

92Y Archives

92nd Street Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association

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YOUNG WOMEN'S HEBREW ASSOCIATION

Records, 1902-1945

3.50 cubic feet (records and photographs), 10 linear feet (card files) and 3 artifacts



Women's sewing class, 1914

Prepared by Nancy M. Robertson
June 1980

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History

The Young Women's Hebrew Association (YWHA) was organized in New York City on February 6, 1902 for the purposes of "promoting Judaism among young Jewish women and of instilling in them principles of kindness and benevolence and of improving their mental, moral, religious, social, and physical condition."

The early meetings were held in the home of Bella (Mrs. Israel) Unterberg, founder of the YWHA and President from 1902 to 1929. By the end of 1902, the organization had rented a building at 1584 Lexington Avenue and dedicated it on February 1, 1903. The building housed classes, clubs, religious services, and recreational activities.

On April 18, 1903, the Young Women's Hebrew Association was formally incorporated. The Constitution and By-laws adopted by the Board of Directors on January 11, 1906 provided that membership in the organization be open to persons "professing Judaism and of the age of at least twenty-one years...by payment of dues for that class of membership in which such person desires to be enrolled." The membership classes consisted of Life Members, Donors, Patrons, and Sustaining Active Members, with a provision for young women of ages 13 to 21 (and 8 to 13 with special permission of the Board of Directors) to be Associate Members. Only Life Members, Donors, Patrons, and Sustaining Active Members had the right to vote in the organization. The Directresses (as members of the Board of Directors were originally called) were drawn only from Life Members, Donors, and Patrons. Although there were male members of the YWHA from early on, a man did not sit on the Board of Directors until 1943.

The increasing activities of the YWHA necessitated expansion of facilities. The YWHA purchased the adjoining buildings at 1578-82 Lexington Avenue and dedicated them on December 16, 1906. In addition to continuing with previous activities, the increased space permitted housing for 18 female residents. Soon, though, it was apparent that even this space would not be sufficient for the growing needs of the organization, particularly in response to demands of young women for housing.

To meet the need for more funds, the YWHA formulated plans for a fundraising project that would reach out to the community. Although some funds were obtained in 1911, the major effort to raise the funds was held in 1912 with a "Whirlwind Campaign for the Building Fund." During this campaign, an early occurrence of a matching grants program was employed by the YWHA to encourage the community at large to support the venture. The YWHA was particularly aided by several substantial gifts from Jacob H. Schiff, whose daughter Frieda (Mrs. Felix M.) Warburg was Treasurer of the Committee on Building Land Fund. The YWHA raised sufficient monies to purchase the lot of land at 27-33 West 110th Street and to construct its own building. The cornerstone at 31 West 110th Street (as it was usually referred to) was laid on April 26, 1914, and the building was dedicated and its Synagogue consecrated on November 22, 1914. Additional funds were subsequently raised so that a swimming pool was added to the facilities by October 1916. In addition to the Synagogue (which could also function as an auditorium) and the pool, the building included a dining room, library, gymnasium, rooms for classes and clubs, and residential accommodations for about 150 young women (later more than 170).

During the years from 1914 to the 1930s, the YWHA focused its resources on its Commercial School, Americanization classes, Employment Bureau, Residence, and religious services and education. The Commercial School was an attempt to fit young women with skills such as shorthand, typing, and switchboard operation so that they could better their employment. The Americanization classes offered some civics and also English for the foreign-

born. The YWHA checked into the employers to which its Employment Bureau referred young women, and also offered vocational counseling for those women in their career choices. The religious services, especially on the High Holidays, were of particular pride to the YWHA. They also held a variety of artistic, dramatical, and musical events, while their programs, clubs, and classes over the years reflected interests in issues ranging from all-day care centers and nutrition for inner-city children to forums on the impact of the vote for women. The YWHA was also instrumental in founding (in 1917) and continuing to support the Room Registry for Jewish Girls and Women, which became a separate organization in 1925. The Registry's purpose was to find suitable homes for Jewish working girls, some of whom could not be accommodated by the Y's overcrowded Residence. Other groups, both Jewish and non-Jewish, were permitted use of facilities at the YWHA.

For a change of pace from city life, the YWHA provided opportunities for girls to go into the country during the summer. Initially the girls were housed at the Warburg estate in White Plains. In 1922, primarily through the generosity of Henry A. Dix, the YWHA obtained its own house and land in Mount Kisco which they used for a swimming pool. The home, additional bungalows, tennis courts, and swimming pool became known as the Ray Hill Camp.

When Mrs. Unterberg retired as President in 1929 due to ill health, she was succeeded by Frieda Schiff Warburg. During the years 1928-1930, the YWHA shared its facilities with the administration and members of the Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA), as construction of a new building at 92nd Street and Lexington Avenue forced the YMHA to vacate its premises.

During the 1930s, the YWHA saw that many of its traditional functions were being absorbed by other organizations or were no longer relevant to the changed neighborhood. For example, in 1934 their formal classes in Jewish history, Bible study, and Hebrew were dropped because both the Jewish Theological Seminary and "other adult organizations" were offering competing courses. In June 1938, the Employment Bureau was merged into the Federation Employment Service. 1938 also saw the discontinuance of religious services as the neighborhood could no longer support a *minyan* (the quorum of ten men required to hold services). By the late 1930s, there was a growing concern that the changes in the neighborhood were leading to a higher turn-over rate among the women choosing to live in the Residence.

When Mrs. Warburg resigned the Presidency in 1942, her initial successor was Carrie (Mrs. Jerome J.) Hanauer, who served as Acting President. In December 1942, Dorothy (Mrs. Richard J.) Bernhard became President. During that year, the YWHA asked Dr. Philip Klein to evaluate "the place and function" of the organization. Following his analysis and recommendations, the YWHA established two committees: one was to determine proper housing for residents, while the other was to work out local community problems.

Simultaneously the U.S. Army asked to lease the 110th Street building and the YWHA was invited to share the facilities of the YMHA at 92nd Street. On July 1, 1942, the YWHA moved. It was given two floors of the dormitory to house female residents, while physical changes were made to permit the girls use of the gymnasium and swimming pool.

The division of interests among the YWHA board members was resolved in late 1945 when the Young Men's Hebrew Association was reincorporated as the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association, and the Young Women's Hebrew Association was reincorporated as the Jewish Association for Neighborhood Centers (JANC). Those YWHA Board members concerned with residence and 92Y activities joined the Board of the 92nd

Street YM-YWHA. Those Board members interested in neighborhood centers constituted the Board of JANC, whose work had begun as early as 1942.

Scope and Content

The record group documents the history of the Young Women's Hebrew Association. The records that have been processed were found in a storeroom at 92nd Street Y, where they had been placed in the 1950s by Mrs. Ruth Reutlinger. She was Residence Director of the YWHA from 1942 to 1945, and Girls Residence Director of the YM-YWHA from 1945 to her retirement in 1958. As the only YWHA administrator to be employed at the YM-YWHA, Reutlinger had the responsibility not only for the YWHA Residence records but for all other surviving records of the YWHA. Her inventory of the records extant in the 1950s corresponds with the records found and processed in 1980. The records now missing (particularly the 1902-1906 and 1939-1945 Board of Directors' minutes) apparently were not in the possession of the YM-YWHA during the 1950s.

The processed YWHA records occupy three one-cubic-foot record boxes and ten one-linear-foot card file boxes. There are also one-half of a cubic foot of photographs and three artifacts. The records consist primarily of minutes, reports, correspondence, and residents' files, along with printed materials (both publications and clippings), photographs, and artifacts. The records have been rearranged to reflect the structure and functions of the organization. The major record subgroups are: Board of Directors, Department of Administration, Registers, Printed Materials, Photographs, and Artifacts.

The minutes of the monthly and annual meetings of the Board of Directors were originally kept in six books labeled "Minutes of the Young Women's Hebrew Association" and numbered as Book Two through Book Seven. The earliest minutes (November 1905 and January 1906) were found loose at the front of Book Two. No other early minutes nor Book One have been located. With the exception of Book Two (October 1906 to February 1912), which was a bound volume, the Board minutes were in ring-binders. The first page of each Book of minutes specifies the Book number and the dates included; these title pages have been retained with the minutes in folders. Documents (including press releases and procedures) pertaining to annual meetings have been integrated into the minutes.

Minutes for Board meetings held after May 1939 have not been located. They would have encompassed the final years of the YWHA and its reincorporation into the Jewish Association for Neighborhood Centers (JANC) in 1945. (In 1958 JANC merged with the Associated YW-YMHAs of Greater New York. A search in June 1980 at the office of Associated Ys indicated virtually no records for JANC. Officials of Associated Ys believe that the JANC records were destroyed.)

Annual reports exist in manuscript and/or published form and are dated for the month in which the YWHA held its annual meeting to report on activities of the previous year. Occasionally a report was issued to cover more than one year; this occurrence has been noted on the box and folder list.

There are several committees of the Board of Directors for which there are few or no extant records. Information about these committees can be obtained from the annual reports of the YWHA, the minutes of the Board of Directors, and the reports of the Superintendent/Executive Director and President.

The records for the Transition Period (1942-1945) include copies of memos and minutes of joint YWHA and YMHA meetings. The originals of some of these documents are located in the files of the YMHA Executive Director for those years.

Because Ruth Reutlinger continued after 1945 in her capacity as Residence Director (for girls), the residence files span the transition from the YWHA to the YM-YWHA. For example, the card files for the residence divide into three periods: 1920-1934, 1934-1942, and 1942-1950. All have been retained with YWHA records. The correspondence concerning residents consists, for the most part, of letters which were attached to the cards in the residents' card files. The correspondence follows the arrangement of the card files: 1920-1934, 1934-1942, and 1942-1950. Sample pages of the receipt books and ledger sheets were retained to illustrate their format and content; the books and sheets were destroyed as the information on them was repetitive.

Printed materials and newspaper clippings for 1903 to 1919 and 1934 were removed from deteriorating scrapbooks. The clippings from these volumes and elsewhere have been arranged chronologically and photocopied onto Permalife paper.

The single volume of records of the Room Registry for Jewish Women and Girls, for the period 1936 to 1941, was found among Reutlinger's files. When the Registry disbanded in 1941, the YWHA discussed continuing its functions.

Photographs are stored with other photos in 92nd Street Y Archives.

Contents List

Box Folder

Board of Directors

General

Minutes. Minutes of Board of Directors' meetings, including scattered correspondence referred to in the minutes and supplementary pages pertaining to annual meetings. Minutes for the Advisory Board (an all male board that existed until the early 1920s to offer counsel on financial and major policy decisions) are interspersed with the Board of Directors' minutes.

3	1	November 1905, January 1906
1	1	October 1906 to June 1909
1	2	October 1909 to May 1912
1	3	October 1912 to June 1914
3	2	September 1914 to June 1915
3	3	September 1915 to May 1917
1	4	September 1917 to May 1919
1	5	October 1919 to May 1922
1	6	October 1922 to May 1925
1	7	October 1925 to May 1929
1	8	October 1929 to May 1934
1	9	October 1934 to May 1939
1	10	<u>Book of Signatures</u> , 1903-1914 and
1	11	<u>Director's Book</u> , 1914-1931. Contain signatures and/or names of Board members and others attending Board meetings and other YWHA functions.
1	12	<u>Directors.</u> Names and addresses of members of the Board of Directors, 1943.
1	13	<u>Officers.</u> Tribute to officers at the time of their election, 1942.

Reports

Annual. Includes the President's Annual Report delivered at the Annual Meeting; lists of committees, committee members, and chairmen; photographs; and records of finances, members, and donations.

1	14	February 1906 and February 1907
1	15	February 1908 and February 1909
1	16	February 1910 and February 1911
1	17	February 1912 and February 1913
1	18	February 1914 and February 1915
1	19	February 1916 and February 1917
1	20	February 1919 (2 year report), February 1925 (6 year report), and January 1927
1	21	March 1943, March 1944, and April 1945
1	22-29	Second copies of the annual reports (except for 1908, 1910, and 1945 for which only one copy is available)

Contents List

Box Folder

Board of Directors – Reports (cont.)

Annual Report of the President. Delivered at the Annual Meeting, and in large part often based on the Annual Report of the Superintendent/Executive Director (see below). Contains a summary of the year's activities.

1	30	February 1907
2	4	February 1908
1	31	February 1918
3	5	February 1919
1	32	February 1920
1	33	February 1923
1	34	February 1924
1	35	February 1925
1	36	February 1926
1	37	January 1930
1	38	February 1935
1	39	February 1936
1	40	February 1937
1	41	February 1938
1	42	February 1939
1	43	January 1940
1	44	January 1941
1	45	January 1942

1	46	<u>General Meeting Report.</u> Intended for delivery at a December 1907 General Meeting of all members that was cancelled due to low attendance.
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Happy Day Fund. Monthly Reports of the income and expenditures for an emergency relief fund for persons affiliated with the YWHA.

1	47	1937-1938
1	48	1939-1940
1	49	1941-1942

1	50	<u>Members and Donations.</u> Lists of new members and of item and cash donations, 1907-1910, 1916-1917.
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Treasurer's Report. Monthly and yearly reports of receipts and disbursements.

1	51	1904-1911
1	52	1916-1917
1	53	1923

Committees of the Board of Directors

1	54	<u>Army and Navy Welfare Work.</u> Annual report of the committee that coordinated the YWHA's war efforts in World War I, 1918.
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Contents List

Box Folder

Board of Directors – Committees (cont.)

1	55	<u>Building</u> . Minutes of monthly meetings on issues relating to the construction of the 110 th Street Building, 1913-1915.
1	56	<u>Building Fund</u> . Book listing cash amounts received towards construction of the 110 th Street Building, 1911-1912.
1	57	<u>Campaign</u> . Minutes for the short-term major fundraising effort for the 110 th Street Building, 1912.
1	58	<u>Classes</u> . Scattered minutes of meetings and reports of educational activities, 1911, 1916-1917.
1	59	<u>Club and Entertainment</u> . Reports of recreational activities, 1911, 1916; constitution of the Club Council which coordinated the activities of various clubs, 1916.
		<u>Dormitory/Residence</u> . Committee changed name in early 1943 and later that year merged with House Committee to form House and Residence Committee. Minutes of meetings and reports to the Board of Directors with general information about residents and sometimes individual case histories.
3	6	1914-1918
1	60	1919-1920
1	61	1921-1922
1	62	1923-1925
1	63	1941-1943
1	64	<u>Efficiency</u> . Committee that met with outside consultants (Dr. Joseph Kahn and Dr. Joseph J. Klein) to acquaint them with the workings of the YWHA; committee also discussed and implemented suggestions for improvements in the organization. Records include minutes of some meetings, 1916, and the preliminary outline of the report on educational activities prepared by Drs. Kahn and Klein, 1916.
		<u>House</u> . Minutes of meetings and monthly reports to the Board on structural conditions in the building and use of the facilities.
1	65	1916, 1921
1	66	1941-1943
1	67	<u>House and Residence</u> . Minutes and monthly, 1943-1945.
1	68	<u>Medical Board</u> . In addition to members of the Board of Directors, physicians served on this board both as advisors and to care for the residents. Yearly reports and lists of the doctors who administered care, 1922-1925.

Contents List

Box Folder

Board of Directors – Committees (cont.)

1	69	<u>Pool</u> . House Committee took over the functions of this committee when the swimming pool in the 110 th Street Building was completed. Minutes of meetings, 1916.
3	7	<u>Religious</u> . At various times, the name also included the words "education," "service," and/or "work." Minutes and reports to the Board of Directors, 1908, 1914, 1917-1920, 1922-1926.
		<u>Vacation Home/Ray Hill Camp</u> . Committee had changed name by 1924 to reflect the name chosen for the camp. Minutes of committee include correspondence from Director of the camp. Financial information consists of monthly accounts of receipts and disbursements.
1	70	Minutes, 1920-1922
3	8	Minutes, 1924-1928
1	71	Finances, 1921-1927
		Legal
3	9	<u>Incorporation, 1903, and Reincorporation, 1945</u> . Incorporation certificates.
3	10	<u>Harriman National Bank</u> . Correspondence, court decisions, and papers concerning settlement of claims against the New York Clearing House Association for the bank failure of the Harriman National Bank where the YWHA was a depositor, 1934-1936.
2	1	<u>Lexington Avenue Mortgage</u> . Correspondence concerning the mortgage of 1578-1582 Lexington Avenue which the YWHA sold after it vacated the premises, 1933-1934.
2	2	<u>Ray Hill Camp</u> . Correspondence about the gift of the camp and about the YWHA's tax status for local property tax, 1920-1925.
		110 th Street Building
2	3	<u>Cornerstone Laying and Dedication</u> . Guest lists, regrets, and congratulations for the two events, 1914.
2	4	<u>Fundraising</u> . Form letters to raise money from the community for the Building Fund, 1911-1914.
3	11-12	<u>General Specifications</u> . Construction specifications drawn up by the architect for the building, 1913.

Contents List**Box Folder****Board of Directors (cont.)**

Transition (1942-1945)

2	5	<u>General</u> . Correspondence, memos, and minutes concerning the move to 92nd Street, initial YWHA neighborhood center activity, and the formation of the Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association and the Jewish Association for Neighborhood Centers, 1942-1945.
		<u>Klein Report</u> . "An Inquiry into Possible Changes in Function, Program, and Policies of the Young Women's Hebrew Association," prepared for the Committee on Inquiry appointed by the Board of Directors. Report and summary of report written by Dr. Philip Klein.
2	6	Report, 1942
2	7	Summary, 1942
2	8	A second copy of the report

Department of Administration

Superintendent/Executive Director (name changed c. 1916)

Reports. Monthly and yearly reports to the Board of Directors on the activities of the YWHA, including questions referred to the Board for policy decision. The early reports contain some information on the dormitory which was later included in the Dormitory Reports (see below). The reports for 1922 and 1923 are annual reports presented to the President as the basis for her Annual Report.

2	9	1906-1907
2	10	1908
2	11	1909
2	12	1910
2	13	1911
2	14	1916
2	15	1917-1919
2	16	1922
2	17	1923

2	18	<u>Other</u> . Letter from an employee to the Executive Director, 1920; budget, 1934; and inventories of supplies at the time of the move to 92nd Street, 1942.
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Commercial School

2	19	<u>Students</u> . Class and payment records for students, 1909-1918.
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Dormitory/Residence (name changed c. 1943)

Correspondence concerning residents. Between the YWHA and residents, their families and employers, and social service agencies that had dealings with the residents.

2	20	1920-1934
2	21	1934-1942
2	22	1942-1950

Contents List

Box Folder

Department of Administration – Dormitory/Residence (cont.)

2	23	<u>Miscellaneous correspondence.</u> Between Residence Secretary and Carrie (Mrs. Jerome) Hanauer, a Board member, 1942.
		<u>Reports.</u> Monthly and a few yearly reports to the Dormitory Committee with general statistics for the Dormitory (total number of girls, income generated, names of girls entering and departing). The reports include details on some individual girls. Information was provided by various employees including the Assistant Superintendent, Dormitory Secretary, and Residence Director.
2	24	1916-1918
2	25	1919-1920
2	26	1921
2	27	1922
2	28	1923
2	29	1924
2	30	1925-1926
2	31	1931
2	32	1932
2	33	1933
2	34	1934
2	35	1935
2	36	1936
2	37	1937
2	38	1938
2	39	1939
2	40	1940
2	41	1941
2	42	1942
2	43	1943
2	44	1944
2	45	1945

Residents' Card Files. The file for each resident includes a residence card and often the application for admittance, a medical card, and other attachments. The cards provide data such as age, occupation, salary, and room rate.

1920-1934 (B-Z) (4 linear feet)

1934-1942 (A to Z) (4 linear feet)

1942-1950 (A to Z) (2 linear feet)

3	13	<u>Ledger Sheets.</u> Sampling of sheets which list the amount and date paid by the residents for their room rent, 1941-1948.
3	14	<u>Receipt Books.</u> Sampling of the Residence's copy of the receipts given the residents upon payment of rent and/or key and towel deposits, 1944-1958.

Contents List**Box Folder****Department of Administration (cont.)**

Employment Bureau

- 2 46 Correspondence. Form letters sent to employers requesting information on job openings, 1918, and response to questionnaire on how the Bureau was run, 1926.

House

- 2 47 Report. To House Committee, 1916.

Medical Department

- 2 48 Reports. Monthly and yearly reports to the Medical Board concerning the girls treated, 1922-1925.

Registers

- 3 15 Activities and Finances. Dates, events, and/or names of bequests, concerts, delegates to other organizations, scholarship recipients, visitors, etc., 1919-1928.
- 3 16 Guest Register. Visitors to the 110th Street Building, 1914-1933, 1937-1938.
- 2 49 Room Registry for Jewish Women and Girls. Income and expenditures and statistics on persons served. The Registry was formally a separate organization, but was supported by the YWHA. 1936-1941.

Printed Materials

Publications of the YWHA

General. Flyers, invitations, tickets, programs for events, etc.

- 2 50 1903-1916
- 2 51 1917-1918
- 2 52 1919-1928
- 2 53 1932-1944
- 2 54 Bulletin of courses and activities, issued for the academic year, 1914-1919, 1933-1942.
- 2 55 Schedule of events, issued monthly, 1911-1919.
- 2 56 Publications of Other Organizations. For events held at the YWHA, sponsored by other groups. Includes Board of Education Lectures, 1915-1919, and neighborhood groups' musical and dramatical programs, 1919.

Newspaper Clippings

On the YWHA.

- 2 57 1903-1912
- 2 58 1913-1919
- 2 59 1931-1938
- 2 60 1940-1945

Contents List**Box Folder****Printed Materials – Newspaper Clippings (cont.)**On Personalities.

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| 2 | 61 | Reutlinger, Ruth. Administrative positions, including Residence Director. 1947 |
| 2 | 62 | Schwartz, Ray (Mrs. Leon). Superintendent/Executive Director. 1918-1937. |
| 2 | 63 | Unterberg, Bella (Mrs. Israel). Founder and first President. Includes some materials from her memorial service. 1915-1935. |
| 2 | 64 | Warburg, Frieda (Mrs. Felix). Board member and second president. 1932-1936. |
| 2 | 65 | Other Board members. Obituaries for Hennie (Mrs. Alfred) Kornfeld, 1945; Rosalie (Mrs. H. Pereira) Mendes, 1953; and Tillie (Mrs. Samuel) Hyman, 1953. |

Scrapbooks

- | | |
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| 3 | <u>Esther Ruskay.</u> Assembled at the death of this early Board member.
<u>1936-1938.</u> Publications and newspaper clippings.
<u>1938-1942.</u> Publications and newspaper clippings. |
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Contents List**Box Folder****Photographs**

Original black-and-white photographs, with negatives where noted. Arranged in folders by activities, places, and personalities.

- Adults' Activities
- All Day Care Center
- Board of Directors
- Building – Lexington Avenue
 - Exterior
 - Dormitory
 - Gymnasium
 - Library
- Building – 110th Street
 - Exterior
 - Construction
 - Auditorium/Synagogue
 - Dining Room
 - Dormitory
 - Gymnasium
 - Kitchen
 - Library
 - Living Room
 - Main Lobby
 - Swimming Pool
- Children's Activities
- Classes
 - Arts and Crafts
 - Civics and Citizenship
 - Cooking
 - Dance
 - English for the Foreign-Born
 - Gymnastics
 - Sewing and Dressmaking
- Clubs
 - Halevy Chorus
 - Mothers Aid Society
 - Scouting
 - Socials
- Commercial School
- Costume Parties
- Dramatics
- Dramatics – Federal Theatre Project
- Hyman, Tillie (Mrs. Samuel)
- Ray Hill Camp (Mount Kisco)
- Social Dancing
- Sukkot (Jewish festival)

Contents List**Box Folder****Photographs (cont.)**

Summer Cottage on Warburg Estate (White Plains)
Unterberg, Bella (Mrs. Israel)
World War I Activities

Artifacts

Corporate Seal: Young Women's Hebrew Association – New York City –
Incorporated 1903.

Torah Crowns (one pair): One is inscribed "Presented by Mr. and Mrs. Samuel
I. Hyman to Commemorate the Dedication of the Synagogue of the
Young Women's Hebrew Association – In Memory of Our Beloved
Father Woolf Endel – Sunday the 4th day of Kislev 5675" (November
22, 1914). The other one has a similar inscription in Hebrew.

Plaque (metal on wood) – "Helen B. Chaim – the generous benefactress of the
Young Women's Hebrew Association in memory of her beloved parents
Sarah and Levi Goldenberg 1939."