



CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES

**Inventory of the
Sam and Manya Lipshitz fonds**

Inventory #F0444

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F0444 - Sam and Manya Lipshitz fonds

Fonds/Collection Number: F0444**Title:** Sam and Manya Lipshitz fonds**Dates:** 1922-2001**Extent:** 3.7 m of textual records and other material

**Biographical Sketch/
Administrative History:** Sam Lipshitz (journalist, editor, typesetter, and political activist) was born in Radom, Poland, on 14 February 1910, and was sent by his parents to live with an aunt in Montreal when he was 17 after graduating from high school. He joined the Jewish Cultural Club of Montreal, where several young members promoted communism, based on the belief that the growth of Yiddish literature, schools, and other social institutions in Russia offered new equality for Jews. Sam was drawn to these views by Manya Cantor. Born in 1906 as Margolia Kantorowicz, Manya left Bialystok, Poland, when she was 13 years old and joined the Twelfth Children's Work Commune in Vitesbsk, Russia. She responded to the commune's poverty and food shortages by writing poetry and plays. Life in the commune also fostered Manya's interest in teaching. She entered the Teachers' Seminary in Vitesbsk in 1923. After joining her brothers in Montreal in 1926, she moved to New York in 1928 to finish her course work at the Teachers' Seminary in New York while working as a clerk in the a store and enjoying the city's vibrant cultural life. Likely inspired by Manya's support of communism, Sam joined the Young Communist League in 1928 while working at the Jewish Public Library. The death of 60 Jews in Palestine in 1929 led to a disagreement over the views of Sam's employer and Moscow's interpretation of the incident as a rebellion against British imperialism. When forced to take a stand, Sam sided with the communists and lost his position. He married Manya on 20 January 1930, and they moved to Toronto where Manya began a 25-year career teaching Yiddish and Jewish history at the Morris Winchevsky School, which was operated by the United Jewish Peoples Order (UJPO). Sam found full-time work with the Communist Party of Canada (renamed the Labor-Progressive Party in 1941 after the party was banned the previous year by the federal government), becoming editor of its newspaper, "Der kamf," by 1932. He later edited "Vocheblatt" ("Canadian Jewish weekly"). He was appointed secretary of the party's Anti-Fascist Committee in 1933, became head of the Jewish National Committee soon after, and sat on the party's Central Committee from 1943 to 1946. His prominent role in the illegal party led to a warrant issued for his arrest and life in hiding until the communists supported the war after Germany's invasion of Russia in June 1941, and Sam spent several days in the Don Jail with Tim Buck and 14 other party leaders in 1942. Sam joined the executive of the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1943, representing the UJPO along with Joseph Baruch Salsberg. His most important work for the Congress occurred in 1945, when he was sent to Poland with Hanane Meier Caiserman to report on the condition of the Jews who had been liberated from Nazi concentration camps just months earlier, and the fate of those who had not survived the experience. Lipshitz wrote and lectured extensively on this experience. He returned to Poland in 1949 to explore Jewish culture, society, and politics (particularly communism), and he also visited Romania and Israel. International issues significantly affected his work for at least another decade. Lipshitz and Salsberg had worked closely for many years (he served as manager for Salsberg's successful campaigns in the provincial riding of Spadina), but Salsberg's growing concern over the Soviet Union's persecution of Jews led to a falling out by 1954, when Salsberg was expelled from the communist party. Despite Salsberg's return to the fold following the exposure of Soviet brutality and anti-Semitism under Joseph Stalin by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956, a bitter rift over the Canadian communist party's response to these admissions led to the resignation of hundreds of Jews in 1957. The Lipshitzs (who had visited the Soviet Union in 1956 and returned deeply troubled by the treatment of Jews under the Soviet regime) and Salsberg were among this group. Resignation from the party also meant an end to employment for the Lipshitzs (Manya as a Jewish teacher, Sam as a political organizer), but Sam found work as a linotype operator. He founded Trade Typesetting in 1964, and did work for many Jewish organizations in Toronto until his retirement in 1975. The dispute carried over to the work of the UJPO, which was led by members of the communist party. Three

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years of bitter and occasionally violent argument between factions led to approximately 30 percent of the membership, led by Sam Lipshitz and Morris Biderman, leaving the UJPO in 1960. Sam was a founding member of the New Jewish Fraternal Association later the same year. After taking in an evening course in journalism at the University of Toronto in 1959, Sam assumed the role of editor for the association's magazine, "Fraternally yours," from March 1960 until his death in 2000. Sam also edited "Voice of Radom," the periodical of the United Radomer Relief for the United States and Canada. Manya was similarly occupied with literary endeavours, writing several articles for Sam's magazines and working on a memoir of economic, political, and social turmoil that followed the Russian revolution of 1917 and the insecurity of Jewish life on the commune during the years that followed her separation from her family. Her book, "Bletlekh fun a shturmisher tsayt" (the added title is "Memories of stormy times"), was published in Yiddish by Sam in 1977, and an English edition translated by Max Rosenfeld and Marcia Usishkin was published in 1991 as "Time remembered : a Jewish children's commune in the Soviet Union in the 1920s." Manya died on 27 July 1996 after a lengthy illness, and was remembered as a teacher, poet, and humanitarian. Sam carried on their legacy as champions of the Yiddish language. He was a member of the Yiddish committee of the United Jewish Appeal Federation of Greater Toronto for 25 years, served on the Yiddish Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress, and wrote more than 170 bi-weekly columns in Yiddish for the "Canadian Jewish news" until he resigned from this post in September 1999. He suffered a massive stroke only two days after completing the Rosh Hashonah issue of "Fraternally yours," and died in Toronto two weeks later on 14 September 2000.

Scope and Content: Fonds consists of correspondence, speeches, handwritten and typescript notes, photographs, programs and flyers for cultural and political events, newspaper and magazine articles, booklets, and ephemera created or accumulated by Sam and Manya Lipshitz regarding their professional activities and family life. Handwritten letters trace their courtship while Sam worked in Montreal and Manya studied in New York during the late 1920s. Many subsequent documents pertain to their involvement with Jewish organizations, particularly the Labour League, United Jewish Peoples Order, the New Fraternal Jewish Association, and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Sam Lipshitz's work as editor and writer is a major theme throughout the fonds, which includes correspondence and draft articles for "Vochenblatt," "Morning freiheit," and "Fraternally yours," as well as clipped stories and entire issues of these periodicals. Sam's trip to Poland in 1945 with H.M. Caiserman on behalf of the Canadian Jewish Congress is well documented through his letters to Manya, published reports, and photographs. Similar records are available for his trips to Europe, Israel, and the Soviet Union, with considerable information regarding the communist parties in these countries (such as a photograph album devoted to the Congress of the Israel Communist Party in 1949). The fonds includes correspondence, reports, speeches, photographs, and other documents pertaining to Sam's involvement with the Labor-Progressive Party, the careers of prominent communists including J.B. Salsberg, Tim Buck, Sam Carr, Fred Rose, and Albert Alexander MacLeod, tensions within the Canadian Jewish Congress over the relationship between communism and Zionism, the Lipshitzs' resignation from the communist party in 1957, Manya's campaign for a seat on the board of education in 1956, and Sam's campaign for alderman in North York in 1974 (both unsuccessful). The fonds also deals with international issues facing the Canadian Jewish community from the 1940s to the 1990s, including: the Warsaw Ghetto uprising in 1943, Nazi concentration camps in Poland during World War II, the Polish resistance movement, relief work after the war and efforts to improve living conditions and cultural life among Poland's Jews, efforts by Jews in Canada to find relatives among the survivors of concentration camps, trials of Nazi war criminals, Canada's post-war immigration policy and the campaign for Jewish emigration to Canada, the survival of anti-Semitism after the war, Palestine and an independent Israel, politics and conflict in the Middle East, the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the plight of Jews in the Soviet Union, Holocaust memorials, and the work of Jewish mutual benefit societies. The Lipshitzs' strong interest in literary affairs is evident through many files pertaining to Jewish writers between 1943

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and 1997, which contain correspondence, biographical articles, samples of these writers' work, and speeches extolling their accomplishments made by Sam when they visited Toronto. This material also deals with the visit of writers Solomon Michoels and Itzik Feffer to New York and Toronto in 1943 to promote relations with the Soviet Union, and memorials to the Soviet writers executed in 1952 under orders from Joseph Stalin. The Lipshtitzs promoted the Yiddish language and Jewish culture through their written work. The fonds includes copies of three issues of the handwritten journal, "Komunar," edited by Manya between 1922 and 1923 while living on the commune in Russia, as well as poetry written by Manya throughout her life. Her teaching notes document Manya's work at the Morris Winchevsky School, and her interest in Jewish history, song, and festivals. Photographs provide additional information on the school's activities, including the visit by singer and activist Paul Robeson in 1947. Other images in the fonds show Sam speaking at rallies, Manya's campaign for "mayor" of Camp Naivelt, and members of the Lipshitzs' extended family in various settings. The fonds also contains material about work of Trade Typesetting, and testimonials to Sam and Manya Lipshitz added to the fonds after their deaths.

Language of material note: The majority of the documents in this fonds are written in Yiddish, with the remainder in English and Hebrew.

Restrictions on Access and Use: No restrictions on access.

Finding Aid: File list is available.

URL of Finding Aid: <http://archivesfa.library.yorku.ca/fonds/ON00370-f0000444.htm>

Accruals: The fonds comprises the following accessions: 2003-061. No further accruals are expected.

Immediate source of acquisition: Fonds was donated by Dr. May Cohen, the daughter of Sam and Manya Lipshitz.

Other Notes: York University Libraries acknowledge the generous support of Dr. Gerald Cohen and Dr. May Cohen, Dr. Ester Reiter, Professor Emerita of York University, Sylwia Szymanska-Smolkin, and Faigel Rosenberg for their preparation of English abstracts for files containing Yiddish documents, which have been added to the fonds where appropriate.

Other Notes: Contents of the fonds were arranged by the University Archivist in consultation with Dr. Gerald Cohen and Dr. May Cohen, and are grouped in the file list under the following headings: Jewish organizations and political files, Trips to Poland, Canadian Jewish Congress, Israel, Jewish writers, General correspondence arranged chronologically, Subject files, Curriculum material and writings of Manya Lipshitz, Personal correspondence of Sam and Manya Lipshitz, Presentation items, Oversize documents, and Photographs. The fonds was accompanied by Manya Lipshitz's autobiography in Yiddish and English, several booklets and pamphlets on Jewish affairs, and copies of Jewish magazines edited or collected by Sam Lipshitz. This material has been catalogued as part of York University Libraries' Special Collections, and can be located using the Libraries' online catalogue by performing a keyword search using the phrase, "Lipshitz fonds."

Provenance Access Points: Lipshitz, Sam, 1910-2000
Lipshitz, Manya, 1906-1996