Finding Aid to the
Harry Lashkowitz Papers

Lashkowitz, Harry, 1889-1963
Harry Lashkowitz papers, 1910-1963
5.6 linear ft.
Collection number:  Mss 223
         Mss 1522
         Oversize 14

OVERVIEW

Links:  Finding aid to the Herschel Lashkowitz Photograph Collection
          Finding aid to the Harry Lashkowitz Photograph Collection
          Finding aid to an earlier accession (Mss 161) of Harry Lashkowitz Papers

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BIOGRAPHY

Harry Lashkowitz was born in the city of Kamentz-Podolsk in the southern Ukraine on May 1, 1889, the son of Isadore and Bessie (Tullman) Lashkowitz. The family immigrated to the United States in 1896.
Harry's father settled in New York City on the east side and established a modest butcher shop. In 1905 Isadore moved his family to Fargo, N.D. and continued as a butcher. Harry attended P.S. 20 in New York City as a youngster and he returned to New York from Fargo to attend secondary school at the City College of New York. In 1905 he advanced from the Academy to the Collegiate Department and received a B.A. of Law from New York University Brooklyn School of Law in 1912. While attending college Harry worked at the university settlement house, which he later claimed had a great affect on his life. Harry returned to Fargo in 1912 and worked under Judge A.T. Cole until he passed the North Dakota Bar Examination and began a private practice. He taught commercial law at the North Dakota Agricultural College from 1916 to 1917. As Harry's law practice grew he hired an associate, Leland J. Smith, in 1925 and they practiced together as Lashkowitz and Smith until 1939. In his law practice, Harry represented many people in the community in a variety of legal matters.

An early Progressive Republican and Nonpartisan League supporter and later a Roosevelt Democrat he was very involved in local and national politics. He ran for States Attorney in Cass County in 1918 (primary), 1926, and 1932 failing to win in all three races. He failed to win in 1930 the race for North Dakota Attorney General. He was appointed First Assistant United States Attorney under P. W. Lanier for District 1, State of North Dakota by President Franklin Roosevelt on September 1, 1933, a position he held until he resigned on October 1, 1953. Harry's final attempt at elected office took place in 1962 when he ran unsuccessfully for the judgeship of the First Judicial District. The highlight of Harry's political involvement was the seconding speech he made for Roosevelt at the 1936 Democratic convention which Damon Runyan acclaimed as one of the four best seconding speeches at the convention.

Harry was also deeply involved in local, national, and international Jewish matters. Locally, he was a member of the Fargo Hebrew Congregation and later the Temple Beth El. He was a member of Fargo's John Hay Lodge #634, and served as vice-president of the District Grand Lodge no. 6 of B'nai B'rith. In the Grand Lodge he served on the executive committee and in 1931 was elected president. Harry corresponded with many national leaders of B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League of the B'nai B'rith while serving on various committees. Some of the committees he served on were the Committee of Jewish Settlement in America, Allied Jewish Campaign (Chairman), Widerscope Committee, Jewish Relief Society (Secretary), and on the advisory committee for the Jewish Book Club. He was also involved with the Denver Jewish Hospital, Cleveland Orphans Home, Zionist Drives, and the Jewish Agricultural Society in legal and administrative matters. During the Jewish Tercentenary in the United States he served as chairman of the Fargo Committee. Harry authored articles about Jewish settlement in North Dakota and contributed an article about Jews in North Dakota to the Jewish Encyclopedia. Harry also was a founder of the North Dakota Public Relations Committee, co-chairman of the Conference of Christians and Jews, a member of the American Civil Liberties Union, and a member of the National Council on Civil Rights.

Harry was involved in local organizations. As a member of the Elks Lodge #260 he served as Exalted Ruler in 1930, Special Deputy Grand Exalted Ruler under Sam Stern from 1952 to 1953, and chairman of the North Dakota Elks Association American Committee. He was also a 32nd Degree Mason and a Shriner. In 1934 Harry was president of the Fargo Central High School PTA.
Harry married Etta Levitz on June 17, 1917. Etta was born at Devils Lake, N.D. on August 3, 1893, the daughter of Mandel and Bessie Levitz, two early settlers in Ramsey County. Fire destroyed the Levitz farmstead and Etta moved with her parents to St. Paul and Sauk Center, Minn. before moving to Fargo in 1894. Harry and Etta had four children, Herschel I. (Apr. 2, 1918), Jane Deborah (Jan. 22, 1920), Loraine Rhea (1926), and Shelly James (1928). Harry died on June 28, 1963, Etta on August 22, 1971 and Jane on September 19, 1973. All are buried at Beth El Memorial Park in Fargo.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The materials in this collection cover Harry Lashkowitz's career as a politician and an active leader in Jewish organizations. More of Lashkowitz's papers are in an earlier donation to the Institute (Manuscript 161). The majority of this collection document Harry's participation in local and national politics as well as his participation in B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League. An earlier donation processed as Mss 161 (consult its finding aid). The collection is divided into six series: Biographical, Family, Political, Organizations, Correspondence and Legal.

The Biography Series contains numerous biographical sketches of Harry that appeared in various publications such as *Who's Who in American Jewry*. A unique aspect is several pages of personal thoughts that Harry wrote about his family and in-laws. The pages are handwritten and very revealing in regards to Harry's personality. There are also newspaper clippings that document Harry's career (public and private) and material from his high school and college years.

The Family Series contains primarily Etta's high school papers. The series contains her history, science and music notebooks as well as various assignments. There are also letters from the children, Herschel's baby score card, and Jane's scrapbook (Mss 1522). The series also contains two trip books--one from Harry and Etta's trip to Israel and Etta's trip to Europe, which she took after Harry's death.

The Political Series covers Harry's campaigns and lifelong involvement in politics. The most notable aspect of the series and possibly the whole collection are two letters from Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt. One is a generic form letter signed by Roosevelt, but the second is a personal letter of thanks to Harry. Harry's campaigns for State's Attorney are not well document in this collection, but there is a post card Harry received from his opponent's support that reminded Harry of how badly he was defeated. Harry's campaign for the District Judge is fairly comprehensive. The interesting aspect of the campaign is the lawsuit filed by Hamilton Englert to protest the last minute filing of Harry. The state and national political scene during the 1930s are well documented by the correspondence and pamphlets Harry kept regarding the various activities and meetings of the Democrats.

The Organizations Series covers Harry's involvement with B'nai B'rith and the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). The material covering B'nai B'rith is mostly correspondence, but there are several reports written by the various committees that Harry served on. The ADL material is correspondence that reflects the country's attempt to keep Nazi sympathizers out of the public eye and maintain a united front. Much of the correspondence deals directly with the ADL effort to combat anti-Semitism in North Dakota, South
Dakota and Minnesota. The correspondence shows how long the process could last as everything went through the chain of command and in some cases that there were repeat offenders.

The **Correspondence Series** covers the years 1910 to 1963 with the majority of the correspondence covering the years 1936-1947. The letters contained in this series are requests for letters of recommendation, replies to friends, and informative letters. One letter that stands out is Harry's letter to a company that overcharged Etta for a vacuum cleaner. Harry wrote to the company telling them of the overcharge according to the price controls established and sent them a copy of the law as well.

The **Legal Series** contains material on Harry's private practice and his years as First Assistant United States District Attorney. The material in this series consists of transcripts of testimony and legal briefs. The series has been arranged so that Harry's private practice is first then there is a transition to his work as the First Assistant United States District Attorney and finally there is a section containing the numerous briefs that Harry wrote in private practice and for the United States government. The cases were not divided this way when the collection was received. They have been put in somewhat alphabetical order according to private or public practice. The most notable local cases are those involving the Equity Cooperative Packing Company, which was a local beef processing company. The most notable legal cases stem for former North Dakota Governor and United States Senator William Langer. The series contains the lawsuits filed by and against Langer as well as a copy of the transcripts regarding the contention of his election to the United States Senate. The most interesting aspect of this series is the lists of criminal violations against property and people as they contain charges that many people would not consider filing today.

The **Oversize Certificates and Posters Series** (Oversize Collection 14) contains nine items including two certificates of marriage for Harry and Etta in 1917, one of which is in Hebrew and English; Scottish Rite membership; appointment at attorney by the North Dakota Supreme Court (1912); appointment as Assistant United States Attorney for North Dakota (1947); Red Mogen David poster; election poster for Harry Lashkowitz for States Attorney and a North Dakota ‘Nonpartisan Ballot’ for states attorney.

**BOX AND FOLDER LIST**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box/Folder</th>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>Finding aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>Biographical material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>High school and college years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4</td>
<td>Business cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/5</td>
<td>Personal reminiscences and writings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/6</td>
<td>Newspaper clippings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Organization letterhead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/8</td>
<td>Certificates</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1/9  Letters from doctors regarding the health of Harry Lashkowitz for insurance purposes
1/10  Patent
1/11  Option agreement to buy
1/12  Get well wishers
1/13  Funeral book
1/14  Letters of remembrance

**Family Series**

1/15  Etta Levitz
1/16  Etta's diary, 1913-1914
1/17  Etta's music homework notebook, 1910-1914
1/18  Etta's science notebook
2/1   Etta's ancient history notebook
2/2   Various homework assignments of Etta
2/3   Herschel's baby scorecard
2/4   Jane's name change document
2/5   Correspondence with children
2/6   Harry and Etta's trip to Europe and Israel
2/7   Etta's trip to Europe
Mss 1522 Jane's scrapbook

**Political Series**

2/8   Signs for Harry's political speaking engagements
2/9   Resolutions passed by the Non-Partisan League-16 March 1922
2/10  Resolutions of the State Democratic Committee
2/11  State and County Democratic Committee correspondence, 1934-1936
2/12  Address delivered by Harry Lashkowitz on behalf of H. H. Holt and J.J. Nygaard
2/13  Democratic State Committee, 1933-1936
2/14  Letters from Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt
2/15  1933 Inauguration
3/1   Harry Lashkowitz's seconding speech of Franklin
       Roosevelt's nomination at the 1936 National Convention
3/2   Democratic National Convention material, 1932, 1934, 1938, 1941
3/3   Letters from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover
3/4   Political cards of Harry Lashkowitz for States' Attorney and Attorney General
3/5   Postcard received by Harry Lashkowitz after defeat in 1926 States' Attorney race
3/6   Messages sent and received during 1926 States' Attorney race
3/7   Candidate's certificate for 1930 Attorney General race
3/8   Political speeches
3/9   Resolutions and speeches on reforming the federal judiciary given by Harry Lashkowitz
3/10  Political cards and flyers for Harry Lashkowitz's 1962 campaign for the First District
       judgeship
3/11  Newspaper clippings on Harry's judgeship campaign
| 3/12   | Letters asking for support in judgeship campaign |
| 3/13   | Letters in support of Harry's nomination |
| 3/14   | Letters addressing political ad of Hamilton Englert's use of the Barnes County Bar Association's name |
| 3/15   | Statements and press releases issued by Harry Lashkowitz |
| 3/16   | Results of the State Bar plebiscite |
| 3/17   | Lawsuit filed by Hamilton Englert over the late filing of candidacy by Harry Lashkowitz |
| 3/18   | Letters of regret regarding Harry's defeat |
| 3/19   | Expense statements |

**Organizations Series**

| 3/20   | National Brotherhood Week, 1939-1942 |
| 3/21   | Speeches given by Harry Lashkowitz during National Brotherhood Week |
| 3/22   | Certificates documenting Harry's participation in B'nai B'rith |
| 3/23   | District Grand Lodge No. 6 letterhead-Harry Lashkowitz, President |
| 3/24   | B'nai B'rith correspondence, 1922, 1924-1925, 1929 |
| 3/25   | B'nai B'rith correspondence, 1930 |
| 3/26   | B'nai B'rith correspondence, 1931 |
| 4/1    | B'nai B'rith correspondence, 1942 |
| 4/3    | Undated B'nai B'rith correspondence |
| 4/4    | Statements issued at various B'nai B'rith conventions |
| 4/5    | Meeting minutes, meeting agendas and reports of District Grand Lodge No. 6 |
| 4/6    | *Report for Executive Committee Members, 1930* |
| 4/7    | *State of the Order* written by Harry Lashkowitz |
| 4/8    | Miscellaneous B'nai B'rith pamphlets and programs regarding engagements for District Grand Lodge No. 6 and John Hay Lodge No. 634 |
| 4/9    | Miscellaneous material on John Hay Lodge No. 634 |
| 4/10   | Speeches given to and about B'nai B'rith by Harry Lashkowitz |
| 4/11   | Miscellaneous B'nai B'rith flyers and lists |
| 4/12   | Anti-Defamation League (ADL) pamphlets and newsletters |
| 4/13   | ADL correspondence, 1935-1936 |
| 4/14   | ADL correspondence, 1937 |
| 4/15   | ADL correspondence, 1938 |
| 5/1    | ADL correspondence, 1939 |
| 5/2    | ADL correspondence, 1940 |
| 5/3    | ADL correspondence, 1941 |
| 5/4    | ADL correspondence, 1942 |
| 5/5    | ADL correspondence, 1943 |
| 5/6    | ADL correspondence, 1944 |
| 5/8    | ADL reports and bulletins |
| 5/9    | ADL conference notes, 1940 and 1942 |
5/10 Speeches given to and about the ADL by Harry Lashkowitz
5/11 Various Jewish organizations
6/1 Speeches given by Harry Lashkowitz to various organizations
6/2 Elks material
6/3 Masonic Lodge material
6/4 Bartley Crum Banquet
6/5 Boy Scout bulletins and meeting minutes
6/6 Boy Scout correspondence
6/7 Notes on Boy Scout activities

**Correspondence Series**

6/8 Foreign language correspondence
6/9 Postcard correspondence
6/10 Personal correspondence, 1908-1909
6/11 Personal correspondence, 1910-1919
6/12 Personal correspondence, 1920-1925, 1927
6/13 Personal correspondence, 1930-1939
7/1 Personal correspondence, 1940
7/2 Personal correspondence, 1941-1944
7/3 Personal correspondence, 1945-1955, 1961-1963
7/4 Undated correspondence
7/5 Business correspondence

**Legal Series**

7/6 Miscellaneous complaints
7/7 Criminal complaints-miscellaneous
7/8 Criminal information-crimes against property
7/9 Criminal information-crimes against persons
7/10 Criminal information-liquor violations
8/1 A. H. Barnes vs. Lavalle Alverson
8/3 The Equity Co-operative Packing Company vs. P.J. Burfening and J.P. Conmy
8/4 The Equity Co-operative Packing Company vs. A. Zimmerman
8/5 A. Goldman vs. Fargo Iron and Metal Co.
8/6 Grain Growers Grain Company vs. State of Michigan and Union Transfer Company
8/7 J. A. Groff vs. George R. Cook
8/8 Gertie Hagen vs. Ethel T. Croft
8/9 Harwood State Bank vs. Hendrum Cooperative Elevator Company
9/1 A. C. Johnson vs. Axel Wagner
9/2 Peter MacArthur vs. North Dakota Workmen's Compensation Bureau, et. al.
9/3 Norman County State Bank vs. Estate of Mads Larson, deceased
9/4 State of North Dakota vs. Jack Ripley and Ray Murphy, alias Ray McDermot
9/5 State of North Dakota vs. Jack Ripley and Ray Murphy, second trial
9/6 State of North Dakota vs. E.W. Rider
9/7 State of North Dakota vs. William Neima
9/8 State of North Dakota vs. John Fremont
9/9 State of North Dakota vs. Olive Malen
9/10 State of North Dakota vs. B.W. Hill
9/11 State of North Dakota vs. Charles Haley, Edward J. Boschart and Denis Maloney
10/1 State of North Dakota vs. Walter Lund
10/2 State of North Dakota vs. Ralph Reber
10/3 A.R. Pinkstaff vs. K.H. Mallarian; Lillian Pinkstaff vs. K.H. Mallarian and Mrs. Alfred Burnette
10/4 Joseph E. Rosetti vs. Common School District No. 96, Cass County, North Dakota
10/5 Scandinavian National Bank vs. N.W. Hall and Mrs. N.W. Hall
10/6 Harry Strom, et. al. vs. Olaf Giske, et al.
10/7 Transcript of testimony taken on State's Attorney subpoenas, 25 and 26 August 1930
10/8 Miscellaneous transcripts and briefs
10/9 State of North Dakota vs. H.G. Betrand
10/10 Adelheid Silbernagle vs. John Silbernagle, et al.
10/11 United State's Attorney file
10/12 Miscellaneous briefs received by U.S. Attorney's office in Fargo
10/13 Native American file
11/1 William Langer and Gerald Nye file
11/2 Harwood State Bank vs. Hendrum Cooperative Elevator Company
11/3 W. Hodgman and Sons, Inc., and Florian Nemmers vs. Mark J. Motis
11/4 Emil Keerbs vs. The Marckel Company
11/5 William Langer vs. The Courier News, William Lemke, George F. MacPherson and Herbert E. Goston
11/6 Lena Myli vs. American Life Insurance Company of Des Moines, Iowa
11/7 John G. Wentzell vs. Emanuel Jackson
11/8 Joseph Coghlan vs. United States of America
11/9 Consolidated Freightways, Inc., vs. United States of America
11/10 Forrest Holiday vs. United States of America
11/11 Henry Buckwald vs. United States of America
11/12 George Nolan vs. United States of America
11/13 Frank Robinson vs. United States of America
11/14 Fred Wayne vs. United States of America

Oversize Certificates & Posters Series

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