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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
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
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

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
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

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