

Hebrew Free Loan Association of Greater Pittsburgh (HFLA), Records, 1887-1999

Rauh Jewish Archives

Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania Archives MSS #267

13 boxes (Boxes 1-13), 6.5 linear feet

Historical Sketch of The Hebrew Free Loan Association (1887-)

The Hebrew Free Loan Association (HFLA) was chartered on February 21, 1887, as the Gemiloth Hagodin Society of Pittsburgh. The organization had resulted from a meeting of Jews in the home of Simon Shupinsky. Fifty dollars remained after expenses were paid for the previous High Holiday services that had been held in Shupinsky's house. The men decided use these funds to set up a free-loan association for Jews.

In 1912, when the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies (now the United Jewish Federation) was formed, the Gemiloth Hagodin became an affiliate. A close working relationship between the two organizations has continued since then. The charter of the Gemiloth Hagodin was amended in 1926, and the name was changed to the Hebrew Free Loan Association of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As the financial support from the Jewish community increased, HFLA was able to grant greater numbers of personal loans, funds for restoration after natural disasters, as well as assistance for the resettlement of refugees.

The organization has continued to give loans to enable individuals, Jewish and non-Jewish, to provide a living for themselves and their families in business, trade, or other professions. The HFLA provides funds to those who, through some unfortunate circumstance, are unable to secure the capital necessary to maintain their respective economic status, and whose reputations for honesty and character justify the granting of a loan. The loans are granted by committees that take into account the situation of the potential borrower without prolonged investigation and are repaid in small weekly payments without any interest or service charges. The transactions surrounding these loans are confidential to avoid any embarrassment to the borrower. The loans are secured by the endorsement of guarantors deemed satisfactory by loan committees.

Demand for loans has reflected the social conditions of the times. For instance, demand increased dramatically during the Depression. Following the St. Patrick's Day Flood of 1936, the HFLA was unable to meet the needs of hard-hit small businessmen in Pittsburgh and the Johnstown area. HFLA representatives consulted with the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies, and the B'nai B'rith, both of whom advanced funds for the needed loans.

After the 1936 flood, the organization continued to grant the usual personal and business loans but also began giving money for refugees to escape Nazi Europe. After the war, HFLA increased their loans to Holocaust survivors. The efforts to assist with resettlement of new Americans have continued with aid to the arrivals from the former Soviet Union.

Scope and Content Note

The HFLA Records are housed in 13 boxes and arranged two series. One series is designated for

records related to the administration of the HFLA. These records are arranged chronologically. The second series is designated for cards related to the loan process and is arranged alphabetically.

Series 1: Administration Material

This series includes correspondence, minutes of regular meetings as well as some minutes of special meetings, financial reports, histories of the organization, legal documents, membership lists, and financial statements. The correspondence relates to such matters as committee appointments, interactions with other organizations, and requests for loans. Included with the minutes, as compiled by the HFLA, are reports, correspondence, and clippings. The scrapbooks include clippings, annual reports, correspondence and other miscellaneous materials, some of which is duplicated in the general files. The scrapbooks are not arranged in any apparent order.

Series 2: Loan Application Cards

This series consists of the cards of loan guarantors and those of applicants. Those of the loan guarantors are arranged separately from those of the loan applicants. Both are sorted alphabetically. The applicant cards give information about reasons for the loan and ability to repay.

Provenance: These materials were received in three accessions and combined into one collection in 2001.

Acc# 1994.0166	Gift of the Hebrew Free Loan Association
Acc# 1994.0167	Gift of the Hebrew Free Loan Association
Acc# 1999.0087	Gift of the Hebrew Free Loan Association

Restrictions: Due to the personal nature of the loan application cards, permission for use must be obtained from the Director of Archives.

Processor: July 1997, records arranged and inventory written by Sara Sirman; December 2001, records rearranged and inventory revised by Susan M. Melnick.

Container List

Series 1: Administration Materials

Box 1	Folder 1	Anniversary dinners	1944-1987
	Folder 2	Brochures	1937, 1948
	Folder 3	Bylaws, charter, constitution	1887-1957
		Correspondence	
	Folder 4	1921-1925	
	Folder 5	1926-1930	
	Folder 6	1931-1933	
	Folder 7	1935	
	Folder 8	1936	

	Folder 9	1937	
	Folder 10	1938-1968	
Box 2	Folder 1	Estates	1922-
	Folder 2	Histories	1935-1999
	Folder 3	Loans	1937-1941
	Folder 4	Membership lists	1934-1950
		Minutes	
	Volume	1908-1922	
	File 4	1922-1925	
	Volume	1924-1931	
Box 3	Volume	1932-1935	
	Folder 1	1934	
	Folder 2	1935-1937	
	Folder 3	1938-1942	
	Folder 4	1943	
	Folder 5	1944	
	Folder 6	1945	
Box 4	Folder 1	1946	
	Folder 2	1947	
	Folder 3	1948-1956	
	Folder 4	Procedures	1940-1968
		Reports	
		Annual	
	Folder 5	1922-1942	
	Folder 6	1943-1963	
	Folder 7	Community Fund	1935-1936
	Folder 8	Resolutions	1945-1967
	Folder 9	Scrapbook	1940-1946
Shelf	Volume	Scrapbook	1942-1962

Series 2: Loan Application Cards c1920-c1960

	Guarantors		
Box 5	A-K		
Box 6	L-S		
Box 7	T-Z		
	Applicants (<i>permission for use must be obtained Director of Archives</i>)		
	A-B		
Box 8	C-F		
Box 9	G-J		
Box 10	K-Ma		

Box 11
Box 12
Box 13

Me-Sa
Sc-Sz
T-Z