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A Glimpse at the Treasures of the Jewish General Hospital Archives
The Jewish General Hospital (JGH) Archives is an integral part of the services provided by the Health Sciences Library of the JGH. It is designed to preserve the institutional memory of the Hospital dating from its forerunners in the 1910s to the present.

Since the official inception of the library in 1941, it has become the repository of archival donations from various departments of the hospital and its affiliates, interested members of the public, and transfers from other archival institutions, in particular the Jewish Public Library Archives. The clientele encompasses a varied spectrum: hospital staff members and affiliates, external researchers, students, archivists, and museum curators, to name a few. Prior to the 1980s, the staff of the library provided reference services for the archives’ users. Sybil (Lapin) Cadloff, a former librarian, took over the Archives in 1986 as a part-time Archives Consultant on a volunteer basis until 2003. Momentum gained during the preparation of the Hospital’s 75th anniversary in 2008, during which a full-time digital archival consultant and a full-time archives assistant were hired, finding aids for selected fonds were created, and a database was purchased, making possible electronic management and easier access to the holdings. A database-driven website (jgh.ca/archives) was launched the following year, which allows for keyword search among nearly 4000 descriptive records, ranging from item to fonds.

Despite being a small repository managed by one archivist, the JGH Archives houses materials that are highly focused either on the hospital or its personnel in a variety of formats. There are approximately 35 feet of textual materials, including administrative and legal documents, correspondence, hospital publications, course materials, news clippings; approximately 8 feet of photographs; and negatives, slides, artifacts, audio-visual materials, and an increasing amount of born-digital records.

One of the key collections of the JGH Archives is the Pledges and Brick Cards acquired from The Foundation of the JGH in 2008. This collection encompasses over 3000 original pledges subscribed by the individuals, families, and businesses of the Montreal Jewish population in 1929 toward founding the Jewish General Hospital. Each pledge card shows the date of subscription, the pledged amount, and the subscriber’s name and address. The brick card was a program devised for children. Certificates were printed in the shape of bricks, and children who donated to the campaign received one ‘brick’ for each dollar they collected. Relatives could also purchase these ‘bricks’ on
behalf of children, thereby identifying even the youngest members of society with this endeavour. Information on each card includes the child’s name, address, and the number of bricks purchased. Since the goal of the capital campaign was to canvass the entire Jewish population of Montreal, this collection can be used as a resource for genealogists and scholars to verify Jewish Montreal dwellers and businesses of the time. The entire collection has been digitized, indexed, and is searchable online from the JGH Archives website (http://jgh.ca/en/archivesbricks), as well as through the portal of Jewish-Gen (http://www.jewishgen.org/databases/Canada/MontrealHospital.htm).

Another highlight is the Samuel Cohen collection for which descriptions are available online, down to the series level (http://www.jgh.ca/en/archivesfindingaids> Samuel Cohen Fonds). Samuel Cohen was the founding Executive Director (1933–1968) of the JGH who was instrumental in helping the Hospital transform from a small, local health institution into one of the largest tertiary university teaching hospitals in Quebec. Among the 3 boxes of materials, primarily textual and administrative, the Wartime Planning Series (PF4.14) distinguishes itself from the rest by its 5 cm of World War Two-related records that cover subjects such as Victory Bonds, wartime regulations and rationing, civil defense, and hospital evacuation, which are not the types of documents one would expect to find in a hospital archives. The correspondence contained in file “Refugees 1930s & 1940s” (PF4.14.1) gives research-
ers an insight into the Hospital’s efforts in assisting fellow Jews to establish a new life in Montreal through creating more opportunities for work. Digitized items can be seen on the online exhibition entitled *A Glimpse Through the Samuel Cohen Fonds* at http://jgh.ca/en/archivessamuelcohen.

In addition, there are two important collections that could be useful for investigation into women's roles in the provision of health care as nurses and volunteers in Quebec – The Women’s Auxiliary Fonds., and the School of Nursing Sous-fonds (SofN, succeeded by Department of Nursing after 1972). The Women’s Auxiliary was founded in 1936 to provide the staff and patients of the Hospital with moral support and material aid. The School of Nursing opened its doors in 1951. Prior to that, the JGH was the only large hospital in Montreal without a school of nursing. Once the School opened the JGH operated the only nursing school in Canada that recruited applicants of all backgrounds, under Jewish auspices. The School ceased operation in 1972 as a result of a new educational system requiring nursing education to be integrated into CEGEPs, which continues today. Together, these two collections comprise nearly 4.6 linear feet consisting of a wide variety of materials ranging from photographs, correspondence, newsletters, scrapbooks, yearbooks (SofN), textbooks (SofN), VHS tapes (SofN), and ephemera that create a colourful account of the activities and the people who contributed to the Hospital’s growth and development over the years. Fonds, sous-fonds and series-level descriptions for both collections are available from the webpage http://www.jgh.ca/en/archivesfindingaids.
Garden party at the home of Allan and Lucy Bronfman to celebrate the launch of the new JGH Women’s Auxiliary, Montreal, June 9, 1936. Inset is an image of Mrs. Alton Goldbloom, Founding President of the Women’s Auxiliary. 2.9-1.1.8. Photographer: Associated Screen News Limited.

In addition to the JGH-related materials, holdings pertinent to other health care organizations in Montreal can also be found in Archives, in particular historical accounts of the Montreal Clinical Society (MCS) by Dr. Etziony, Archivist of the Society, and by Dr. Nathan Segall, a prominent member and former president of the Society. These documents provide detailed information about the history of the Society and are viewable onsite at the Archives.

This article mentions but a few samples from the highly specialized collection of the JGH Archives. In conjunction with the related holdings at the Alex Dworkin Canadian Jewish Archives, the Jewish Public Library Archives, and the online exhibition of the Museum of Jewish Montreal, the JGH Archives is a valuable resource for scholars who hope to gain insight into the evolution of the JGH and its contributions to the provision of health care in Quebec. For any assistance, researchers can contact the archivist by email at legacy@jgh.mcgill.ca or by phone at (514) 340-8222 x 23277. Access restrictions may be assigned to some files containing patient information.