



**B'NAI B'RITH  
INTERNATIONAL**



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Expansive Archives of B'nai B'rith Relocates to the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio**

*At the AJA, the collection of the most important Jewish membership organization in American Jewish history will be accessible to scholars, researchers and students the world over*

(CINCINNATI, OHIO and WASHINGTON, D.C., May 24, 2012)—B'nai B'rith International—widely considered by scholars and historians to be the most important Jewish membership organization in American Jewish history—has announced that the contents of its archives and its Holocaust and Related Materials Archives will be relocated to the Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio (AJA). The AJA is located on the Cincinnati campus of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.



*Rare images of the men who founded B'nai B'rith at Sinsheimer's Café in New York City on October 13, 1843.*

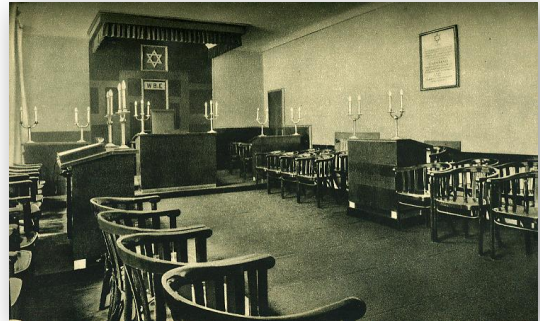
The expansive collection showcases not only B'nai B'rith's history but also momentous occasions in Jewish history dating back to 1700. "These impressive and extensive archives reflect the evolution of B'nai B'rith which, in many ways, parallels the evolution of the American Jewish experience and its connection to Jewish communities around the world," said B'nai B'rith International Executive Vice President Daniel S. Mariaschin. "We are delighted that the American Jewish Archives will now be the custodian of these precious documents."

The archive's thousands of manuscripts, charters, medals, letters, memorabilia and other artifacts demonstrate changing societal needs from the needs of orphans to those of the elderly, from assistance to immigrants to the preservation of Jewish identity in an open society. These archives represent a treasured primary resource for researchers and extend from former mining towns in the American West to the Jewish presence on the Island of Rhodes.

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“Once we moved from our former headquarters building it was regrettable this treasure trove of material was not as accessible as we would have liked and we are delighted that this is no longer the case, “ said B'nai B'rith International President Allan J. Jacobs. “We are confident that through this important agreement to relocate the archives, the collection will continue to serve as a valuable historical resource.”

Noted historian Jonathan Sarna has called B'nai B'rith, established in New York in 1843, “the most important Jewish fraternal organization in American Jewish history.” With a continued presence in more than 50 countries, B'nai B'rith International works on behalf of the global Jewish community by advocating for Israel, combating anti-Semitism, protecting seniors, promoting community service and aiding in disaster relief.



*Interior of Austria's Gratz Lodge,  
circa 1930.*

“B'nai B'rith has played a shaping role in American Jewish life for more than 150 years,” said Sarna, the Joseph H. and Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and Chief Historian, National Museum of American Jewish History. “Its massive collection of papers sheds light on everything from national crises to local philanthropic initiatives; they mirror the American Jewish experience as a whole. How fitting that this invaluable collection will now be housed at the American Jewish Archives, where the papers of so many of B'nai B'rith's leaders and members are already repositied.”

“Our center is deeply honored by B'nai Brith's decision to entrust its archival treasure trove to the American Jewish Archives,” said Dr. Gary P. Zola, Executive Director of the AJA and Professor of the American Jewish Experience at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. “We are fully cognizant of B'nai Brith's tremendous historical significance. Not only will we preserve these remarkable records in perpetuity, but we are firmly committed to making these records accessible to all those who are interested in making use of them.”

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The collection includes:

- Correspondence between and photos of B'nai B'rith leaders and U.S. presidents including Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Ronald Reagan, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.
- Rare newsletters and books published by B'nai B'rith's European lodges, 1886-1937
- Internal correspondence and confidential reports illuminating B'nai B'rith's relationship with Vatican leaders before and during the groundbreaking Second Vatican Council, 1961-1966
- Original minutes, charters, memorabilia and other items from American lodges spanning the 1870s-1980s
- Telegrams, internal memos and eyewitness accounts documenting the response of B'nai B'rith and other Jewish organizations to the rise of Nazism

Professor Dr. Cornelia Wilhelm, DAAD Professor at Emory University's Department of History/Jewish Studies Department noted that, "The order's record keeping was extremely thorough and has produced enlightening vital statistics of early 19th century American Jewry (age, occupation, birthplace, marriage status, number of children, death rate and reason etc.), which are otherwise barely available."

Historians widely agree that few organizations shaped modern American Jewish history more profoundly than B'nai B'rith. "Scholars have long hoped to cull its historical records to shed light on the workings and impact of this very significant institution," added Dr. Hasia R. Diner, the Paul and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University.

*For more comprehensive information on the collection or to arrange for an interview, please contact American Jewish Archives representative Joyce Kamen at 513-543-8109 or [joyce@kamencreative.com](mailto:joyce@kamencreative.com) or Dara Kahn of B'nai B'rith International at 202-857-6527 or [dkahn@bnaibrith.org](mailto:dkahn@bnaibrith.org). For a selection of pictures of archive contents, click here: <http://tinyurl.com/bth4qn8>*