



The New York Public Library
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division

Guide to the

Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records

1923-1991

Sc MG 574

Summary

Creator: Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation (Harlem, New York, N.Y.)

Title: Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records

Date: 1923-1991

Size: 0.42 linear feet (1 box)

Source: Gift of Rabbi Chaim White, 1996, as part of the Zakor: Israelite History and Archives Project.

Revision History: Finding aid updated by Lauren Stark.

Abstract: The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, one of the oldest and largest communities of Black Hebrews in the United States, was founded in Harlem in 1919, by Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew (1892-1973). Though this congregation traces its origin to the activities of those who came to New York during the first waves of Black migration and immigration, it was in the post World War II years that the community took root. Rabbi Matthew created a number of auxiliary organizations, and today there are seven Black synagogues in the downstate New York area that trace their origins directly to Rabbi Matthew and his congregation. The synagogue is located in Harlem. The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records consist of several ledgers, including a photocopy of a record book listing members' names and addresses, births and deaths (1923-1959); and other membership ledgers providing individual financial records, worship, and Hebrew school attendance (1927-1959). The collection ledger lists amounts donated from 1974-1991. The collection also includes correspondence of Rabbi Matthew regarding dedication of the new synagogue in Harlem (1962) and speaking engagements in the Northeast (1968-1970). There is also a notebook listing members of various committees, along with notes about several services held at the synagogue (1948), a golden anniversary program (1966), and news clippings.

Preferred citation: [Item], Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records, Sc MG 574, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, The New York Public Library

Language of the Material: English

Processing note: Accessioned by Chandra Buie, August 1996.

Separated Materials:

Transferred to the Photographs and Prints Division: photographs.

Related Materials:

W. A. Matthew collection, Sc MG 609, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

Creator History

The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation, one of the oldest and largest communities of Black Hebrews in the United States, was founded in Harlem in 1919, by Rabbi Wentworth Arthur Matthew (1892-1973). Though this congregation traces its origin to the activities of those who came to New York during the first waves of Black migration and immigration, it was in the post World War II years that the community took root. Rabbi Matthew created a number of auxiliary organizations, and today there are seven Black synagogues in the downstate New York area that trace their origins directly to Rabbi Matthew and his congregation. The synagogue is located in Harlem.

Scope and Content Note

The Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation records consist of several ledgers, including a photocopy of a record book listing members' names and addresses, births and deaths (1923-1959); and other membership ledgers providing individual financial records, worship, and Hebrew school attendance (1927-1959). The collection ledger lists amounts donated from 1974-1991. The collection also includes correspondence of Rabbi Matthew regarding dedication of the new synagogue in Harlem (1962) and speaking engagements in the Northeast (1968-1970). There is also a notebook listing members of various committees, along with notes about several services held at the synagogue (1948), a golden anniversary program (1966), and news clippings.

Arrangement: Arranged chronologically.

Key Terms**Subjects**

African American Jews
African Americans -- Religion
Jewish way of life
Judaism
Judaism -- Customs and practices

Names

Matthew, Wentworth A. (Wentworth Arthur), 1892-1973
Commandment Keepers Ethiopian Hebrew Congregation (Harlem, New York, N.Y.)

Container List

- b. 1 f. 1 Membership book (photocopy) 1923-1959
- b. 1 f. 2 Worship service and Hebrew School attendance ledger 1927-1931
- b. 1 f. 3 Financial records 1927-1931
- b. 1 f. 4 Miscellaneous 1930-1974
- b. 1 f. 5 Membership contribution and worship service attendance ledger 1937-1940
- b. 1 f. 6 Financial records 1938
- b. 1 f. 7 Worship service attendance ledger 1939-1955
- b. 1 f. 8 Notebook 1948
- b. 1 f. 9 News clippings 1958-1973
- b. 1 f. 10 Matthew, Rabbi Wentworth A. correspondence 1962-1970
- b. 1 f. 11 Printed matter 1966-1968
- Collection ledgers (photocopies)
 - b. 1 f. 12 1974-1979
 - b. 1 f. 13 1980-1985
 - b. 1 f. 14 1986-1991