Guide to the Congregation Beth Israel Records MS 43

Finding aid prepared by Jennifer Ho
Collection processed as part of grant project supported by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) with generous funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation.
San Diego History Center Document Collection
1649 El Prado, Suite 3
San Diego, CA, 92101
619-232-6203
December 7, 2011
Title: Congregation Beth Israel Records
Identifier/Call Number: MS 43
Contributing Institution: San Diego History Center Document Collection
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 0.25 Linear feet(1 box)
Date (inclusive): 1921-1969
Abstract: This collection consists of documents from Congregation Beth Israel related to their land purchases and projects.
creator: Congregation Beth Israel (San Diego, Calif.).

Biographical / Historical Notes
Congregation Beth Israel, with roots in San Diego dating back to 1861, was officially incorporated in 1886. Since its inception, it has built and occupied three synagogues in San Diego, all of which are still standing. The Congregation’s first temple was completed in 1889 at 2nd Avenue and Beech Street (1502 2nd Avenue), largely due to the efforts of Samuel I. Fox and Adolph Levi. In this same time period, the Congregation established a Jewish burial ground called Home of Peace Cemetery as part of Mount Hope Cemetery.

In 1926, outgrowing its synagogue building, the Congregation purchased lots G, H and I on Block 286 of the “Horton’s Addition” area of San Diego, on 3rd and Laurel Streets. There they built a new synagogue, Temple Beth Israel, which was designed by noted San Diego architect William Henry Wheeler and built by M. Trepte & Son. The synagogue was mortgaged in 1931. The Congregation continued to purchase land on Block 286, and it soon owned the entire block, including an apartment complex and house that were demolished in 1968 to make way for a parking lot for the Temple. In 1967, Congregation Beth Israel merged with Temple Solel, whose five blocks of property located between Juan Street and Harney Court came under the care of the Congregation.

In 2001, the Congregation built a new temple and surrounding complex in University City, and sold Block 286 to Peter J. Block Companies, who agreed to preserve the building. It is currently occupied by Ohr Shalom Synagogue. The first and original temple, which had been owned and used by the Fraternal Spiritualist Church, was made a San Diego Historic Site in 1973. Congregation Beth Israel repurchased this building and donated it to the county in 1978; in that year it was moved to Heritage Park in Old Town, where it stands today and serves as a public meeting place and religious museum after a long period of restoration, funded in part by both the Congregation and the Save Our Heritage Organization.

This collection was donated by Richard C. Levi, grandson of one of the early leaders of Congregation Beth Israel, Adolph Levi. Adolph (1858-1943) immigrated to California from Bohemia in 1877 to join his brother Simon (1850-1918) in San Diego. Both became successful businessmen and prominent members of San Diego. Adolph was instrumental in building the first synagogue, and both Adolph and Simon served terms as president of Congregation Beth Israel. Richard Levi (1918 - ) was an active leader of the Congregation, serving as Treasurer for many years.

Scope and Content
The collection contains documents relating to the administration, land purchases and building projects of Congregation Beth Israel, including its temple on 3rd and Laurel Streets. Highlights include administrative resolutions, court petitions, legal agreements and contracts, correspondence, maps and property deeds.

Arrangement
Items in the collection are arranged by subject.

Processing Information
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Preferred Citation
Congregation Beth Israel Records, MS 43, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

Conditions Governing Access
This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use
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Immediate Source of Acquisition
Accession number 830729A.
Albert, David
Congregation Beth Israel (San Diego, Calif.).
F.E. Young Investment Co..
Fox, Samuel I.
Home of Peace Cemetery.
Levi, Adolph
Levi, Richard C.
Price, Alan
Rabin, Seymour
Samisch, E. H.
Stacy, Mary Duffy
Temple Beth Israel (San Diego, Calif.).
Trepte Construction Company.
Wheeler, William Henry
Real property
San Diego (Calif.)
Synagogues

Box-folder 1:1  Administration, 1923 October 1-1969 May 28 and undated
Includes:
Correspondence relating to increase in number of directors
Resolution granting authority to officers in financial matters

Box-folder 1:2  Sale of Lots G and H (Block 207) and purchase of Lots G, H, and I (Block 286) to build temple on 3rd and Laurel Streets, 1923-1926 April 2 and undated
Includes:
Legal agreements
Court petitions

Box-folder 1:3  Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: construction, 1925 August 22-September 12 and undated
Includes:
Correspondence from contractor, M. Trepte and Sons (Trepte Construction Company)
Contracts
Builder’s Bond to Owner

Box-folder 1:4  Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: mortgage, 1931 July-August 26
Includes:
Notice of special meeting
Copy of proposed resolution

Box-folder 1:5  Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: purchase of Lots D-F, Block 286, 1962 October 15 and undated
Includes:
Deed of Trust
Legal agreement
Box-folder 1:6  
Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: purchase of Lots A-F, Block 286, 1964 March 10-1967 October 12 and undated  
Includes:  
Correspondence from bank  
Sale information with tax assessment values  
Escrow documents  
Corporation grant deed

Box-folder 1:7  
Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: loan to purchase Lots A-F, Block 286, 1967 August 29-1969 August 1 and undated  
Includes:  
Promissory note and correspondence regarding loan from Beth Israel Cemetery and Mausoleum Association, Inc.

Box-folder 1:8  
Temple Beth Israel on 3rd and Laurel: parking lot (built on lots A-F, Block 286), 1968 July 30-December 24 and undated  
Includes:  
Proposed parking lot in Block 286-Horton's Addition for Temple Beth Israel (diagram) (in Oversize Collections D3)  
Handwritten notes  
Proposals  
Application for conditional use  
Building demolition contract

Box-folder 1:9  
Juan Street property and Temple Solel, 1964 June 4-1968 October 7 and undated  
Includes:  
Promissory note  
Deed of Trust  
Schedule of expenses  
Notices of public hearing  
Topographic maps

Box-folder 1:10  
Property appraisals, 1968 June 10-1969 December 4 and undated  
Includes:  
Correspondence from appraisers  
List of Real Estate Appraisers

Box-folder 1:11  
Property maintenance and improvements, 1968 February 12-June 11 and undated  
Includes:  
Correspondence from architect

Box-folder 1:12  
Miscellanea, 1921-1969 October 6 and undated  
Includes:  
New Temple Beth Israel Dedication Services program  
Save Our Heritage Organization member letter  
Comparable Land Costs chart – Pill Hill Area  
Horton’s Addition maps  
Grading plan for the proposed fill site in a portion of lot 35, Rancho Mission (diagram), 1969 (in Oversize Collections D3)  
Agreement to allocate portion of Home of Peace Cemetery to Congregation Tiffereth Israel