

C Temple Beth El, Jefferson City, Missouri, Records, 1868-1984  
3914 .2 linear feet, photocopies

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## INTRODUCTION

The records of Temple Beth El, a synagogue in Jefferson City, Missouri, include legal papers, by-laws, minutes, newspaper clippings, and correspondence that document the temple's history from its origin as the Jefferson City Hebrew Cemetery Association to its centennial anniversary in 1983.

## DONOR INFORMATION

Photocopies of the Temple Beth El records were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Julius Meyerhardt, president of Temple Beth El, on December 29, 1983 (SHS Accession No. 2508).

## INSTITUTIONAL SKETCH

In 1879 members of the Jefferson City Jewish community, organized under the name the Jefferson City Hebrew Cemetery Association, purchased a city lot for the "purpose of continuing and perpetuating in the time honored custom of burying... [their] dead with the ceremonies and usages of the Jewish religion." This association was the predecessor of the Beth El congregation.

To accommodate more members and to promote the Reform Jewish faith, the Jefferson City Hebrew Cemetery Association formed the Beth El congregation and bought more land in 1882 to construct a synagogue. Temple Beth El was completed the next year.

It has served as a place of worship for all Jewish people, from Orthodox to Reform Judaism, but the services have conformed more to Reform practices.

During its one-hundred plus years, Temple Beth El has been a relatively quiet place for worship; yet, it can boast of having held some notable functions, and the building itself has historical significance. On September 19, 1954, Temple Beth El hosted Missouri's ceremonies during the tercentenary of the first Jewish settlement in North America. In October 1957 the Beth El congregation celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of their place of worship. A fund raising event was held in 1968 to finance a renovation of Temple Beth El and, in 1971, with renovations completed, the congregation invited the Jefferson City community to an open house. Missouri governor Christopher Bond, and both state legislative branches, recognized Temple Beth El with certificates to commemorate its centennial anniversary in 1983. Temple Beth El is one of the oldest synagogues west of the Mississippi River that still conducts services on its original site. It is also one of the buildings within the downtown Jefferson City historic district.

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The records of Temple Beth El consist photocopies of legal papers, by-laws, minutes, newspaper clippings, and correspondence that document the congregation's history from its origin as the Jefferson City Hebrew Cemetery Association, to its centennial anniversary in 1983. This collection is well balanced; material exists for almost all of the temple's history. The strength of the collection is the Beth El congregation's minutes for the years 1937-1983; the lack of minutes from earlier years is the collection's weakness. The records are arranged by type of material or

subject and chronologically thereunder.

#### FOLDER LIST

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- f. 3 Minutes, 1953-1959
- f. 4 Minutes, 1960-1965
- f. 5 Minutes, 1972-1983
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