

The Filson Historical Society

Perley, Martin, 1910-2003
Added papers, 1942-1946

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Size of Collection:
1 cubic foot

Locator Number:
Mss./A/P451a

Perley, Martin, 1910-2003
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Biographical Note

Rabbi Martin Perley was born Martin Perelmuter in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1910. His parents were naturalized American citizens from Russia. By 1912 the family had moved to Canada and his parents became Canadian citizens. Martin returns to the United States in 1930 to go to Rabbinical school, claiming American citizenship. In 1934 he accepts a position in Australia and lives there for three years and legally changes his name to Perley. He returns to the United States in 1937 and accepts a position in Hot Springs, Arkansas. In 1942 he becomes a Chaplain in the United States Army, first serving at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana and then at Fort Custer in Michigan before being sent to the Pacific theater.

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Scope and Content Note.

Rabbi Martin Perley served as an Army Chaplain during the second world war. His papers start with his being recruited by the Jewish Welfare League to be a Chaplain in 1942 and end with his service overseas in 1946. His service includes Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana, Fort Custer in Michigan and Iwo Jima in the Pacific. The papers deal mostly with counseling soldiers and preparing for the Jewish High Holy Days. He also encounters some German Jewish prisoners of war at Fort Custer and wrote an article for the Jewish press about the prisoners.

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Folder List

Folder 1: Soldier Problems: Letters from 1943 and 44 from soldiers and their families discussing a variety of problems. Health is the biggest issue.

Folder 2: German Jewish Prisoners of War: Newspaper clippings and correspondence about Jewish prisoners of war captured in Normandy. Most letters are either looking for relatives or questioning the prisoner's Jewish faith. A 1918 Jewish Prayer Book issued by the German Army.

Folder 3: Letters about Soldiers: Letters from the families of soldier asking for Perley's aid. This aid is from visiting a soldier in the hospital to arranging furloughs to helping to arrange transfers.

Folder 4: Untitled – correspondence: Condolence letter responses and regulations for writing condolence letters. File is from 1945 in the Pacific Theater.

Folder 5: Letters to Relatives: From late 1945. Letters expressing appreciation that their sons have a Jewish Chaplain in the south Pacific. One mentions the Atomic bomb drop.

Folder 6: Correspondence, Personal: Letters dealing with personal matters before he entered the service. V Mail to his wife from Pearl Harbor, letters discussing Jewish information pamphlets.

Folder 7: Letters from Soldier: Letters from soldiers that have left Fort Custer and some that are still stationed there. The ones on base are usually responding to an invitation to services during the high holy days. Those from off base are simply continuing a friendship with Rabbi Perley.

Folder 8: Acknowledgement from Parents: Mostly letters from family thanking Rabbi Perley for writing them about their son/husband/brother attending services during the high holy days. One card is a Zionist themed card with a prayer for the creation of the Jewish state.

Folder 9: Untitled Correspondence: Letters from 1945 including a sarcastic song about not being sent home.

Folder 10: Correspondence, General: Request for speaking engagements and a letter asking Rabbi Perley to be on the board to honor Chaim Weizmann.

Folder 11: Immigration Correspondence: Correspondence to get Mrs. Perley a proper identification card to return to the U.S. after a visit to Canada. She was born in Great Britain and is yet a U.S. citizen.

Folder 12: Correspondence Chief of Chaplains, Washington: Correspondence about Perley's entry into service, a biographical sketch for the government records, and newsletters from the Chief of Chaplains.

Folder 13: All Church Council Correspondence: Mostly correspondence with other rabbis and newsletters. Newsletter and pamphlet from Iwo Jima about the end of the war.

Folder 14: CCAR Correspondence and Material: Central Conference of American Rabbis. Correspondence and newsletters from the Conference. A letter in response to a Houston Texas congregation who petitioned against the Conference because of Zionism. Petition from Texas.

Folder 15: Official Correspondence: Mostly official letters from Head Chaplain's office. Letter asking for personal experiences for training of chaplains quite interesting.

Folder 16: Personal: Draft of a letter from Mrs. Perley complaining about a woman in Hot Springs that worked at the Leo. N. Levi Hospital. Other letters deal with financial matters such as stocks and rental property.

Folder 17: JWB – Monthly Reports: These are the reports filled out by Rabbi Perley and sent to the Jewish Welfare Board.

Folder 18: JWB – Revolving Fund: Expense forms from Perley to JWB.

Folder 19: JWB Rabbi Philip Bernstein: Letter 13 October 1944 has a story about a Prisoner exchange. Letter 25 August 1944 describes Rabbis in the service of U S Armed Forces. Letters deal mostly with the JWB.

Folder 20: Service Programs, Publicity material, Holiday, Form Letters: Greetings from General McArthur during the High Holy Days.

Folder 21: Form Letters: Letters to soldiers and their families.

Folder 22: Capt. Martin Perley Extra Orders: Orders to report to various posts. Orders for other assignments

Folder 23: Passover 1944 – Material, etc.: Chapel Bulletins, correspondence and other materials relating to the arrangements for the Base Passover celebration.

Folder 24: Sabbath Service Program: Chapel Bulletins and service programs from Fort Custer, Michigan.

Folder 25: Notes on Jewish Problems course: Booklets on anti-Semitism and Zionism.

Folder 26: Anti-Semitism – Refutation: Booklets, pamphlets and newspaper articles.

Folder 27: High Holy Day Arrangements: Memos and newsletters dealing with the High Holy Days at Fort Custer, 1943.

Folder 28: Untitled: Programs and memos for Jewish holidays including Chanukah.

Folder 29: Chaplaincy: Correspondence dealing with Perley's recruitment into the Chaplain position. Difficulties in getting Rabbis to volunteer are in early letters. Difficulties that arose

because of Perley's position as a secretary of the Leo N Levy Memorial Hospital are covered in the later letters.

Folder 30: Chaplain Material: Newsletters from Jewish organizations.

Folder 31: Rabbinical Pension: Letters and forms for the Pension payment while in the military.

Folder 32: Palestine: Papers dealing with Perley's legal status. His parents came from Russia and became

U S citizens. He was born in Philadelphia in 1910. His parents then moved to Canada and became Canadian citizens in 1920. In 1930 Martin came to the U S to school and claimed U S citizenship proved by his birth certificate. When he received a job in Australia he was denied a U S passport because his parents claimed him in their citizenship of Canada. Perley was forced to travel on British passport. He returned to the U S via Canada with his Australian wife. They applied for citizenship, but Martin was advised he was a u S citizen all along due to birth. He can not lose that citizenship as a minor.

Folder 33: Bills, etc.: Bills, canceled checks, bank statements and receipts from the 1940s.

Folder 34: Orientation? Talks: Correspondence with Jewish organizations complaining about Jewish Chaplains not being sent home as quickly as other Chaplains and asking the organizations to put some pressure on the Army to change that fact. Manuals and newsletters about dealing with enlisted men and information.

Folder 35: Fort Custer Clearances: Official documents and orders.

Folder 36: Articles: Written by Pearly for newsletters.

Folder 37: Post? And Orders: Official documents and orders for Perley. Three of the booklets that he would hand out to soldiers: The story of the Jews in the United States, The Faith and Message of the Prophets, and What is the Talmud?

Folder 38: Memorandum, Receipts, Supplies, etc.: Supplies for services.

Folder 39: Chicago Round table: Correspondence and program for an event to be held in Chicago, but Perley had to cancel because he received orders for overseas duty.

Folder 40: Property Receipts – Personal: Receipts and requests for supplies while overseas.

Folder 41: Property Accountability: Requests for religious supplies at Fort Custer.

Folder 42: Personal Clippings: Newspaper and newsletter clippings.

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Subject Headings

Immigrants – United States

Jewish nationalism – United States

Jewish soldiers – United States

National Jewish Welfare Board

Rabbis – United States

Weizmann, Chaim, 1874-1952

World War, 1939-1945 – Campaigns – Pacific Ocean

World War, 1939-1945 – Chaplains

World War, 1939-1945 – Pamphlets

World War, 1939-1945 – Participation, Jewish

World War 1939-1945 – Prisoners and prisons

Zionism – United States