Community Partnership

for the preservation of

Jewish History
in the Mahoning Valley

Kayla Metzger | Sarah Wilschek | Hannah Klacik Martha Bishop | Dr. Thomas Leary

O1 Introduction

Congregation Rodef Sholom



Congregation Rodef Sholom

- Founded in 1867 as the first, and only, Reform Jewish Congregation in Youngstown
- Has consistently served as the only Reform Jewish Congregation in Youngstown
- The congregation built its current edifice in 1915 and has remained in the location without any interruption of service or mission



The Creation of the Project

- Searching for a way to engage the Congregation during the winter of 2019-2020
- Discovery of congregation's historical materials tucked away when searching for something
- Evolution from congregation involvement into partnership and community involvement





Congregation Rodef Sholom's Goals

- Highlight the value and impact of Congregation Rodef Sholom on the greater Jewish and secular communities
- Create a relevant and useful tool for the congregation and greater community
- Implement a process for collection growth and manipulation based on findings
- Involve partners within the community for enhanced care and depth of knowledge with regard to the collection



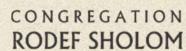
O2 Partnerships

Planning & Outreach



Partnerships















Youngstown Historical Center of Industry & Labor

Local History Member

Meetings started February 2020

Faculty & Students

Practicum in Applied History
Course Spring 2021 +
Center for Judaic & Holocaust
Studies

Archives

State-wide connections & expertise

Planning & Outreach

AmeriCorps x Rodef meetings to identify goals, priorities and needs of the

organization to make the project a reality

- Developed a Collections Management Policy
- Increased exposure of the project/goals to the local community and greater historical community of Ohio to increase visibility and interest
 - o Local press outlets
 - Interviews
 - o American Jewish Libraries article

Congregation Rodef Sholom: A History and Lesson in Collaboration and the Creation of an Archive

By Sarah B. Wilschek and Kayla Metzger

Congregation Rodef Sholom's History and Role in

ongregation Rodef Sholom is a Reform Jewish synagogue in Youngstown, Ohio, devoted to meeting the spirit educational, and social needs of its members and to fulfilling the Jewish obligation of social action to help those in need. Founded on May 12, 1867, Rodef Sholom ("Pursuers of gation for over a century and a half of their operation, that now Peace") is the oldest Jewish congregation in Youngstown, originally occupying a building on Federal Street downtown before breaking ground for the current synagogue on Elm Street in 1914. Congregation Rodef Sholom remains the largest congregation in the Youngstown area and the only one with a Brotherhood and Sisterhood, serving the greater Mahoning Valley including and sistemood, serving the greater changing counties, as well Trumbull, Columbiana, Stark, and Mahoning counties, as well as communities in the Shenango Valley (Sharon, New Castle, and Sharpsville, PA) following a merger with Temple Beth Israel in 2015. Rodef Sholom is committed to working with the local

neighborhood and nonprofits to promote a strong sense of support and community. The Board of Trustees established an inter-congregational collaboration committee with regional neighbors, El Emeth and Ohev Tzedek, to implement a consolidation plan for

Discovering Rodef Sholom's History: Down the Rabbit Hole

In 2019, shortly after starting her position as Executive Director, Sarah Wilschek discovered boxes and shelves full of documents. objects, ledgers, and more tucked away in a utility closer on the lower level of the synagogue. She investigated other areas of the synagogue, locating many more records that tell a more detailed enable Rodef Sholom to better understand their history as an

Congregation Rodef Sholom's archival collections date back to its foundation in 1867, encompassing material from both Rodef Sholom and Temple Beth Israel. The materials include, but are not limited to: framed/mounted art and photographs; membership ledgers, financial ledgers, deeds, documer maps for Congregation Rodef Sholom's cemeteries (Briar Hill and Tom Homestead, 1967 - present); Sisterhood records from and from Fromestead, 1907 - presently observed and 1867 and Brotherhood records since 1924, including programs,

AJL News and Reviews May | June 2021

Making the Project a Reality

- Funding assistance was needed to create a proper environment for archival material, particularly aged and vulnerable records
- Sought expertise from American Jewish Archives, Youngstown State University and Youngstown Historical Center of Industry and Labor on best practices and collections care
- Awarded Ohio Archives Grant from Ohio Historical Records Advisory Review Board to set up Archive room for improved storage and create a research space





O3 Experiential Learning

Youngstown State University

Student Involvement

- Began with YSU History Program's Practicum II course in January 2021
 - Inventoried art & framed collections and gained a general understanding of content of collection
 - Introduced to archival logistics by Martha Bishop
- Assisted in developing project plans and creating a grant budget
- Played a role in helping neighboring congregations develop their own inventory plan



Internship & Current Standing

- Internship spent working on archives, assisting other local congregations
 - o Became familiar with archival materials
 - o Creating a finding aid
 - o Practical ways to organize
- Applying the archives to a thesis
 - o Variety of sources
 - o Able to tailor to my personal interests
- Independent study
 - o National Register of Historic Places nomination



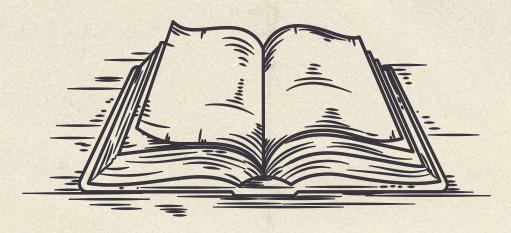
Progress Update

- Around 50% complete with organizing Rodef Sholom's collection
- Completion of funded project phase by December 2021





O4 Next Steps



Continuing & Strengthening Partnerships

Moving into the Future

- Enhancing partnerships with Youngstown State University
 - Future courses on the congregation, its members, and its impact on the greater
 Youngstown community
- Using items in the collection for future projects
 - o Application for the National Register
- Access to additional grant and program funding
 - Partnership with YSU Holocaust and Judaic Studies program for visiting scholars
- Creating a replication guide for other organizations
- Ongoing partnership opportunities
 - o Ohio History Service Corps
 - o American Jewish Archives
 - o Mahoning Valley Historical Society



Thank you

Kayla Metzger | director@springhillhistorichome.org

For questions about Ohio History Service Corps opportunities: americorps@ohiohistory.org

Sarah Wilschek | swilschek@congregationrodefsholom.org

For research requests: archives@congregationrodefsholom.org

For inquiries about the YSU M.A. in History (Applied History Certificate) Program:

Dr. Thomas Leary | teleary@ysu.edu