

Leon Shapiro Papers

1939-1984

15 boxes (8.75 linear ft.)

Call no.: MS 127

Read collection overview [Collection overview](#)

Historian, author, Professor of Russian and Soviet Jewish History at Rutgers University, who helped arrange the escape of Jews from Europe during World War II and was active in several organizations concerned with the emigration of Soviet and Eastern European Jews to Palestine. Papers include biographical materials, correspondence, legal documents, writings, lecture and research materials, statistical data in the world Jewish population before and after World War II, oral history transcripts, pamphlets, newspaper clippings, and four photographs.

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Background on Leon Shapiro

Leon Shapiro (1905-1984) was a historian and Professor of Russian and Soviet Jewish History at Rutgers University; author of *The History of ORT: A Jewish Movement for Social Change*; a 35-year contributor of articles to "The American Jewish Yearbook"; fluent speaker of Yiddish, Hebrew, English, Russian, German, French, and Ukrainian; helped arrange the escape of Jews from Europe during World War II; and an active member in several organizations concerned with the emigration of Soviet and Eastern European Jews to Palestine and other issues related to Judaism.

1905	Born July 14, in Hersun (Korsun, Korsoun, Hersein), Kiev, Russia, to Mark and Freida Scheinblum Shapiro.
1923	Candidate for degree in Social Sciences and Law, University of Kiev. Imprisoned for anti-Bolshevik activities.
1925	Exiled to Palestine.

1928	Diplome de Licencie en Droit, Social Sciences and Law, University of Toulouse.
1935	Married in Paris to Leorfore Rita Willdorff; divorced in 1940.
1940	Secretary General, Federation des Societes Juives de France, Paris
1941-1949	Research Associate, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, New York.
1941	Immigrated to U.S.
1946	Married Luba.
1954-1956	Assistant Director, Cultural Department, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany
1964-1967	Research Associate, Columbia University Seminar in International Research Methods.
1964-1972	Assistant Executive Director, Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture.
1968-1978	Professor, Russian and Soviet Jewish History, Department of Hebraic Studies and Soviet/Eastern European Studies Program, Rutgers University.
1972-1973	Adjunct Professor, Queens College, School of General Studies, City College of New York.
1973	Adjunct Associate Professor, Judaic Studies, Brooklyn College, City College of New York.
1974-1975	Adjunct Associate Professor, Academy Without Walls, Haifa University.
1978-1979	Professor, Empire State College.
1984	Died, December 25, New York City.

Scope of collection

The Leon Shapiro papers (1939-1984) pertain primarily to Soviet and Eastern European Jewry before and after World War II and to the formation of the nation of Israel in personal, research, and published materials.

The collection comprises biographical materials, correspondence, legal documents, audio-tapes, four photographs, writings, newspaper clippings, research materials, oral history transcripts, printed materials, and statistical data.

Arrangement

This collection is organized into seven series:

- **Series 1. Bio-Bibliographical, 1940-1984**
- **Series 2. Correspondence, 1945-1984**
- **Series 3. Subject Files, 1955-1984**

- **Series 4. Writings, 1939-1984**
- **Series 5. Research Materials, 1940s-1980s**
- **Series 6. Oral Histories, 1974-1979**
- **Series 7. Printed Materials, 1949-1985**

Series descriptions

Series 1. Biographical and Bibliographical

1940-1984

Shapiro's legal papers and official documents, biographical information, two audio-tape interviews of Mr. Shapiro, newspaper obituaries, and publication lists are in Series 1.

Series 2. Correspondence

1945-1984

Incoming letters and typescript copies of outgoing letters, mostly professional, some personal, are in Series 2, alphabetically arranged. Notable are the letters from Romanian Jews seeking immigration to Israel (1970s). Series 2 also contains a photograph of a painting titled "On Both Sides of the Warsaw Ghetto Wall 1943" sent by the artist, Israel Beinbauer, and three other unidentified photographs, ca. 1931 Vienna.

Series 3. Subject files

1955-1984

Subject files in Series 3 are divided into two sections, arranged alphabetically. The first contains materials related to Shapiro's professional and personal interests, and includes pamphlets and minutes of meetings from the program for Jewish Studies Without Walls, his two audio-tape lectures on the History of Soviet Jewry, a certificate and badge of Honor from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee along with Russian newspaper articles, various committee materials, and independent research projects. The second section is primarily comprised of Rutgers University student papers, correspondence, and lectures.

Series 4. Writings

1939-1984

Handwritten, typescript, and photocopies of various articles about the Soviet Union submitted to the American Jewish Yearbook for publication, along with their printed versions, are arranged chronologically in Series 4. Also present are statistics on the World Jewish Population, correspondence relating to publishing, ORT papers, book reviews, and an audio-tape of the 1980 ORT Rabbinic Scholar Conference.

Series 5. Research Materials

1940s-1980s

Census and other statistical data on the world Jewish population before and after World War II, together with descriptions of French concentration camps and Jewish life in occupied France, are in Series 5 in chronological order. Notable are the materials regarding Irgun, Haganah, and Palestine. This series contains a message to British soldiers dated 1947, other Hebrew documents, newspaper articles, and transcripts of political broadcasts relating to the foundation of Israel. Also in Series 5 there are reference materials on Jewish resistance during the holocaust and in Palestine.

Series 6. Oral Histories

1974-1979

Series 6 contains transcripts and seven audio-tapes from the Lautenberg Oral History Collection of Surviving Eastern European Communities, listed alphabetically. These describe Jewish life before Hitler and Stalin assumed power.

Series 7. Printed Materials

1949-1985

Pamphlets, booklets, articles, and miscellaneous ephemera relating to Soviet and European Jewry and holocaust survivors are in this series.

Collection inventory

Series 1. Biographical and Bibliographical

1940-1984

Vita and Biographical articles		Box 1: 1
Lists of Publications		Box 1: 2
Official Documents: Birth, Marriage	1940-1945	Box 1: 3
Official Documents: Citizenship, Travel	1929-1946	Box 1: 4
Official Documents: Education, Work	1940-1946	Box 1: 5
Obituaries	1984	Box 1: 6
Interview: LS interviewed by Rabbi Seligson on "Message of Israel", audiotape	1980	Box 1: 7
Interview: LS interviewed by Sheila Zucker, WEVD-FM, audiotape	1980	Box 1: 8

Series 2. Correspondence**1945-1984**

A - American Committee		Box 1: 9
American Jewish Committee - American Jewish Yearbook		Box 1: 10
American ORT Federation		Box 1: 11
B - C		Box 1: 12
D - G		Box 1: 13
H - K		Box 1: 14
L - Ma		Box 1: 15
Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture		Box 1: 16
Mon - N		Box 1: 17
O - Wol		Box 1: 18
Women's American ORT		Box 1: 19
World ORT Union		Box 1: 20
Wos - Z, unidentified		Box 1: 21
75th birthday greetings		Box 1: 22

Series 3. Subject files**1955-1984**

Academy for Jewish Studies Without Walls	1973-1977	Box 2: 23
American Council for Emigres in the Professions	1979	Box 2: 24
American Jewish Committee talk, Irving	n.d.	Box 2: 25
American Joint Distribution Committee--Certificate of Honor	1984	Box 2: 26
Association for Jewish Studies	1976	Box 2: 27
Brooklyn College	1973	Box 2: 28
Columbia University	1965	Box 2: 29
Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture	c1982	Box 2: 30
National Endowment for the Humanities	1979	Box 2: 31
New York Association for New Americans	1975-1978	Box 2: 32
ORT Jewish Book Fair, Detroit, packet	1980	Box 2: 33
ORT: National Rabbinic Scholar Conference	1980	Box 2: 34
Pasternak, Boris, clippings	1958	Box 2: 34a
Project on 100 Years of Jewish Life in Russia and USSR	1919-1984	Box 2: 35
Queens College	1972-1978	Box 2: 36
Rutgers: class handouts		Box 2: 37

Rutgers: course materials		Box 2: 38
Rutgers: Hebraic Studies Department	1973-1977	Box 2: 39
Rutgers: Jews in Eastern Europe, Lecture Notes and background materials		Box 3: 40
Rutgers: Lectures-Eastern European Jews	1955-1967	Box 3: 41
Rutgers (and Queens): Modern Anti-Semitism--Lecture notes and suppl.		Box 3: 42
Rutgers: University position--correspondence and documents	1968-1978	Box 3: 43-46
Rutgers: Soviet and East European Program--memos and correspondence	1970-1981	Box 4: 47
Rutgers: Soviet and East European Program--reports, lists, etc.	1971-1977	Box 4: 48
Schwartz (?), Part I, edited ts draft	n.d.	Box 4: 49
Society for Research on Jewish Communities	1981	Box 4: 50
Solidarity	1981-1982	Box 4: 51
Stalin-Alliluyeva, Svetlana	1967	Box 4: 52
Students' papers		Box 4: 53
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Students' papers		Box 5: 62
Synagogue Council of America	1973-1981	Box 5: 63
Union of Russian Jews	1975-1976	Box 5: 64
World Union of Jewish Studies	1963-1980	Box 5: 65
Zipperstein, Steven: "First Years of Jewish Odessa" 1978		Box 5: 66
Unidentified items		Box 5: 67

Series 4. Writings

1939-1984

American Jewish Yearbook --ms, typescript, and printed versions of LS contributions

1939-1984

Box 6: 68-80

"L'Influence Juive Chez Marcel Proust" --ms; also ms or notes on Charles Plisnier	c.1942	Box 7: 81
"Foyer de la Bibliotheque de la Sorbonne" --dialogue	1962	Box 7: 82
Encyclopedia Judaica articles: correspondence about and typescript	1964-1966	Box 7: 83
"Russian Jewry after Stalin", in Russian Jewry 1917-1967	1969	Box 7: 84
"Passover Restrictions in the Soviet Union", Jewish Telegraphic Agency Passover Release No. 9	1970	Box 7: 85
History of the Jews in Russia and Poland by Simon Dubnow, reissued--biog., intro., and outline history by LS: correspondence., reviews, publicity	1975	Box 7: 86
"Soviet Jewry since the Death of Stalin" --typescript draft and reprint from American Jewish Yearbook, 1979	1978	Box 7: 87
History of ORT	1976-1980	Box 7: 88-91
Guide to the Material on ORT's History	1981	Box 7: 92
"Mid-passage--50 Years of ORT: Short Comments"		Box 7: 93
Speech: ORT Rabbinic/Scholar Conference, audiotape	1980	Box 7: 94
Speech: "ORT in Jewish Life"		Box 7: 95
Speech: "ORT's Origins"		Box 7: 96
Speech: "Jews and Jewish Communities in Eastern and Central Europe--An Overview"	1980	Box 7: 97
Jews Under Tyranny: The Soviet Union -outline	1980s	Box 7: 98
Additional notes re: USSR		Box 7: 99
Jewish Life in Russia and the USSR --outline, chapter, ms, corresp.	1983	Box 8: 100
One Hundred Years of Jewish Life in the Russian Empire and Under Soviet Rule -outline	n.d.	Box 8: 101
Soviet Russia/Russian Jewry in the 20th Century--lecture notes (?),writing preparation (?)		Box 8: 102
Book reviews	1964-1984	Box 8: 103

Series 5. Research Materials

1940s-1980s

World Jewish Population	1940s-1980s	Box 9: 105-114
Soviet, Russian, and East European Jewry		Box 10: 115-126
ORT, Gide		Box 11: 127-135
Irgun, Haganah, Palestine		Box 12: 136

Series 6. Oral Histories

1974-1979

Project documents, Transcripts A-Z, tapes

1974-1979

Box 13-14:
137-140

Series 7. Printed Materials

1949-1985

Printed versions of writings by others

1949-1985

Box 15:
141

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Languages:

English, French

Provenance

Acquired from Luba Shapiro, Leon's wife, via Michael Wolff and Stanley Radosh, 1986.

Acknowledgments

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Processing Information

Processed by Linda Seidman, December 1986.

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Search terms

Subjects

- Europe, Eastern--Ethnic relations--History--20th century--Sources.
- Israel--Emigration and immigration--History--Sources.

- Soviet Union--Ethnic relations--History--Sources.

Names

- Rutgers University--Curricula.
- Rutgers University--Faculty--History--

Israel--History--1948-1967--Sources.

- Jews, Soviet--History--Sources.
- Jews--Europe, Eastern--History--Sources.
- Jews--Migrations--History--Sources.
- Jews--Population--History--Sources.
- Jews--Soviet Union--History--Sources.
- Occupational training for Jews--History--Sources.
- Palestine--History--1929-1948--Sources.
- Romania--Emigration and immigration--History--Sources.

Sources.

- Rutgers University--Students--History--Sources.
- Shapiro, Leon--Archives.
- World ORT Union--History--Sources.

Genre terms

- Oral histories.
- Photographs.

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