

WORCESTER HISTORICAL  
MUSEUM

30 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts

ARCHIVES

Shaarai Torah Records  
(1973-1995)

1997.106

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Series |                               | Page | Box |
|--------|-------------------------------|------|-----|
|        | Collection Information        | 3    |     |
|        | Historical/Biographical Notes | 4    |     |
|        | Scope and Content             | 5    |     |
|        | Series Description            | 6    |     |
| 1      | Minutes                       | 7    | 1   |
| 2      | Lists                         | 9    | 1   |
| 3      | Legal documents               | 10   | 1   |

## Collection Information

Abstract : The Shaarai Torah Records encompass the last twenty years of the Congregation's existence, and highlight the difficulties faced by shrinking membership rolls, deficit budgets, and related problems, culminating with the decision to sell the buildings.

Finding Aid : Finding Aid in print form is available in the Repository.

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : Donated by Congregation Shaarai Torah, Sons of Abraham, Jack Pearl, President; September 1997.

Note: This collection is mostly manuscript records on acidic paper.

MARC Access : Collection is cataloged in MARC under the following subject headings (lcsh, aat, tgm, gmcp)

Shaarai Torah Sons of Abraham.  
Synagogues – Massachusetts – Worcester.  
Synagogue fund raising – Massachusetts – Worcester.  
Jews – Massachusetts – Worcester.  
Jewish way of life.

(aat)  
Minutes.

(local 690)  
Jewish Community in Worcester

### Historical/Biographical Notes

Congregation Shaarai Torah was established in 1904 and built a synagogue at 32 Providence Street in 1906, one of many small neighborhood synagogues built during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century throughout the country during a period of extensive immigration of Eastern European Jews to the United States. Some eight synagogues existed in the eastern part of Worcester through the 1940s. By 1990, only Shaarai Torah was left. The earliest Jewish immigrants settled in eastern Worcester, in the densely populated area around Green and Water Streets. Upward mobility and changing demographics of the city caused a dispersal of the Jews from their clustered east side neighborhoods, to a more even distribution throughout the city.

The records of the last twenty years of Shaarai Torah indicate the major problems of declining membership rolls, increased costs, deficit budgets, and increasing age of remaining membership. Formal records of the Congregation are sparse during the last few years of its life, as only a small number of members kept the synagogue open through volunteer efforts. The decision was made to sell the property in 1995, as remaining members were no longer able to maintain the building or keep it open.

The final record in the collection is a buy-sell agreement between Congregation Shaarai Torah and the Second Baptist Church of Worcester.

## Scope and Content

The collection consists mainly of minutes of meetings of Congregation Shaarai Torah Board of Directors between 1973 and 1995, and provide information and insight into the declining membership, increased financial difficulties, and the desires and efforts of the remaining members of the congregation to overcome their difficulties. The minutes from 1973 to the late 1980s stress the various fund raising activities of the congregation, and their attempts to keep the synagogue open. Records for the late 1980s and early 1990s are sparse, as membership declined below the point of effectiveness. The final records deal with the decision to sell the building.

Also included with the Board of Directors minutes are minutes of various ad hoc committees, especially a committee formed for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Congregation.

Financial records and budget documents form part of the Board of Directors minutes, and are included with annual meeting minutes (not all years).

The collection also includes lists of members of the Board of Directors during the last twenty years, and a Purchase and Sale agreement between Congregation Shaarai Torah and Second Baptist Church for the sale of the synagogue in 1995.

### Series Description

Series 1: Minutes. Mostly manuscript Minutes of meetings of the Board of Directors of Congregation Shaarai Torah, between 1973-1995. Includes minutes of committee meetings and financial reports for some years. Also includes Annual Meeting minutes for some years.

Series 2: Lists. List of members of the Board of Directors of Congregation Shaarai Torah between 1973-1995. Typescript with additions and deletions inscribed.

Series 3: Legal documents. Purchase and Sale Agreement for the building and property of Congregation Shaarai Torah on Providence Street to the Second Baptist Church of Worcester.

Shaarai Torah Records  
1997.106  
Series 1, Minutes

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u>  |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1            | 1               | 1997.106.1.1-.6    | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1973-1974 : mostly manuscript records on notebook paper. 6 items   |
| 1            | 2               | 1997.106.1.7-.12   | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1975 : manuscript records on notebook paper. 6 items.  |
| 1            | 3               | 1997.106.1.13-.16  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1976 : manuscript records on notebook paper. 4 items.  |
| 1            | 4               | 1997.106.1.17-.19  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1977 : manuscript records on notebook paper. 3 items.  |
| 1            | 5               | 1997.106.1.20-.23  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1978 : manuscript records on notebook paper. 4 items.  |
| 1            | 6               | 1997.106.1.24-.44  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1979, and minutes of 75 <sup>th</sup> anniversary committee : manuscript records on notebook paper. 21 items.      |
| 1            | 7               | 1997.106.1.45-.52  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1980-1981 : manuscript and typescript records on notebook paper. 8 items.  |
| 1            | 8               | 1997.106.1.53-.55  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1982 : typescript records on notebook paper. 3 items.  |
| 1            | 9               | 1997.106.1.56-.68  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1983-1984, with miscellaneous memoranda and notes : typescript and manuscript records on notebook paper. 13 items. |
| 1            | 10              | 1997.106.1.69-.82  | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1985-1986, including financial reports : typescript and manuscript records on notebook paper. 14 items.            |

Series 1, continued

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|---|----|-------------------|---|
| 1 | 11 | 1997.106.1.83-.88 | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1987-1988, including financial reports : typescript on notebook paper. 6 items.  |
| 1 | 12 | 1997.106.1.89-.90 | Minutes of meetings of Board of Directors, 1995 : manuscript records on notebook paper. 2 items. These minutes describe the steps taken in preparing the building for sale. |



Shaarai Torah Records  
1997.106  
Series 2, Lists

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u>  |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1            | 13              | 1997.106.2.1       | Members of the Board of Directors, 1973-1995 :<br>typescript with changes inscribed. N.d. |

Shaarai Torah Records  
1997.106  
Series 3, Legal Documents

| <u>Box #</u> | <u>Folder #</u> | <u>Accession #</u> | <u>Description</u>  |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------|---|
| 1            | 14              | 1997.106.3.1       | Purchase and Sale Agreement between<br>Congregation Shaarai Torah and Second Baptist<br>Church, for property and building at 32 Providence<br>Street (Shaarai Torah synagogue) / Silver & Silver,<br>Main Street, Worcester. Includes a copy of the<br>1906 deed to Shaarai Thorah [sic] from Israel et al.<br>6 p. |
|              |                 | 1a                 | envelope  |