

# WORCESTER HISTORICAL MUSEUM

30 Elm Street  
Worcester, Massachusetts

## ARCHIVES

Shaarai Torah Records  
(1950s-1990s)

2000.11

Processed by William F. Carroll, C.A.  
March 2000

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### Collection Information

Abstract : The Shaarai Torah membership ledger provides a list of synagogue members and dues paid to the synagogue from the 1950s to the early 1990s, and illustrate declining membership and income during the final years of the synagogue.

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

Preferred Citation : Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester, Massachusetts.

Provenance : Donated by Jack Pearl, President of Shaarai Torah synagogue, January 2000.

Note: This collection is a bound ledger with acidic leaves.

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

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

(655 aat)  
Ledgers.

(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 membership ledger, 1950s-1990s, provides insight into the financial situation of the synagogue and decline of membership during the last decades of its existence.

### **Scope and Content**

The collection consists of a membership ledger with members and dues paid entered from ca. 1950s to ca. 1989. Letters and other documents inserted in the ledger concern dues payment, 1980s; thank you notes, requests for membership, 1960s; a membership list, n.d.; and legal documents approving the use of the synagogue property by the Second Baptist Church, 1989.

### **Series Description**

Series 1: Membership ledger. Record of members and dues paid ca. 1950s – 1989.

Series 2: Letters and related documents, 1960s – 1989.

Shaarai Torah Records  
2000.11  
Series 1, Membership ledger

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1		2000.11.1.1	Ledger, lists members and dues paid, 1950s – 1990s. Bound volume.

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Shaarai Torah Records  
2000.11  
Series 2, Letters, etc.

<u>Box #</u>	<u>Folder #</u>	<u>Accession #</u>	<u>Description</u>
1	1	2000.11.2.1	Membership list, Congregation Shaarai Torah, Sons of Abraham East, n.d. (ca. 1975) 3 p.
1	1	2000.11.2.2	Letter relating to dues for Joseph Fine, September 12, 1980.
1	1	2000.11.2.3	Letter relating to dues for Dr. Samuel Fine, October 19, 1984.
1	1	2000.11.2.4	Request for membership from Bloomfield family members, June 21, 1966.
1	1	2000.11.2.5a-d	Letter of welcome to Bloomfield family members, June 21, 1966. 4 items.
1	1	2000.11.2.6	Certificate of corporate resolution or vote, to authorize use of property by Second Baptist Church, Inc., ca. 1989.
1	1	2000.11.2.7	Waiver of restrictions and consent, to authorize Second Baptist Church, Inc., to use property, ca. 1989. 2 copies.