



The Historical
Society of
Pennsylvania

MSS 020

**Rose I. Bender
Papers**

**1929-1973 (bulk ca. 1931-1946)
5 boxes, 2 lin. feet**

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Related Collections at Solis-Cohen, Solomon, 1857-1948 (Collection

HSP: 1322)

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Abstract

Rose I. Bender (1895¹-1964) was born in Philadelphia, the daughter of Joseph and Rachel Magil, Lithuanian immigrants and pioneer Zionists. As an adult, Rose was active in Hadassah and a wide variety of other Jewish organizations at both the local and national level. In 1945 Rose was appointed executive director of the Philadelphia Zionist Organization of America, becoming the only woman in the organization to hold such a high position.

The collection consists of correspondence, clippings, and miscellaneous items primarily relating to Bender's activities in Hadassah, the Zionist Organization of America, and Allied Jewish Appeal. Notes from other organizations, including but not limited to the National Jewish Hospital, American Palestine Music Association, and the Palestine Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York, as well as souvenirs from her work as a delegate at Zionist congresses in both Geneva (1939) and Basel (1946), Switzerland are also included.

Background note

Rose I. Bender was born in Philadelphia in 1895. Her parents, Joseph and Rachel Magil, were born in Lithuania and immigrated to the United States in 1893, continuing their participation in the nascent Zionist movement in America as they had in Europe. Upon moving to Philadelphia, Joseph helped organize the first branch of the city's Zionist organization. Joseph and Rachel raised their four children, three daughters and a son, in a household of Jewish tradition, practice, and instruction. Rose was educated in the traditional Hebrew school and later graduated from Gratz College, officially established in 1895 as a Hebrew teachers college. Like her parents, Rose demonstrated a dedication to Zionism and an interest in Jewish life and education. While still in high school, Rose organized a Jewish youth club which developed into the first Young Judea club in the United States. Later she taught in the Philadelphia Hebrew and Sunday school system.

¹ There is a discrepancy between the Library of Congress Authorities webpage which records that Rose Bender was born in 1865 and other written records which record the date as 1895. The 1895 date seems more plausible as Rose was born in Philadelphia and her parents only immigrated to the United States in 1893.

In 1917, Rose married Oscar Bender, already an established Philadelphia lawyer. The couple had two daughters, Natalie and Harriet.

Rose joined Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization, in 1927 and remained an active member for many years. She served as both secretary and president of the West Philadelphia group and later as president of the entire Philadelphia chapter for three years. Rose was elected to the National Board of Hadassah and served for seven years. She was the chairwoman for Hadassah's national fundraising campaign from 1941 to 1942, but resigned the position to head the Women's Division of the Allied Jewish Appeal, of which she had already served as chairwoman. In October of 1945, Rose became executive director of the Philadelphia Zionist Organization of America, the only woman at that time to hold such a high position in the organization. Under her leadership, the Philadelphia Zionist Organization had the largest membership of any city in the country and its fundraising campaign was considered the most successful.

In the interest of Jewish settlement in Palestine, overseas relief, and the promotion of Judaism in general, Rose visited over eighty communities throughout the United States to speak before both Hadassah members from other regions as well as Jewish community members not yet affiliated with an organization. As a member of Hadassah, Rose was also a delegate to both the 21st World Zionist Congress held in Geneva, Switzerland, in August, 1939, and to the 22nd Zionist Congress in Basel, Switzerland in December, 1946, as well as the American Jewish Conference.

Mrs. Bender died in 1964, having lived in Philadelphia her entire life.

Scope & content

The Rose I. Bender Papers, which span the period 1929-1973, contain many useful materials regarding the Zionist movement and Jewish women's activism, with emphasis on the years preceding Israeli independence in 1948. Compiled by a woman passionate about such causes and serving both local and national leadership roles for a number of organizations, this collection includes correspondence, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous items relating to Rose's activities in Hadassah, the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), Allied Jewish Appeal, and other Jewish agencies. Highlights include notes and souvenirs from both the 21st and 22nd Zionist Congresses in Geneva and Basel, letters regarding conditions in Palestine during World War II and the evacuation of Jewish children from Europe (connected with the Youth Aliyah Bureau), detailed reports about individual Hadassah chapters across the United States, correspondence documenting struggles within ZOA leadership, and Hadassah memos regarding the organization's purpose and performance.

Materials are arranged by organization and chronologically when possible. Because a portion of the collection was cleaned for mold, the collection has been divided into two sections to limit the spread of possible mold spores. As a result, folder headings in Boxes 4-5 frequently duplicate those in Boxes 1-3.

Box 1 contains Rose's biographical information and various other personal documents. Several page-long biographies indicating her activities and achievements seem to have been used to support her candidacy as delegate to the American Jewish Conference of 1941. Though there are several different copies of biographical handouts, all include virtually the same information: her early history, the positions she held in Zionist organizations, and her successful participation in and leadership of both membership and gift drives. Rose's personal documents found in Box 1 range from invitations to board meetings and conferences at which she was to be the keynote speaker to a handwritten draft of her daughter Harriet's 1941 high school yearbook. Box 1 also contains four folders of Hadassah correspondence from 1929 through 1946. Spanning almost two decades of charitable work, the documents in these folders include correspondence regarding the building fund for the Hadassah University Hospital's proposed construction, the establishment of Hadassah branches across the country, Hadassah tour itineraries, and numerous letters addressed to Rose of commendation and appreciation. In one such letter congratulating Rose on both her efforts and her success securing donations for Hadassah even in times of national crisis, on July 3, 1934, Annie Schimmel from Tel Aviv said, "It is to be marveled at that my friends can manage despite the depression to carry on so successfully and maintain that fine morale which is Hadassah's tradition and also to raise such large sums of money."

Box 2 contains additional information regarding Hadassah tours and conventions, as well as information pertaining to the Women's Division of Allied Jewish Appeal and the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds. Programs, itineraries, newsletters, and yearbooks are included in the folders dedicated to Hadassah, while agendas and minutes from national board meetings, membership campaigns, and dozens of letters to and from chairmen of various internal committees comprise the Allied Jewish Appeal folder. Many of these letters were sent in preparation for the close of the Allied Jewish Appeal fundraising campaign in December 1940. In the December 23rd newsletter of Allied Jewish Appeal, Rose thanked each of the contributors for their effort, noting that over 35,000 individuals were contacted and \$136,000 was raised. Perhaps it was the phrase which Rose's colleague, Mrs. J. Alexander Kline, Chairman of Organizations for the Women's Division of Allied Jewish Appeals and the author of many of the letters of appeal, used when requesting a donation to which the campaign owed its success. As Mrs. Kline wrote, "I am sure the unfortunate plight of our fellow Jews needs no salesmanship today. Their misery speaks for itself."

Box 3 contains ZOA materials, including itineraries, addresses, cruise information, and miscellaneous items regarding the Zionist congresses of 1939 and 1946 held in Geneva and Basel, Switzerland. This box also contains additional notes and souvenirs including an invitation to the celebratory dinner honoring Judge Louis E. Levinthal on his election as president of the Zionist Organization of America, songs about Israel written in both Hebrew and English, and letters regarding the Jewish Palestine Pavilion at the 1939 World's Fair in New York City. Also among these documents is a letter from a Mr. William Hirsch, appealing to Rose for her help securing for his two European cousins permits to enter Palestine. Not only did Rose provide a public voice willing to address Jewish concerns, it seems she used her own connections in Hadassah and the Allied

Jewish Appeal to aid fellow Jews who were lacking either the resources or the connections do so themselves.

Like Box 3, Box 4 is also dedicated to ZOA materials. Many of the items in this box are directly related to the Zionist congresses in Geneva and Basel in 1939 and 1946 respectively. However, unlike in Box 3, in Box 4 there are fewer personal itineraries and items and more official bulletins and reports documenting the proceedings of the Congresses. There is also information dealing with the Youth Aliyah Conference and the Joint Committee for Youth Affairs, as well as Zionist propaganda and medical and economic information regarding immigration to Palestine.

Complementing the contents of Boxes 1 and 2, Box 5 contains several folders of Hadassah and Allied Jewish Appeal documents. Not only did Rose keep the booklets and pamphlets printed by Hadassah's programming and education committees but also various flyers, advertisements, invitations, seating cards, and postcards issued by Hadassah departments. Several months of Allied Jewish Appeal bulletins, from both the regular division and the women's branch, titled *The Volunteer* and *Women's Work* respectively, are also found within this box. Never losing her deep sense of commitment to Jewish education, Rose was appointed to sit on a survey committee for a report compiled in 1943 on Jewish education in Philadelphia. Rose saved a copy of this original publication written by Leo L. Honor and Morris Leibman. Memos and newsletters related to Jewish community relations and Jewish student activities in Philadelphia fill another folder. Concluding the collection are two folders of newspaper clippings, one dealing primarily with religious themes and the other composed of articles of more secular importance. Items referring directly or indirectly to friends and acquaintances such as Solomon Solis-Cohen, another active member of the Philadelphia Jewish community and Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah, are among the saved newspaper articles.

Separation report

None.

Related materials

At HSP:

Solis-Cohen, Emily, 1930-1948 (MSS 019).

Solis-Cohen, Jacob, 1925-1960 (MSS 014, PG 061).

Solis-Cohen, Solomon, 1857-1948 (Collection 1322).

At the American Jewish Archives, Cincinnati, OH:
Rose Bender (MS 80-773).

Languages represented

English, Yiddish, Hebrew, German, French.

Subjects

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945) – Foreign public opinion – American

Immigrants – Jews – United States

Immigrants – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia

Jews – American – Palestine – History – 20th century

Jews – Charities

Jews – Children – 1930-1940

Jews – Education

Jews – Palestine – 20th century

Jews – Pennsylvania – Philadelphia

Jews – Political activity

Jews – Societies

Women – Charities

World War, 1939-1945 – Refugees

Zionism and literature – Congresses

Zionist propaganda

Zionism – Songs and music

Allied Jewish Appeal. Women's Division

American Jewish Congress. Women's Division

American Jewish Historical Society

American Zionist Emergency Council

Associated Talmud Torahs of Philadelphia

B'nai B'rith

Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds

Extraordinary Zionist Conference (1942 : New York, N.Y.)

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America
Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Education Dept.
Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America. Junior Hadassah
Hillel Foundation
Jewish Theological Seminary (New York, N.Y.)
National Conference of Christians and Jews
National Council of Jewish Women
National Jewish Hospital (U.S.)
New York World's Fair (1939-1940)
United Palestine Appeal
Women's League of the United Synagogue of America
Youth Aliyah
Zionist Congress (21st: 1939: Geneva, Switzerland)
Zionist Congress (22nd: 1946: Basel, Switzerland)
Zionist Organization of America

Bender, Oscar G.
Bender, Rose I., 1865-1964
Levinthal, Louis E., 1892-1976
Solis-Cohen, Solomon, 1857-1948
Szold, Henrietta, 1860-1945

Administrative Information

Restrictions

The collection is open for research.

Acquisition information

Gift of Maxwell Whiteman, 1973.

Accession number 1973-021.

Preferred citation

Cite as: [Indicate cited item or series here], Rose I. Bender Papers (MSS 020), The Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Processing note

Possible mold in Box 1 Folder 2, Box 2 Folder 5 and Box 3 Folders 1 and 6. Boxes 4 and 5 are both labeled “items have been cleaned for mold.” Many items have stains and possible re-bloom.

The first three boxes were processed by the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in the 1980s. In 2007, Rachel Moskowitz arranged and rehoused the last two boxes and prepared a new finding aid for the entire collection.

Box and folder listing

*These folders contain material written or printed in Yiddish, Hebrew, French, or German.

Folder title	Date	Extent	Box	Folder
Biographical Data	1933-1944, n.d.	10 items	1	1
Personal Correspondence	1932-1947, n.d.	65 items	1	2
Personal Miscellaneous	1937-1946, n.d.	10 items	1	3
Hadassah Correspondence	1929, 1933- 1935, n.d.	121 items	1	4
Hadassah Correspondence	1936-1939	111 items	1	5
Hadassah Correspondence	[194_], 1940- 1941	146 items	1	6
Hadassah Correspondence	1942-1946	67 items	1	7
Hadassah Tours	1938-1941	48 items	2	1
Hadassah Conventions	1940-1943	8 items	2	2
Hadassah Miscellaneous	1934-1944, n.d.	55 items	2	3
Allied Jewish Appeal – Women’s Division	1937-1939, [194_], 1940- 1945	152 items	2	4
Allied Jewish Appeal – Women’s Division Information	1940	247 items	2	5
General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds*	1942	17 items	2	6
ZOA Correspondence	1932-1947	117 items	3	1
21 st Zionist Congress – Geneva, Switzerland	1939	13 items	3	2
Extraordinary Zionist Conference	1942	6 items	3	3
World Confederation of General Zionists – Basel, Switzerland*	1946	50 items	3	4
Dinner in honor of Judge Louis E. Levinthal, President of ZOA	1941	36 items	3	5
Zionist Miscellaneous	1940-1945, n.d.	17 items	3	6
American Palestine Music Association	1938, 1939	2 items	3	7
Jewish Education	1944-1945	3 items	3	8
National Jewish Hospital	1941-1942	9 items	3	9
Jewish Palestine Pavilion – N.Y. World’s Fair	1939	30 items	3	10
Songs and Dances	1936, 1937, n.d.	15 items	3	11
21 st Zionist Congress and Constitution of Zionist Org.*	1938-1939	6 items	4	1

Congrezion and 21 st Zionist Congress Miscellaneous	1939	11 items	4	2
Zionist Propaganda*	1938-1942	10 items	4	3
Jewish Immigration to Palestine Information*	1939, n.d.	5 items	4	4
Joint Committee for Youth Affairs, Youth Aliyah Conference	1939	12 items	4	5
22 nd World Zionist Congress	1946	4 items	4	6
Congrezion, 22 nd World Zionist Congress Bulletin	1946	6 items	4	7
Palestine Economic Information*	1938-1944	5 items	4	8
Hadassah Programming Materials	1935-1943	13 items	5	1
Hadassah Miscellaneous	1932-1944, n.d.	34 items	5	2
Allied Jewish Appeal	1940-1942, n.d.	33 items	5	3
Zionist Organization of America	1941, 1947, n.d.	4 items	5	4
United Palestine Appeal	1940, 1944	4 items	5	5
American Zionist Emergency Council	1943	1 item	5	6
Jewish Education in Philadelphia	1943	1 item	5	7
National Conference of Christians and Jews	1957, 1958	3 items	5	8
Jewish Community Relations Council and Jewish Student Activities	1956-1958	8 items	5	9
Jewish Education Brochures	1973, n.d.	2 items	5	10
Newspaper Articles – Jewish Content*	1932-1963, n.d.	31 items	5	11
Miscellaneous Personal Documents	1931-1973, n.d.	50 items	5	12
Miscellaneous Bulletins	1938, 1969-1970, n.d.	3 items	5	13