

Cemetery Book - Record Salem Cemetery
Congregation Beth Israel, San Francisco, CA

Congregation Beth Israel

Congregation Beth Israel was founded as an Orthodox synagogue in San Francisco in 1860, and subsequently became "the first conservative congregation west of Chicago." From 1860 to 1874 the congregation worshiped in a leased building on Sutter Street between Dupont and Stockton Streets. The congregation built its first synagogue on Turk Street between Jones and Taylor Streets, and dedicated it in 1879. The congregation outgrew the Turk Street building and, in 1891, built a new synagogue at 1411 Geary Street, near Octavia.

In 1905, the congregation started construction of an even larger synagogue building at 1839 Geary Street between Fillmore and Steiner Streets. It was nearing completion when it was destroyed by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. At the time, the congregation had 200 member families, and an annual income of \$15,800. Services were held on Shabbat and the Jewish holidays. The congregational school had 250 students and five teachers. The members re-built at the 1839 Geary Street location, and dedicated the building in 1908.

Over time, Beth Israel gravitated toward Conservative Judaism.

Temple Judea and merger with Congregation Beth Israel

Temple Judea was formed in 1953 as a Reform congregation, and built a new building at 625 Brotherhood Way in San Francisco, completed in 1964.

Beth Israel merged with Temple Judea in 1969, and the combined congregation is known as Temple Beth Israel Judea and is located at the Brotherhood Way site.

These summaries of information about the history of the two (now combined) congregations are taken from Wikipedia, accessed 9 Aug 2019 at this URL:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congregation_Beth_Israel-Judea#Congregation_Beth_Israel

Cemetery Record Book for Congregation Beth Israel

During housecleaning in 2018, a single cemetery ledger book was found in the files of Temple Beth Israel Judea. The book, of about 200 pages, contains records of the burials of 4910 members of Congregation Beth Israel between 15 September 1891 and 2 December 1929. Almost all of the burials took place at Salem Memorial Park, 1171 El Camino Real, Colma, CA 94014. Salem Memorial Park is owned by Sinai Memorial Chapel, and Sinai Memorial Chapel has other records of these burials, and many other

burials at Salem. Sinai Memorial Chapel is located at 1501 Divisadero St., San Francisco, CA 94115, telephone 415 921-3636.

The data is recorded chronologically within each letter of the alphabet, and includes the following items:

- Burial number
- Date of burial (sometimes date of death is recorded)
- Last name
- First (and middle) names
- Age in years, (and sometimes in months and days)
- Burial location at Salem Memorial Park, including Block, Section, and Lot
- Reference to a (lost) burial ledger
- Remarks

NOTE: Age data is primarily in year, month, day sequence. We have not changed the data from the way it was originally entered, despite the appearance of months in excess of 12 in some entries. This fact makes it appear that some original entries are in year, day, month sequence. We cannot confirm the correct dates for the original entries.

The book was given to the San Francisco Bay Area Jewish Genealogical Society (SFBAJGS) as Beth Israel Judea deemed it was no longer appropriate to keep the original book in its records.

The pages of the book were digitally photographed by SFBAJGS and the entries in the book were transcribed by the SFBAJGS and entered in an Excel spreadsheet. Copies of the photographs and Excel spreadsheet were given to Beth Israel Judea, and another set of copies accompanies the original book. A copy of the photographs and spreadsheet is maintained in the SFBAJGS inventory of local records, and the data has been uploaded to the USA Database on JewishGen, the primary website for Jewish genealogical research online. The URL of the USA Database is <https://www.jewishgen.org/databases/USA/>

To preserve this artifact of San Francisco's Jewish history, SFBAJGS is donating the book and the accompanying digital photographs and electronic spreadsheet to the History Center at the San Francisco Public Library.

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