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Guide to the Peter Ascoli Papers 1896-2006



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.ASCOLIP
Title	Ascoli, Peter. Papers
Date	1896-2006
Size	6.75 linear feet (9 boxes)
Repository	Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract The Peter Ascoli Papers make available the materials that Ascoli collected during the preparation of his 2006 book about his grandfather, Julius Rosenwald. An early chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Rosenwald was pioneering figure in not just business but also philanthropy. He founded the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago and established a foundation that build over 5,000 schools for Black children across the American South. The Ascoli Papers gather together both photocopies of material that is held in other archives that have Rosenwald collections but also documents that were previously held privately by members of the Rosenwald family. The Ascoli collection contains correspondence, early 20th century newspaper clippings, oral history interviews, financial ledgers, and scholarly articles. The collection complements the Julius Rosenwald Papers that are also available in Special Collections at the University of Chicago Library.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Ascoli, Peter. Papers, [Box #, Folder #], Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Biographical Note

Peter M. Ascoli (b. 1942) is the grandson of Chicago merchant and philanthropist Julius Rosenwald (1862-1932), and the son of Marion Rosenwald Ascoli (1902-1990). Peter Ascoli earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago in 1964 and later a Ph.D. in European history from the University of California at Berkeley. From 1971 to 1978, he was an assistant professor at Utah State University, after which he returned to Chicago and worked in

fundraising for cultural and non-profit organizations in the city. He began the biography of his grandfather in the early 1990s and published it in 2006 under the title, *Julius Rosenwald: The Man Who Built Sears, Roebuck and Advanced the Cause of Black Education in the American South*.

Julius Rosenwald was a towering figure of American industry and philanthropy in the early twentieth century. Born in Springfield, Illinois in 1862 to German Jewish parents, Rosenwald operated clothing retail and wholesale businesses in New York and Chicago before he made, in 1895, through his brother-in-law, a \$75,000 investment in the young mail-order retailer, Sears, Roebuck and Company. Within two years, Rosenwald stepped away from his wholesale clothing business to work full-time as an executive at Sears. He greatly improved efficiency and reliability in the mail-order operation at Sears, and after he became chairman in 1910, he oversaw the expansion of Sears into the nation's largest retailer. Although Rosenwald began to introduce some retail stores, the full transition of Sears from a mail-order to retail-store company would be carried out by his successor as chairman, Robert E. Wood.

Alongside his career in business, Rosenwald left a considerable legacy as a philanthropist. He contributed to a wide range of charitable causes in Chicago and across the nation, including public housing, crop improvement, Jewish organizing, and the Y.M.C.A. In the mid-1920s, he made the founding gift to establish the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, which he had originally hoped would be modeled on the style of the Deutsches Museum in Munich. Rosenwald also served as an early trustee of the University of Chicago, to which he made several important gifts, and where Rosenwald Hall was named in his honor.

As a philanthropist, he remains perhaps most well-known for his contributions to Black education in the South at a time when enrollment of Black children in grade schools was often less than half the rate among white children. Inspired by an essay by Booker T. Washington and a later meeting with him, Rosenwald set up a foundation (the Julius Rosenwald Fund) to create schools for Blacks in communities from Texas to Maryland. By 1932, over 5,000 Rosenwald schools had been built. Rosenwald also supported Black colleges and universities through collaboration on initiatives with the General Education Board, and through direct contributions to several institutions, including Tuskegee Institute, Fisk University and Howard University.

Julius Rosenwald and Augusta ('Gussie') Nusbaum were married in 1890 and had five children: Lessing (b. 1891), Adele (b. 1892), Edith (b. 1895), Marion (b. 1902) and William (b. 1903). Gussie died in 1928, and Julius remarried in 1929, to Adelaide Goodkind, the widowed mother of his daughter-in-law, Edith Goodkind Rosenwald, who was married to Lessing. Gussie and Julius' youngest daughter, Marion, was briefly married to Alfred K. Stern before wedding Max Ascoli in 1940.

Other family members that appear in the collection are: Janet Becker (b. 1930), the youngest child of Lessing and Edith Rosenwald, and Phillip M. Stern (b. 1926), the youngest child of Edith Rosenwald (second daughter of Gussie and Julius) and Edgar B. Stern. Longue Vue House and Gardens was the home that Edith and Edgar Stern built in New Orleans. It is now a public venue and museum with archival holdings.

Scope Note

The Peter Ascoli Papers represent the materials that Ascoli gathered during the preparation of his book about his grandfather, Julius Rosenwald. A large share of the collection consists of photocopies of material that is held in other institutions that have Rosenwald archives, but an equally substantial share represents documents that were in the possession of different Rosenwald family members and are not available elsewhere. These documents are contained in Series III and IV. Lastly, the Ascoli Papers complement the Julius Rosenwald Papers, which were similarly donated to the University of Chicago Library after Morris Werner completed his book on Rosenwald in the mid-twentieth century.

The Ascoli Papers are arranged into seven series that span 1896 to 2006:

Series I: Primary Sources Concerning Julius Rosenwald, is organized into two subseries.

Subseries 1: Photocopies of Known Archival Provenance, gathers together the documents that Ascoli collected during his visits to archives that have Rosenwald collections. The documents range from Rosenwald's correspondence with his immediate family to philanthropic activities. Of note is a letter by Booker T. Washington that was seminal to the development of what would become the Rosenwald schools. Materials in this subseries are arranged alphabetically, and the name of the archive where the originals are held is given in brackets for each item.

Subseries 2: Photocopies of Unknown Archival Provenance, groups together diverse documents for which the location of the original holding could not be determined. The materials again include correspondence with Rosenwald's immediate family but cover a wider range of his philanthropic activity. Contemporary interviews with and tributes to Rosenwald will also be found here, along with documents from his leadership of Sears. Of note is the ledger of the philanthropic gifts that Rosenwald made from 1899 to 1931. Materials in this subseries are arranged alphabetically.

Series II: Secondary Sources on Julius Rosenwald and His Context, contains assessments of Rosenwald as a leader in business and philanthropy and his connection to the American Jewish community of the early 20th century. The assessments were written both during and after his lifetime, and represent academic articles, magazine articles and book excerpts. Materials in this series are arranged alphabetically.

Series III: Estate and Trust Records, holds material relating to executing the estate of Julius Rosenwald. There is a large report on the entire estate as well as a report from the Rosenwald Family Association. Created only a few days before his death, the Rosenwald Family Association received a share of the estate's assets in order to fulfill the remaining pledges that Rosenwald had made to charitable organizations. Material in this series is arranged alphabetically.

Series IV: Family Interviews and Private Writings about Julius Rosenwald, gathers together materials that had been in the possession of different family members and were not previously in an archive. Another grandson, Phillip M. Stern, originally assembled much of the material in doing oral history interviews with Rosenwald's children (Stern's aunts and uncles). He also interviewed persons who had worked closely with Rosenwald (e.g., Nathan Levin, an accountant) and persons who had attended a Rosenwald school. A privately-written autobiography by William Rosenwald will be found in this series, along with a book describing the plan of the Deutsches Museum in Munich, the institution that inspired the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. Material in this series is arranged chronologically.

Series V: Materials from and Site Visits to Rosenwald Schools in the South, contains the diverse material that Ascoli collected as part of making visits to Rosenwald schools. Community members sent him brochures and newsletters ahead of visits and Ascoli gathered other documents from local institutions. Ascoli also collected newsletters and magazine articles from places for which it is not known whether he visited or had a plan to do so. Material in this series is arranged alphabetically.

Series VI: Correspondence and Additional Materials of Peter Ascoli, represents items that fall into one of two categories. (i) The item pertains to research logistics: planning projects (some of which were not part of the book) or records from a visit to an archive, including notes. (ii) The item is a primary or secondary source about Rosenwald that has been arranged separately from Series I and II because the documents were conserved by Ascoli with materials that indicate how he obtained them or that reveal a contemporary discussion of a subject, which Ascoli followed through newspaper clippings that he also kept with the materials. Generally, a correspondent enclosed a document along with a note or Ascoli received a reply from an institution with copies of the relevant documents. Items in this series are arranged alphabetically, and span the years 1915-2003 (bulk 1960-2003).

Series VII: Photographs, contains a framed picture of the Rosenwald extended family and an unframed photograph of Rosenwald in front of a carriage. There is a third picture that appears to be from one of Ascoli's site visits but what exactly it depicts is unknown.

Related Resources

Arnett, Trevor. Papers, 1921-1932

Asher, Louis E. Papers, 1894-1914

Rosenwald, Julius. Papers, 1905-1963

Rosenwald, Samuel. Papers, 1830-1987

Swift, Harold. Papers, 1897-1962

Subject Headings

- Eastman, George, 1854-1932
- Flexner, Abraham, 1866-1959
- Hirsch, Emil Gustav, 1851-1923
- Rosenwald, Julius, 1862-1932
- Sears, Roebuck and Company
- Stern, Edgar Bloom, 1886-1959
- Washington, Booker T., 1856-1915
-
- General Education Board (New York, N.Y.)
- Museum of Science and Industry (Chicago, Ill.)
- African Americans--Education
- Philanthropists--United States
- Rosenwald schools

INVENTORY

Series I: Primary Sources Concerning Julius Rosenwald, 1896-1937

Subseries 1: Photocopies of Known Archival Provenance

Box 1

Folder 1

Correspondence with George Eastman, 1921-1922 [George Eastman House]

Box 1

Folder 2

Correspondence concerning Herbert Hoover, 1919-1932 [Herbert Hoover Presidential Library]

Box 1

Folder 3

Correspondence held at Longue Vue, 1900-1910 [Archives of Longue Vue House and Gardens]

Box 1

Folder 4

Correspondence held at Longue Vue, 1910-1926 [Archives of Longue Vue House and Gardens]

Box 1

Folder 5

Founding of the Museum of Science and Industry, 1922-1931 [Museum of Science and Industry Archives]

Box 1

Folder 6

Letter from Booker T. Washington on a plan to help colored schools, 1912 [Museum of Science and Industry Archives]

Box 1

Folder 7

General Education Board, 1928-1931 [Rockefeller Archive Center]

Box 1

Folder 8

General Education Board and Rosenwald schools, 1915-1924 [Rockefeller Archive Center and University of Chicago Library]

Box 1

Folder 9

General Education Board and Rosenwald schools, 1925-1932 [Rockefeller Archive Center and University of Chicago Library]

Box 2

Folder 1

General Education Board and Abraham Flexner, 1919-1929 [Rockefeller Archive Center and Library of Congress]

Box 2

Folder 2

Julius Rosenwald Fund and General Education Board, 1932-1939 [Rockefeller Archive Center]

Box 2

Folder 3

Requests to fund archeological research in the Near East, 1914-1925 [Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago]

Box 2

Folder 4

Requests to fund archeological research in the Near East, 1926-1932 [Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago]

Box 2

Folder 5

Rosenwald's gifts to the Y.M.C.A., 1910-1920 [Y.M.C.A. of the U.S.A. Archives]

Subseries 2: Photocopies of Unknown Archival Provenance

Box 2

Folder 6

American Jewish Committee, 1908-1929

Box 2

Folder 7

Black Y.M.C.A.s and Jesse Moorland, 1918-1934

Box 2

Folder 8

Chicago Bureau of Public Efficiency, 1911-1925

Box 2

Folder 9

Civic Philanthropy in Chicago, 1911-1924

Box 2

Folder 10

Contemporary interviews of Rosenwald, 1912-1931

Box 2

Folder 11

Correspondence from trip to Mexico, 1900

Box 2

Folder 12

Correspondence with Aaron Nusbaum, 1901

Box 2

Folder 13

Correspondence from trip to Europe [1/2], 1904

Box 2

Folder 14

Correspondence from trip to Europe [2/2], 1904

Box 3

Folder 1

Correspondence from trip to Europe, 1907

Box 3

Folder 2

Correspondence with Extended Family, 1908-1910

Box 3

Folder 3

Correspondence with Adele Rosenwald (Daughter), 1909-1910

Box 3

Folder 4

Correspondence with Lessing Rosenwald (Son), 1910

Box 3

Folder 5

Correspondence with Children (Adele, Edith, Marion, William), 1910-1930

Box 3

Folder 6

Correspondence from trip to Europe, 1911

Box 3

Folder 7

Correspondence from trip to Egypt, 1914

Box 3

Folder 8

Correspondence from trip to Hawaii, 1931

Box 3

Folder 9

Jewish philanthropy, 1910-1929

Box 3

Folder 10

Jewish farm settlements in southern Russia, 1926-1931

Box 3

Folder 11

Julius Rosenwald's service in the Great War, 1916-1922

Box 3

Folder 12

Julius Rosenwald's illness and death, 1931-1935

Box 3

Folder 13

Ledger of Julius Rosenwald's philanthropic gifts, 1899-1931

Box 3

Folder 14

Letter from Jane Addams, 1907

Box 3

Folder 15

Letters from Minnie Low, 1908-1909

Box 3

Folder 16

Letters from Gussie Rosenwald, 1913-1915

Box 3

Folder 17

Letters of condolence upon the death of Gussie Rosenwald, 1929

Box 4

Folder 1

Marriage to Adelaide ('Addie') Goodkind, 1930

Box 4

Folder 2

Obituaries and tributes upon the death of Julius Rosenwald, 1932

Box 4

Folder 3

O'Hara Commission of the Illinois Senate, 1913

Box 4

Folder 4

Sears Complex on Homan Avenue - National Register of Historic Places, 1975

Box 4

Folder 5

Sears, Roebuck - Board of Directors minutes and balance sheets, 1906-1929

Box 4

Folder 6

Sears, Roebuck - Documents on management, operations and sales, 1896-1932

Box 4

Folder 7

Sears, Roebuck - Chairman Robert E. Wood, 1924-1965

Box 4

Folder 8

Second Industrial Conference, 1919

Box 4

Folder 9

Senate race controversy and Frank L. Smith, 1926-1931

Box 4

Folder 10

U.S. Presidents, 1911-1926

Box 4

Folder 11

Visits to Tuskegee Institute, 1912-1917

**Series II: Secondary Sources on Julius Rosenwald and His Context,
1897-2003**

Box 4

Folder 12

Aaronson, Daniel and Bhaskar Mazumder, "The Impact of Rosenwald Schools on Black Achievement," 2009

Box 4

Folder 13

Appreciations of Rosenwald written by Black contemporaries - Magazine articles, 1920s

Box 4

Folder 14

Articles on Rosenwald as a pioneer at Sears and in philanthropy, 1906-1984

Box 4

Folder 15

Black workers in Chicago - Book excerpts, 1990

Box 4

Folder 16

Chicago Jewish Community - Book excerpts, autobiography, 1924-1939

Box 4

Folder 17

Emil G. Hirsch and Reform Judaism - Articles, essays, 1897-1971

Box 5

Folder 1

Hanchett, Thomas, "The Rosenwald Schools and Black Education in North Carolina," 1988

Box 5

Folder 2

Harlan, Louis R., "Booker T. Washington's Discovery of Jews," 1982

Box 5

Folder 3

International House Movement - Diss. excerpts, 1971-1999

Box 5

Folder 4

Joyce, Miriam, "Julius Rosenwald and World War I," 1993

Box 5

Folder 5

Judge Julian W. Mack - Book excerpt, articles, undated

Box 5

Folder 6

Julius Rosenwald Fund - Journal articles, 1984-1997

Box 5

Folder 7

Legacy of Rosenwald as a Philanthropist - Magazine articles, 1960-2000

Box 5

Folder 8

Memoirs by other figures who were connected to Rosenwald - Photocopies, 1975-1990

Box 5

Folder 9

Mordecai Ham's denunciation of Rosenwald's philanthropy in the South - Newspaper article and book excerpt, 1924-1981

Box 5

Folder 10

Northern philanthropy and the education of Blacks in the South - Articles, book excerpts, 1950-2002

Box 5

Folder 11

Philanthropic foundations in the U.S. - Articles, 1981-1987

Box 5

Folder 12

Reviews of 'Rosenwald' by M. R. Werner, circa 1940

Box 5

Folder 13

Rosenwald schools and their legacy in the South - Academic writings, newspaper articles, 1970-1996

Box 5

Folder 14

Sears, Roebuck and Company - Business articles, 1961-1993

Box 5

Folder 15

Short biographical studies of Rosenwald - Book excerpts, 1922-1964

Box 5

Folder 16

Weiss, Nancy, "Contribution of Jews to the Civil Rights Movement," 1995

Series III: Estate and Trust Records, 1914-1944

Box 5

Folder 17

Documents concerning individual beneficiaries and family trusts, 1914-1930

Box 5

Folder 18

Report on the estate of Julius Rosenwald, 1932-1936

Box 5

Folder 19

Rosenwald Family Association - Financial statements and schedules, 1944

Box 6

Report on the estate and trust of Augusta N. Rosenwald, 1930

Series IV: Family Interviews and Private Writings about Julius Rosenwald, 1921-1994

Box 7

Folder 1

English compositions by Marion Rosenwald - Manuscripts, 1921

Box 7

Folder 2

Report of the Deutsches Museum of Munich - Bound volume, 1929

Box 7

Folder 3

Interview with Edith Rosenwald Stern by unknown interviewer - Typescript, 1978

Box 7

Folder 4

Interview with her parents, Lessing and Edith Goodkind Rosenwald, by Janet Becker - Typescripts, 1978

Box 7

Folder 5

Interview with Edith Rosenwald by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, circa 1980s

Box 7

Folder 6

Interview with Julius ('Dooley') Rosenwald by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, circa 1980s

Box 7

Folder 7

Interview with Nathan Levin by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, circa 1980s

Box 7

Folder 8

Interview with Herb Pollack by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, circa 1980s

Box 7

Folder 9

Interviews with William Rosenwald by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, 1983-1989

Box 7

Folder 10

Interviews with Marion Rosenwald Ascoli by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, 1983-1990

Box 7

Folder 11

Interview with Marion Rosenwald Ascoli at the home of Lucy and Peter Ascoli - Typescript, 1988

Box 7

Folder 12

Interviews with graduates of Rosenwald Schools in Mississippi by Phillip M. Stern -
Typescripts, 1989

Box 7

Folder 13

Interview with Eleanor Adler Dillard in Georgia by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, 1989

Box 7

Folder 14

Interviews with Robert C. Weaver and Ray Rubinow by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript,
1989

Box 7

Folder 15

Interview with a Mississippi resident about Rosenwald Schools by Phillip M. Stern -
Typescript, 1990

Box 7

Folder 16

Interview with Maurice Hexter by Phillip M. Stern - Typescript, 1990

Box 7

Folder 17

Dictation of Recollections by William Rosenwald - Typescript and notes, 1993

Box 7

Folder 18

Letter from Peter Ascoli to William Rosenwald arranging an interview - Typescript, 1993

Box 7

Folder 19

Draft of an autobiography by William Rosenwald - Typescript, 1994

**Series V: Materials from and Site Visits to Rosenwald Schools in the
South, 1986-2006**

Box 7

Folder 20

Different schools as sites of historic preservation - Clippings, newsletters, magazines,
2002-2004

Box 8

Folder 1

Mecklenburg County schools (North Carolina) - Historical study, newspaper articles,
survey, photographs, 1986-1991

Box 8

Folder 2

Mount Zion School in Florence, South Carolina - Letters, pamphlets, photographs, 2000

Box 8

Folder 3

Texas schools - Brochure, newspaper article, 1998

Box 8

Folder 4

Weatherford, Carole Boston, "Dear Mr. Rosenwald" - Children's book, 2006

Series VI: Correspondence and Additional Materials of Peter Ascoli, 1915-2003

Box 8

Folder 5

Annotated text on H. H. Rogers and Macon County schools (Alabama) - Notes and typescript, 2003

Box 8

Folder 6

Article on Edgar Stern and Dillard University - Typescript, 2001

Box 8

Folder 7

Discussion of a documentary film about Julius Rosenwald and Black education in the South - Draft of scenes, letters, reports, 1996-1997

Box 8

Folder 8

Documents sent by Janet Becker - Newsletters, magazine articles, 1994

Box 8

Folder 9

Family history materials - Memorial tributes to Adele Rosenwald Levy and obituary for William Rosenwald, 1960-1996

Box 8

Folder 10

Letters to Julius Rosenwald about his charitable gifts - Photocopies, 1915-1962

Box 8

Folder 11

Materials on Julius Rosenwald's involvement in the Jewish community - Correspondence, photocopies, circa 1990s

Box 8

Folder 12

Memoir by Montague about a Black Y.M.C.A. - Typescript and photograph, 1952

Box 8

Folder 13

Michigan Blvd. Garden Apartments - Archival notes and newspaper clippings, 1929-2002

Box 8

Folder 14

News articles and clippings gathered by Ascoli, circa 2000

Box 8

Folder 15

Notes from Fisk University Archives - Typescripts, circa 2000

Box 8

Folder 16

Planning Visits to Rockefeller Archive Center - Finding aid notes, informational materials, circa 1994

Box 8

Folder 17

Research materials 1 - Notes and photocopies from various archives, circa 2000

Box 8

Folder 18

Research materials 2 - Notes and photocopies from various archives, circa 2000

Box 8

Folder 19

Research materials 3 - Notes and photocopies from various archives, circa 2000

Series VII: Photographs, 1913-2001

Box 8

Folder 20

Julius Rosenwald about to enter a carriage [Museum of Science and Industry Archives],
circa 1920s

Box 8

Folder 21

Congregation gathers outside a southern Black church that is connected with a Rosenwald
School?, 2001

Box 9

Framed photograph of the Rosenwald extended family, 1913