



BHC-MSS 0040
Guide to the Papers of Diana Lesser
By Lisa Furchtgott
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Descriptive Summary

Creator: Diana Lesser

Title: Papers of Diana Lesser

Dates: 1937-1977 [bulk 1954-1955]

Quantity: 1 manuscript box

Abstract: The papers of Diana Lesser consist of Bridgeport Jewish Community Council and Tercentenary Committee meeting minutes, correspondence, research notes, and draft chapters, along with other book materials intended to be used for a history of Jewish life in Bridgeport. The book never came to fruition, but the drafts contain important documentation of the community.

Language: English

Repository: Bridgeport History Center

Biographical History

Diana O. Lesser was born January 13, 1903 in Ansonia, Connecticut. The child of philanthropically minded parents, she moved with her family to Bridgeport in 1920. Due to her parents' influence and the fact that most women did not attend college at the time, Diana became involved in social-reform volunteer work. Her commitments would eventually see her become involved with organizations both local and national, Jewish and secular, women-run or not. These organizations include the National Council of Jewish Women, Planned Parenthood League of Connecticut, the American Red Cross, the New England Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, Bridgeport Chapter of United Nations, Meals On Wheels, the Jewish Family Service Bureau, League of Women Voters, Connecticut Society of Blindness, the Jewish Home for the Elderly, the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society, the Women's Auxiliary of Bridgeport Hospital, and others.

Diana married Lawrence Klein Lesser, the son of a Jewish family living in Bridgeport since 1850. Additional information is lacking at this time.

Diana Lesser died on September 25, 1995.

Scope and Content Note

In 1954 the Tercentenary Committee, appointed by the Bridgeport Jewish Community Council, sought to produce a book celebrating three centuries of Jewish life in the city. Almost all items were produced from 1954-1956. The material within the collection represents the first draft of chapters for the book, and thus documents various aspects of Jewish life in Bridgeport from the 1650s to the 1950s.

Lesser kept these materials until donating them to the Bridgeport History Center.

Arrangement note

Folders are divided into Series I, covering Jewish Community Council minutes, research notes, and correspondence, and Series II, various chapter drafts.

Administrative information

Provenance: Given to the Bridgeport History Center in the 1970s by Diana Lesser. Her letter to Helen Wasserman, dated February 17, 1978, describes the process.

Preferred Citation

Papers of Diana Lesser, (BHC-MSS 0040), Bridgeport History Center.

Names and Subject Tracings*Corporate names*

Bridgeport Jewish Tercentenary Committee

Subject tracings

American Jewish history

Bridgeport, Conn.

Detailed box and folder listing

Series I, Jewish Community Council minutes

Box 1

1. Minutes and correspondence – Bridgeport Jewish Tercentenary Committee, 1954-1956
2. Representatives of organizations to Historical Committee, undated
3. Inquiries and replies for information on Jewish history, 1954-1977
4. Responses of local history organizations, 1937-1957
5. Correspondence re: Lesser family history, 1955, 1966
6. Biographies, 1954-1955, undated
7. Research notes, 1954-1958, undated

Series II, Various chapter drafts

8. Preliminary outline for history, 1954, undated
9. Proposed foreword by Governor Ribicoff, 1955, undated
10. Proposed editor's statement of Prof. M. Millhauser (marked "void"), 1955
11. Proposed acknowledgments for history, undated
12. Draft chapter, editor's statement," undated
13. Draft collection, "Introduction," 1955
14. Draft chapter, "Education," c. 1954-1955
15. Draft chapter, Professionals, undated
16. Draft chapter, "Service Organizations," undated
17. Draft chapter, "Philanthropists," undated
18. Draft chapter, "Cultural Contributions," undated
19. Draft chapter, "Religious groups," 1954, undated
20. Draft chapter, "Military," undated