box-folder 6/30 **People c.1909, 1949, 1955**