The United Jewish Federation marked its 90th anniversary this year by donating its executive board meeting minutes to the Rauh Jewish Archives at the History Center.

As the philanthropic center of the Jewish community of Pittsburgh, the UJF has responded to the changing needs of the Jewish community since its founding in 1912. A “Committee of Fifty” of the United Hebrew Relief Association convened on November 6, 1911, with the goal of centralizing the charities of the Jewish community. The resulting Federation of Jewish Philanthropies held its first meeting early the next year. Behind the formal language in these minutes is the story of the dramatic changes taking place in Pittsburgh’s Jewish community: changes that were paralleled in the larger Pittsburgh community and in many other cities.

The Great Migration was in full swing: between 1890 and 1910, almost 12 million immigrants reached the United States. During that period, approximately 25,000 Jews moved into Pittsburgh from Eastern Europe, increasing the number of Jews in the city almost seven-fold. The existing social services could only begin to meet the needs of these new Americans.

In response, new institutions opened their doors: the Jewish Home for the Aged (1906), the Irene Kaufmann Settlement (1911), and Montefiore Hospital (1911) to name only a few. The many new agencies joined the previously established ones in competing for financial support. Annie Jacob Davis, the “Mother of Montefiore Hospital,”1 recounts in her memoirs how she and other women went door-to-door collecting the money to underwrite the hospital where Jewish doctors might train and Jewish patients find kosher food. The tireless Rabbi Aaron Mordechai Ashinsky toured Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and eastern Ohio to raise funds for “maintaining a home or house for aged Hebrews in conformity with ... Orthodox Judaism” that would serve the tri-state region.2

During the federation’s 1913 annual meeting, President Aaron Cohen explained the purpose of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropy: “Federation is not only a means to obtain more revenue, but it spells a higher order of efficiency on the part of those directors who are relieved of the worry of soliciting funds.”3 Those that joined the federation agreed not to seek funding on their own, but were to benefit from professional fund-raising and administration. Rival fund-raising among institutions was to be no longer necessary.

The efforts of Annie Jacob Davis and Rabbi Ashinsky are in contrast to disbursements totaling $69,926.76 made by the federation during its first year in existence. Fourteen member institutions were recipients, with Montefiore Hospital receiving $10,655.51 and the Jewish Home for the Aged receiving $6,500. The founding of the federation, one of the first of its kind in the country, was part of the general movement to centralize charities that gave rise to Associated Charities (later the United Way), the...
Pittsburgh Community Service for Negroes, and the Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

The work of the UJF in responding to the identified needs of Jews in Pittsburgh and abroad has continued since 1912. In chronicling that work, these minutes provide insight into the federation itself and are a guide to the Jewish experience in Pittsburgh and the surrounding area.

Materials from the recent donation by the United Jewish Federation to the Rauh Jewish Archives will be on permanent display in the Life on the Hill section of the History Center’s Points In Time exhibit. The addition describes the founding of the Jewish Federation of Philanthropies in 1912, now known as the United Jewish Federation, and notes how Jewish charities aiding Pittsburgh’s Hill District in the early 20th century united under the federation to raise and distribute money more efficiently. The exhibit also highlights the contributions of founding member A. Leo Wiel and the work of Bertha Florsheim Rauh.

1 Bleier, Carol Stein with Lu Donnelly and Samuel P. Granowitz, M.D. To Good Health and Life. L’chaim, a History of Montefiore Hospital of Pittsburgh, 1898–1990 (Pittsburgh: Montefiore History Fund, 1997) 12.


3 Executive Board Minutes, Volume 1 (1912–1928), United Jewish Federation Collection, Rauh Jewish Archives, HSWP.
Eclectic Art and Objects Gallery is pleased to present a retrospective exhibit of neo-expressionist artist Peter Robert Keil.

Peter is one of Germany's best known contemporary artists and one of the Grossen Wilden of Berlin. In the late fifties he studied in the studios of Joan Miro in Palma where he learned the freedom of rhythmic structuring and the vocabulary of color and form.

Today he is best known for his rich, gaudy palette and his expressive brush strokes that depict sometimes grotesque faces, bar and street scenes and sometimes the peacefulness of sailing boats and beaches.

_Emsworth Gallery 10:00AM - 7:00PM Tuesday - Saturday_
_The Exhibition runs through October._