

Alice Davis Menken (1870-1936)

Papers, n.d., 1880-1936

***P-23**



Founded in 1892

3 manuscript boxes
4 oversized boxes
1.75 linear feet

Processing Date: August 1995
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RELATED MATERIALS: Material pertaining to Alice Davis Menken can be found in the collections of Rosalie Solomons Phillips and the Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations. The Library of the American Jewish Historical Society also own several of Menken's published works; researchers should consult the library catalogue for more information.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alice Davis Menken (1870-1936)

Alice Davis was born on August 4, 1870, in New York City. She was the third of the seven children of Michael Marks and Miriam Maduro Peixotto Davis, and was descended from several prominent European Sephardic families. She was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution on her mother's side.

Davis married Mortimer Morange Menken, a lawyer, on October 17, 1893. Their only child, Harold Davis Menken, was born in 1895. In 1896, she helped to establish the Sisterhood of Congregation Shearith Israel, and she served as its president from 1900 to 1929. She began her social relief work in the Sisterhood's settlement house on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, the "Neighborhood House."

Through this settlement house work, Menken became involved in the problem of delinquency among Jewish women. Much of this delinquency was connected to the white slave trade, as traders preyed on the girls and young women who immigrated alone to the United States. In 1908, Menken founded a Sisterhood committee to work in cooperation with the New York City Probation Department in the Women's Night Court, assisting delinquent Jewish women involved in the criminal justice system.

Menken was also involved in the founding of the Jewish Board of Guardians, was the chair of the Department of Court, Probation and Parole of the Board of Guardians' Women's Division, and was its vice president at the time of her death. She also chaired a committee of the Council of Jewish Women which worked with women paroled from New York State prisons.

Menken helped to found the Jewish Big Sister movement in 1911, and in 1920 was appointed by New York Governor Alfred E. Smith to the Board of Managers of the New York State Reformatory for Women.

Menken died in New York on March 23, 1936.

References:

The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. 7.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The papers of Alice Davis Menken contain correspondence, reports, published and unpublished articles notebooks, travel diaries, ephemera, programs, photographs, post cards, book reviews, and pamphlets relating to Menken's work with a number of agencies, including: the Society of New York State Women, the Jewish Welfare Board, the Women's Motor Corps of America, the Jewish Protectory and Aid Society (later renamed the Jewish Board of Guardians), the New York City Women's Night Court, the Hudson State Training School, the New York State Reformatory for Women, the Society for Political Study, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Progressive Party, the Mayor's Committee of Women on National Defense, Congregation Shearith Israel, the Florence Crittendon League, the New York Training School for Community Center Workers, the Committee of Fourteen, and Inwood House. Also included is material pertaining to her personal life, copies of her published and unpublished writings, other printed material relating to corrections and the penal system and photographs.

Menken's scrapbooks cover the years 1883-1936. They contain 2,200 items including newspaper clippings, manuscript, typescript and published essays and speeches, ribbons and badges, postcards, photographs, correspondence and ephemera. [Use of the scrapbooks may be restricted because of their ongoing conservation.]

The collection is valuable to researchers studying New York Jewry, the history of the New York (and U.S.) corrections system, any of the above-mentioned organizations, and women and Jews in (non-professional) social work.

Of special interest is correspondence between Menken and other influential Jews of the time such as H. Pereira Mendes, David de Sola Pool, and Jessica B. Peixotto on her work; also interesting is an illuminated book given to Menken by the Sisterhood of Shearith Israel in 1926 (she was its president for several years).

Most of the documents are in English, though there are a few pieces in German and Yiddish.

BOX LIST

Box 1

Published articles by Alice Davis Menken

Other articles/ pamphlets

Published articles about Alice Davis Menken

Other

Box 2

Travel Diaries, 1913

Society of New York State Women, Historical Record from March 1913 to May 1914

Illuminated book, 1926

School notebooks

Programs

Photographs and Post Cards

Box 3

New York Training School for Community Center Workers, 1915-1916

Reviews of her book *On the Side of Mercy*, 1933-1934

Correspondence

Correspondence about her books and articles

Correspondence

Correspondence

The Community Clearing House

"Survey of Reformatory and Correctional 1919

Institutions and agencies as Related to the Problem of Commercialized Vice"

The Survey, January 1927

Box 4

Scrapbook, 1883-1919

Box 5

Scrapbook, 1920-1927

Box 6

Scrapbook, 1928-1933

Box 7

Scrapbook, 1933-1936

ITEM LISTING

Box 1

Published articles by Alice Davis Menken

1. "The Rehabilitation of the Morally Handicapped," *Journal of the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology*, 15:1, May 1924, pp. 147-154
 - 2 copies
 - plus 2 reprints
2. "A Social Aspect of the Unmarried Mother," *The Journal of Delinquency*, 7:2, March 1922, pp. 99-103
 - plus 2 reprints
3. *Delinquent Girls on Parole: A Study of Girls Paroled from Cedar Knolls School (1909-1925)* (booklet)
 - 3 copies
4. *Hints for Meeting the Problem of Maladjusted Youth: A Study in Social Work for Beginners*. New York City, 1922 (booklet)
 - 2 copies
5. "A Woman's Reformatory in the Making Minimum Standards," Janie M. Coggeshall and ADM, *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*. 23:5, Jan-Feb 1933, pp. 819-828
6. *Tales of One City: A Few Selected Stories to Illustrate The Rehabilitation of the Morally Handicapped, A Study in Social Service*, New York City, 1924
 - 2 copies
7. "Law Enforcement in Relation to the Treatment of Sex Offenders in New York City," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, 19:3, March 1933, pp. 143-150
8. "Religious Education for the Jewish Youth," *The Jewish Forum* 14:2, Feb. 1931, pp. 59-60
9. "The Physical and Financial Problems of Girl Probationers," *Probation and the Prevention of Delinquency, Proceedings of the National Probation Association*, 1923. NY, National Probation Association, Inc, 1924. pp. 106-109

Other articles/pamphlets

1. Report of the *Probation Committee of the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue in the City of New York, Inc*. New York, 1913, 1914, 1915, 1916.
 - she is a member of the committee

2. mailing from Sisterhood of Sp. and Port. Syn. soliciting funds for their "Neighborhood House," 133 Eldridge Street
- including article by ADM, Sisterhood Pres, "Our Neighbor-Friends"
3. report of the Sisterhood of the Sp. and Port. Syn, ADM, Pres., 1916?
4. pamphlet on "The Oriental Sephardic Jews of New York," by J. de A. Benyunes
- mentions Sp. and Port. Syn and its sisterhood
5. *Bulletin of the Mass Society for Social Hygiene*, 3:4, April, 1933
- cites ADM's article in *Journal of Social Hygiene*, 1933
6. flyer for lectures given by ADM on "Can We Help our Unfortunate Sister and How?"
7. booklet, *Annual Report of the Florence Crittendon League, Inc.*, NYC, 1929
- she wrote the booklet's foreword and is on the Bd. of Directors of the League
8. "Address of Dr. Cyrus Adler, Delivered at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue, Mod., Nov. 27, 1916."
9. "Victory Hall: Monograph no. 3 and Advanced Plans, 2nd Ed."
- plans for a memorial hall for veterans
10. "Addresses at the Annual Banquet of The Poor Richard Club," Phila., 1915
- including: "The American Woman in Municipal Life" by Dr. Katherine Bement Davis, "Peace and Prosperity" by Hon. William Jennings Bryan
11. "55th Annual Report of the Institution for the Improved Instruction of Deaf-Mutes of NYC," 1921
- she is mentioned on p. 10 as one of the 1st female members of the Bd. of Trustees and on p. 22 as being responsible for organizing the pupils' religious instruction
12. "The Correctional Institutions for Women," by Commission to Investigate Prison Administration and Construction, presented to NY State Legislature, Feb, 1932
- she is thanked as the Chairman of the Dept of Court Probation and Parole, Women's Division, Jewish Board of Guardians

Published articles about ADM

1. "Reformation is a Work of Optimism: Mrs. Menken Writes Her Thirty Years of Social Work," *New York Evening Post*, Oct. 21, 1933
2. "A New Deal for Delinquent Girls," *Flushing, L.I. North Shore Daily Journal*, Nov. 17, 1933
- same article in *The West Virginian, Fairmont, WV* and *Long Island Daily Press* and *The Lincoln Evening Journal*

3. "Alice Davis Menken," [Yiddish], *Amerikaner (The Jewish American Family Magazine and Gazette)*, March 23, 1934

Other

- "The Activities of the Mayor's Committee of Women on National Defense," NY, 1918-1919
 - she's a committee member
- notebook: "Credentials re 'Hints for Meeting the Problem of Maladjusted Youth' and orders for same"
- letters to her praising "Hints for Meeting the Problem of Maladjusted Youth"
- letters to her about her various articles and booklets
- "The Passing of the Women's Night Court in New York City," ADM, *The Survey* Oct. 12, 1918, pp. 41-42.
- "New York Lawyers Association, Necrology of Mortimer Morange Menken"
- "Humanities in the Women's Court of New York," ADM, *The Woman Republican*, 1:2, Feb. 1931, pp. 3+
- "The Committee of Fourteen in New York City, Annual Report, 1920," NY, 1921
 - she's on the committee, is on the Bd. of Directors
 - mailing from Sisterhood of Sp. and Port. Syn. soliciting funds for their "Neighborhood House," 133 Eldridge Street, including article by ADM, Sisterhood Pres, "Our Neighbor_Friends"
- "As A Woman Sees It," ADM, *The Woman Republican* 10:16, Aug. 1932, p. 7
 - 2 copies
- "Municipal Government: Newer Trends," ADM, *The Woman Republican* 10:9, Feb. 27, 1932
 - 2 copies

Box 2

Travel Diaries

1. "My Trip Abroad" diary with compass on cover
 - summer 1913
 - small calendar inside 1st page
 - pictures of "Funnels and House Flags of Principal Atlantic Lines"
 - sailed on *Baltic* to Liverpool, Aug. 7, returned on *Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm*, Sept. 27
 - first few pages are travel info printed in diary - time differences, etc
 - itinerary: Liverpool, London, Oxford, Scotland, Ireland, Paris
 - impressions from London - on clothes, manners, weather, expressions (language), shops, teeth
 - list of gifts at sailing, including telegrams
 - addresses - incl. some Jews and Portuguese Syn.
 - map of the world glued into the back
2. "My Trip Abroad" with pencil
 - in outside pocket: slips of paper with jokes and funny stories, cartoons, card with "God Bless you, Dear!"

- envelope with white and purple heather from Scottish moors and shamrock from Killarney, Sept 1913
- glued into inside cover: poem, Aug 1913, for ADM from E.W. Snyder on having hay fever and having to take a voyage because of it
- 2 cartoons on marriage and travel
- itinerary
- more cartoons about travel
- picture of American Express office in London
- places visited in London, Oxford, etc.

Society of New York State Women, Historical Record from March 1913-May 1914

Illuminated book

- from the Sisterhood of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of the City of New York, Oct. 18, 1926
 - a welcome home to ADM (their president) after a trip to Europe which she had taken for her health, signed by the 1st VP and Sect'y
 - includes a gold Sisterhood seal/sticker

School Notebooks

1. "Alice G. Davis Compositions,"
 - 15 yrs old, 188?, Gardner Institute
 2. "Original Poetry by Alice G. Davis, 1885-1887"
 - includes "Thoughts on the Departure of our New Year (Jewish)" and some poems to "Mortie" (her future husband)
 3. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1880
 4. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1884
 5. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1889-1899
 6. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1886-1889
 7. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1884-1885
 8. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1899-1917
 9. "Gems of Poetry from Various Authors," 1883-1886
 10. compositions 1882-1883
- booklet for memorial service for Daniel Peixotto Hays, Mar. 1924, Temple Israel, NY
 - she spoke, as did Adolph Ochs, Stephen Wise, Sen. Seabury Mastick
 - card: on outside, "Marilyn Marise Menken 1924-, Great Great Great Great-Granddaughter of the American Revolution"
 - on inside, photo of mother and child with "Greetings, Mother's Day," and prose poem, "Loveliness," by Harriet Menken
 - calling card of Miss Miriam Peixotto, her mother
 - prayer given by Rev. Joseph Corcos at the Sisterhood's 25th Anniversary, Dec. 6, 1932
 - certificate naming ADM as "Manager of the New York State Reformatory for Women"
 - signed by Alfred Smith, Gov. of NY, 2/11/24, with state seal

- button and ribbon: "Re-elect Your Congressman Ruth Pratt, 17th District"
- booklet: "Souvenir of the Golden Wedding Anniversary of Michael Marks Davis and Miriam Peixotto Davis, 10/7/16, NYC"
 - includes poem by ADM, photos of Michael and Miriam on their wedding day, Ketubah and translation, poem by H. Pereira Mendes and D. de Sola Pool, prose by Daniel Peixotto Hays: "To Aunt Mirrie and Uncle Mike," prose and poetry from relatives
- application of ADM to be member of The Society of Colonial Dames XVII Century
 - with a bit of her genealogy (she's descended from Benjamin Mendes Seixas, Moses Isaacks)
- letter from Irene G. McDougall to ADM, 1932
- application for her granddaughter, Marilyn Marise Menken, to join Children of the American Revolution (she's 7 years old)
- handwritten draft of a book/article: "The Growth of Modern Philanthropy"

Programs

- Testimonial Dinner Menu to Frank Moss by Greenwich Villagers
- invitation to parents' 50th anniversary celebration
- banquet in honor of Cpt. Charles A. Lindbergh by Mayor of City of NY, 6/14/27
- Gala Concert for the benefit of German Jewish Relief, 9/28/33 (she's a Patron/Box Holder)

Photographs and Post Cards

- Andes Mts, 1929 (4+ postcards)
- and pamphlet "The Transandine Route," 1929
- ADM, 1894
- the tombstone of Adah Isaacs Menken, 1933
- ADM, 1918, in uniform
- ADM, 1887
- ADM, 1889

Box 3

NY Training School for Community Center Workers

- pamphlet: "A Call to Service from The Mayor's Committee on National Defense, Committee on Aliens"
 - info. on Training Course for Volunteer Community Work, Training School for Community Workers, including reg. form and training course schedule
- letters, 1915_1917 from NY Training School for Community Workers, about her participation in their training programs
 - she's an alumna [was a pupil in its first year, according to her letter of 1/9/17]
- booklet on NY Training School for Community Center Workers, 1915-1916, describing their goals, methods, organization, course of study, requirements for admission, etc. (2 copies)
- letters from her, 1916, to NY Training School
- flyer announcing lectures to be held at the school

- application for admission to NY Training School, including question sheet and several pages of answers
- clipping on opening of school
- schedule card, membership card, record card
- acceptance letter, 1915
- essays she wrote while at the school
 - on "alleged antipathetic groups"
 - on drawing immigrants into community centers
 - on making centers fraternal
 - on cooperation with public schools
 - on the ideal community center
- final exam (May 1916), with questions about her opinion of the training course, her strengths and weaknesses
 - she says her first weakness is "a too strongly developed optimism"
 - includes some of her ideas for community centers
- paper (April 1916): "How the Community Center out to be Organized Internally and Externally"
- paper (March 1916): "The Organization of Sing Sing Prison"
- bibliography: "Selected List of References on Social and Community Center Bibliographies and Lists (in NY Public Library)"
- Feb 1916, "Some Things for Consideration"
- typed notes on lectures about:
 - alcoholism, licensing of commercialized amusements, the theater, on community center in P.S. 104, sociology, relation of immigrant to government and founding of Immigration Service Bureau, vocational guidance and employment, school planning, community center for "colored people" in Harlem, rel'ship of police to community, democracy in the making, group leadership, vocational guidance, courts and institutions, types of organizations, medical services in communities, labor unions and the community center, social survey of community forces, the Gary system, community centers of Belgium, community drama, surveys, the economic city, city planning, the dance, leisure, visit to Ellis Island (Nov. 1915) (questions, no answers), crime and leisure, psychoanalytic view of children's "sexuology," psychology, Bd. of Ed. and community center, "psych-analysis" (incl. references to "Froid"), delinquency, saloon as community problem (lecture given by "Mr. Hapgood"), camp fire girl movement, juvenile delinquency
- sample (?) record-keeping sheet
- list of regular students at school w/ addresses (7 men incl. one rabbi, 22 women, single and married)
- programs of different centers
- observations from visiting a center, Oct. 1916
- questions of students to be answered by the class
- flyer announcing opening of community center at P.S. 104 (16th St. and 1st Ave.)
- essay: "What is a Community Center?"
- flyer for Community Chorus Rehearsal at P.S. 64 (9th St. east of Ave B)
- hand_written songs for chorus: "Columbia!" and "The Star Spangled Banner"
- report of evening entertainment at PS 104, attended by 65 kids
 - includes note about a boy named Jack Magliano who was afraid to go home because "of the cruelty of his father" and what the center workers did in response

Reviews of her book *On the Side of Mercy: Problems in Social Readjustment* (1933)

- includes reviews by H. Pereira Mendes in US and international Jewish periodicals
- reviews from *California Jewish Review*, *NY Times Book Review*, *American Hebrew*, note in Shearith Israel bulletin

Correspondence

- with *The Survey*, 1917_1926
 - including article by her which was published therein, gratitude for her donations
- with National Service Commission of NYC
- flyers from Mayor's Committee on National Defense, Committee on Aliens
 - asking for volunteers for Americanizing programs

Correspondence about her books and articles

- letters from different city officers like probation officers, judges (even one of the Supreme Court of NY), D.A.'s office;
- letters from rabbis, Federated Jewish Charities, US Dept of Labor, Professors (incl. Jessica B. Peixotto, Prof. of Social Economics, UC Berkeley), YWHA, D. de Sola Pool, Jewish Assoc. for the Protection of Girls and Women

Correspondence

- B'nai B'rith National Jewish Monthly, April 1934, incl. review of her book
- letter from H. Pereira Mendes to her about her book, 1933
 - incl. comments like "You have beautifully proclaimed true womanhood's message, 'Pity,_but help.'"
 - "If the errants, the sinners whom your book depicts debased womanhood, as they did, you have glorified womanhood by showing to those errants and sinners, so oft 'more sinned against than sinning,' those attributes of womanhood, - Pity, Love, Mercy, the Spirit of Rescue, Help, Rescue, Uplift, which glorify true Womanhood as true Judaism paints it."
 - also about her work with the Sisterhood at Shearith Israel, his work in trying to overcome religious apathy
- letters thanking her for sending her book
- review from *The National Humane Review*, *Bulletin of the Jewish Board of Guardians*, *Better Times: The Welfare Magazine*, *The Town Crier* (incl. in same issue is obituary about her husband)

Correspondence

- letters requesting copies of book

The Community Clearing House

- pamphlets: "The Community Clearing House: A Neighborhood Gateway to All the City's Resources of Helpfulness, Central Gramercy District"
- 1 letter from them to her

"Survey of Reformatory and Correctional Institutions and Agencies as Related to The Problem of Commercialized Vice," by Alice D. Menken, Special Sub-Committee, Committee of Fourteen, Aug. 1919

- dealing with delinquent women over age 16
- also, "Outline of a lecture delivered at Hudson State School, at the Course of Study for College Women," July, 1933, on "The Girl in the Courts"

The Survey, Jan. 1927

- includes article which mentions her, p. 502

Box 4 - Scrapbook (1883-1919)

- "Probation Work Among Jewish Women," *The Jewish Woman* 5 (October 1925): 6-8
- manuscript, typescript and published essays and speeches
- correspondence
- newspaper clippings
- ribbons and badges: as delegate to Convention of New York City Federation of Women's Clubs, Continental Congress of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Women's Motor Corps of America
- her *ketubah*
- postcards
- she was a member of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, 1917
- chauffeur's licence with medallions (for the Motor Corps)
- Motor Corps: she drove an ambulance in NY taking sick and wounded soldiers from ships to hospitals (during WWI)
- she resigned from the Council of Jewish Women and other organizations in order to focus her time on the Motor Corps

Box 5 - Scrapbook (1920-1927)

- material pertaining to her involvement with the Republican Women's [NY] State Executive Committee
- much material on her political work
- photographs
- biographical statement, 1927
- Sisterhood work, her work with the State Reformatory

Box 6 - Scrapbook (1928-1933)

- 1928 Annual Report of the Shearith Israel Sisterhood

- Dec. 14, 1928: ADM to Rene Arbib (Corresponding Secretary of the SI Sisterhood): her term as president ends in January 1929 and she won't accept re-nomination
- "I believe that the interests of the Sisterhood require a change of personnel in his office"
- Dec. 1929: she's not a Zionist; she thinks money should go to increase "colonization in Russia and to promote enterprises in America"
- ticket for the Republican National Convention, 1932

Box 7 - Scrapbook (1933-1936)