

Charles and Mary Cohen Collection

ARC MS 3

Finding aid prepared by Arthur Kiron, Manuscript Curator and Assistant Archivist..

Last updated on April 14, 2016.

University of Pennsylvania, Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies

September 1991

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Summary Information

Repository	University of Pennsylvania: Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies
Creator	Cohen, Charles J., (Charles Joseph), 1847-1927
Creator	Cohen, Mary M., 1854-1911
Title	Charles and Mary Cohen Collection
Call number	ARC MS 3
Date [bulk]	1850-1912
Date [inclusive]	1846-1920
Extent	4 linear feet (5 document cases)
Language	Multiple languages
Language of Materials note	Languages: English, Hebrew, Gaelic (Irish), French

Biography/History

Charles Joseph Cohen was born on September 21, 1847 in Philadelphia into a prosperous family and died in Atlantic City, New Jersey, September 17, 1927. He was a prominent member of a number of Philadelphia Jewish and other civic and charitable organizations. Rebecca Gratz, the famous Philadelphia Jewish leader, was Charles' godmother.

Mary M. Cohen was born in Philadelphia February 26, 1854 and died in Atlantic City, New Jersey on

July 2, 1911. She was a leading exponent of Jewish and women's causes, a journalist, writer, and poet. She was active in numerous civic organizations, and was among the founders of the National Council of Jewish Women and the founder and life-time honorary President of the Browning Society.

Their father, Henry Cohen, arrived in Philadelphia from London in 1843 and established a successful business manufacturing envelopes. Henry Cohen married Mathilda Samuel (of the prominent Samuel family of Liverpool) in 1844. The Cohen family maintained close relations with important London Jewish families, including the Aguilar. Charles and Mary had one younger sister named Katherine who also attained prominence, as an artist and sculptress. She studied art in Philadelphia, New York, Paris and Italy, and was renowned for her many artistic productions, including the busts of several famous individuals, such as Judge Mayer Sulzberger and Lucien Moss.

Charles was educated in Philadelphia and abroad, and later married Clothilde Florence Cohen, in 1880, with whom he had three children, Henry, Albert, and Eleanor. Mary was similarly educated in elite private schools in America and Europe. She never married.

According to Cyrus Alder, in his necrology of Charles Cohen published in *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, vol. 31, p. 255-56, among the many organizations in which Charles was active were: Synagogue Mikveh Israel (vice-president) and (president, 1879-1881, 1903-1907); Gratz College (board of trustees); Young Men's Hebrew Association (president, 1879); Hebrew Education Society (board of officers, 1877-1880); American Jewish Historical Association (executive council).

Charles was also a member of many Philadelphia civic groups and private clubs, including the Committee of 100, the Philobiblon Club and the New Century Club. He was the president of the Numismatics and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia (1898-1913), president of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce (1913-1916); trustee of the Fairmount Park Art Association (1877), president of the Association from 1916); president of the Philadelphia Fountain Association (1923).

The published works of Charles Cohen include *Sabato Morais: A Memoir and Portrait* as well as several histories of Philadelphia institutions, e.g. the Faires Classical Institute, the Penn Club, as well as the Rittenhouse Square area of Philadelphia.

According to the *American Jewish Year Book* (1905-06), pages 48-49, Mary M. Cohen was a member of the Central Executive Board, Chairman of the Central Committee on Reciprocity, Council of Jewish Women; president of the Mikveh Israel Association; Superintendent of the Mikveh Israel religious school; manager of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society; vice-president and chairman, section on Literature and Art, New Century Club; president of the Hebrew Sunday School Society; corresponding secretary of the Jewish Publication Society of America; superintendent of the Southern Hebrew Sunday School; founder of the National Council of Jewish Women.

She was also a member of the Philadelphia Committee for the Columbus Exposition of 1893; member of the executive committee of the Philadelphia Contemporary Club; Director of the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art. She belonged to the Women's New Century Club and was "the first woman to read (an) original paper before the Philadelphia Social Science Association."

Mary was a prolific contributor to local newspapers and published, often under the pseudonym "Coralie," many literary works. She was outspoken in her many public defenses of Judaism and the Jewish people, and was called by Henry Morais in his book on Philadelphia Jewry "unwavering in her attachment to historical Judaism."

Bibliography

Cyrus Adler, "Charles J. Cohen," *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, volume 31 (1928), pp. 255-256.

"Mary M. Cohen," in *American Jewish Year Book*, 5666 (1905-06), pp. 48-49.

Dropsie College Board of Governors Minutes, "Report of the Dropsie College Library, May 26- Sept. 21, 1920," pp. 394-396.

Guide to the Depositories of Manuscripts in the United States, prepared by The Historical Records Survey Division of Women's and Professional Projects Works Progress Administration (Columbus, Ohio: The

Historical Records Survey, 1938).

Guide to the Depositories of Manuscript Collections in Pennsylvania, Bulletin no. 774 (no. 4 of Historical Commission Series), edited by Margaret Sherburne Eliot and Sylvester K. Stevens (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Historical Commission, 1939).

Morais, Henry S., *The Jews of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: 1894).

Stern, Malcolm H., *Americans of Jewish Descent*, (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1960).

Also see the relevant articles on Charles, Mary, and Katherine Cohen found in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 3 (NY: 1943).

Scope and Contents

The Charles and Mary Cohen collection provides valuable insight into the workings of the Philadelphia Jewish community and two of its leaders, particularly around the time of the turn of the century. Important events such as the Philadelphia Centennial celebration and the dedication of the new building to house Congregation Mikveh Israel (Charles succeeded his father as president of the Congregation in 1879) are also represented.

A large portion of the collection is composed of newspaper clippings, primarily dealing with Jewish subjects, such as a collection of memorial clippings on the occasion of the death of Sabato Morais. Mr. Cohen avidly collected articles relating to the controversies of his time -- including the question of whether Jews were a race or religion, the Dreyfus Affair, and other articles and book reviews dealing with archeological discoveries in Egypt and the Near East. An unbound scrapbook of articles by Charles Cohen forms part of the collection.

The collection also contains four scrapbooks belonging to Mary M. Cohen -- one unbound and three bound scrapbook volumes of newspaper articles by or of interest to her. These items may prove useful for researching American Jewish women's history and particularly for understanding Mary's activities in Philadelphia civic affairs. Also found in the scrapbooks are letters to Mary Cohen from Cyrus Adler, Gustav Gottheil, A.S. Isaacs, Marcus Jastrow, Nina Morais, Sabato Morais, Ellen Phillips, Mayer Sulzberger, and others.

Of interest to researchers of Jewish life in Latin America is an extensive diary kept by Charles Cohen of his visit to Kingston, Jamaica, Panama, and Costa Rica in 1910, as well as photographic postcards of the cemeteries of Sarajevo and Prague, and the Prague Synagogue, (circa 1916).

Notably absent from the collection is the correspondence between Charles Cohen and the Aguilars, an influential Jewish family from London. According to the 1938 *Guide to Depositories of Manuscripts Collections in the United States* and the 1939 *Guide to Depositories...in Pennsylvania*, the Charles J. Cohen collection "consists mainly of correspondence of the Cohen-Aguilar families concerning social and literary activities in Philadelphia and London. There are 450 items arranged in 71 envelopes (6" x 10"), numbered 1-71." Only a few exchanges of letters between Sarah Aguilar and the Cohen family were found during processing.

Rationale for arrangement

The original order of the collection, including the sequence of the original numbered envelopes (1-69, plus unnumbered envelopes) has been preserved as the basis for its arrangement. While many of the original groupings by subject at first appear quite random, they nevertheless often provide the context and therefore the only clue to a given item's ultimate relevance within the collection or to a dateable identification. In addition, the original titled envelopes may provide the only basis for eventually reconstructing what is missing from the original donation, e.g., in those cases where numbered envelopes were discovered during processing to be either missing (e.g. nos. 2, 18, 20, 40, 42, 50, 64, 70 and 71) or empty (see Box 3 File Folder (FF) 5).

Administrative Information

University of Pennsylvania, Library at the Herbert D. Katz Center for Advanced Judaic Studies

September 1991

Finding aid prepared by Arthur Kiron, Manuscript Curator and Assistant Archivist..

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

Donated by Charles J. Cohen (Dropsie College Board of Governors Minutes, *Library Report, May 26-September 21, 1920*);

Additional gift of Mrs. Albert M. Cohen, November 2, 1960.

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Sabato Morais Collection

Removals

See Oversized Storage Box 1 for a photo of a sculpture, signed by Katherine Cohen and dated Paris Salon, 1896.

Controlled Access Headings

FORM/GENRE(S)

- Diaries
- Letters (correspondence)
- Newspaper clippings
- Scrapbooks

GEOGRAPHIC NAME(S)

- Congregation Mikveh Israel (Philadelphia, Pa.)

PERSONAL NAME(S)

- Morais, Sabato, 1823-1897.

SUBJECT(S)

- Jews--Pennsylvania--Philadelphia

Collection Inventory

	Box	Folder
Finding Aid, 1991.	1	1
Miscellaneous writings of Henry Cohen, 1855-1880.	1	2
Newspaper clippings about English caves; water marks; Hebrew language, 1908.	1	3
Letters by Mathilda Cohen from Mrs. Carrie Samuel, of Liverpool, England, 1864.	1	4
Letter by Henry Cohen to Charles Cohen acknowledging receipt of Charles' catalogue, 1878.	1	5
Letter by Judith Cohen to Henry Cohen, 1852.	1	6

Bulletins of Congregation Mikveh Israel; letter addressed to Sir Moses Montefiore from Henry Cohen and Abraham Hart; miscellaneous letters; clippings, 1859-1902.	1	7
Letters by Kate Samuel to Mathilda Cohen, 1851-1852.	1	8
Letters by Sarah Aguilar to Mathilda Cohen (1852-1853); letter by Mayer Sulzberger to Charles Cohen (1902).	1	9
Letters by Anna R. Ropes to Mary M. Cohen, 1853-1873.	1	10
Letters by Henry Cohen from the South and from Europe, 1847-1858.	1	11
Notes on the translation of Wisdom, Psalms, and Proverbs from Rev. Leon Elmaleh to Charles Cohen., 1909.	1	12
Notice of the election of Charles Cohen to the Social Art Club, 1877.	1	13

Poem by Mary Cohen to Charles Cohen on the occasion of his birthday, 1879.	1	14
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Notes on the Wolf fund by Abraham Hart to Charles Cohen, 1879.	1	15
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Miscellaneous papers relating to Sabato Morais and the Jewish Theological Seminary, 1890-1899.	1	16
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Clipping about Mikveh Israel, 1908.	1	17
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Clippings on the "Oldest love letter," "The New Year and the Pentateuch;" poems of Robert Louis Stevenson; notes on the records of the Palestine Exploration Society, 1908.	1	18
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Notes on the Mortara case, 1908.	1	19
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Miscellaneous clippings, receipts, and papers on Mikveh Israel, Women's	1	20
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Centennial Committee; Plan of Municipal Improvements Map (1908);
Committee of 100, 1862-1908.

Clippings on Hebrew Literature Society, Jewish Philanthropy; Oscar Straus, 1906-1908.	1	21
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Clippings on Liberal Judaism; Libraries, 1908.	1	22
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Clippings on Intermarriage; Solomon's Temple; Definition of Jew; Samaritan Joshua, 1908.	1	23
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Clippings on Synagogues; Purim; Hannukah; Who is a Jew; Dr. Schechter, 1906.	1	24
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Grace Aguilar and Rebecca Gratz; Philadelphia Sunday School, 1908.	1	25
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Clippings and notes on the Mortara case; Judge Sulzberger; review of Davidson's Parody; Question of race; the Y.M.H.A.; Jews in Literature; Hebrew printing; S.P.C.A.; Parchment; Jews of Kurdistan; Calendar;	1	26
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Menorah; Wealth of Jews; King Solomon; Hittite records; Discovery of the Garden of Eden; et al., 1907-1910.

Clippings of reviews of Schechter's Studies; Jewish proverbs; hygiene; Simon the Just; Spanish Inquisition, 1908.	1	27
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Clippings and notes on Disraeli; Sidonia; the Jewish Lord Mayor of England, 1908.	1	28
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Note on the character of Moses, 1908.	1	29
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Letter of inquiry by Charles Cohen about the discovery of a whalebone inscription by Hugo Winckler, 1907.	1	30
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Clippings and notes on books on Egypt and the Near East, 1904-1907.	1	31
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Transactions of the Philobiblon Club and related letters, 1902.	2	1
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Menu for a dinner party with various signatures, including that of T.J. Sully Darby, 1904.	2	2
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Clippings and notes on Jews, Jews in literature, and archeological discoveries, 1908.	2	3
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New Century Club Seal and related materials; Poem to Edith Cohen, 1848-1905.	2	4
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Notes and directions translated into English concerning the opening of the Ark in a Synagogue, 1898.	2	5
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Clippings on the Census; Judaism in the Early Christian period; Jewish surnames; Jastrow on Job; Sanitation; et al., 1909.	2	6
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Information concerning St. Helena and Napoleon, in particular concerning the flag draped over his funeral bier and his chess table, both of which came into the possession of the Cohen family (see below, Box 3, Folder 2). Useful genealogical information about the Cohen family also is recorded, 1909.	2	7
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Clippings, letters and notes on the dedication of Mikveh Israel, 1909.	2	8
Clippings on the dedication of Gratz College, 1909.	2	9
Clippings on the Spanish Inquisition; Jews in Tunis; Review of Hoffman's commentary on Leviticus; the Hebrew Prophets; the Alliance Israelite Universal; the Great Sabbath; et al., 1909.	2	10
Clippings and notes on Mikveh Israel dedication, 1909.	2	11
Clippings on various Jewish topics, 1909.	2	12
Clippings and miscellaneous notes on Jewish Peerage; Negro-Jew; Talmud; De Sola's Sephardic prayer book; Dr. Herbert Clay on the Old Testament; et al., 1908.	2	13
Clippings on various archeological discoveries and a letter from Dr. Herbert	2	14

Clay, 1909.

Transcribed copy of a letter from Sabato Morais; Clippings on Sukkahs in New York; Judaism in France; Ezekiel's Temple; Abyssinian manuscripts; Rabbi Akiba; Old Testament criticism, 1909.	2	15
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Autograph letter of Israel Zangwill to Charles J. Cohen and a clipping of a picture of Zangwill, 1898.	2	16
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Autograph letter by Arthur Dembitz to Charles Cohen; letters concerning Henry Cohen, 1899.	2	17
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Clippings and notices for the Committee of 100; three copies of the "Articles of Association, Declaration of Principles, List of Officers, Committees and Members of the Citizens' Committee of One Hundred, By-Laws of the Executive Committee" (1882). 1882-1900. Very acidic/fragile clippings on the death of John Hunter (1910).	2	18
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Clipping on Passover, 1900.	2	19
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Clipping on the Citizen's Union, 1901.	2	20
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Two separate envelopes numbered "57": 1) Clipping of a caricature of an opera n.d. wall-flower; 2) Extensive clippings on Sir Stuart Samuel and Herbert Samuel, 1912-1913.	2	21
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Minute on the Death of Henry Cohen, 1879.	2	22
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Letter by E. Mocatta to the Cohens, undated.	2	23
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Clippings of obituary notices for Sabato Morais, 1897.	2	24
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Notes and clippings on Mikveh Israel and of a lecture delivered by Cyrus Adler at Mikveh Israel, 1907.	2	25
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Letters exchanged between the Birmingham Free Library and Charles Cohen concerning the purchase and donation to the library of editions of	2	26
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Shakespeare's works, 1901.

Letters, clippings, and memos regarding the Committee of 100, 1912.

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1

Letter from Drexel Institute to Charles Cohen about the Napoleon items deposited there (see above Box 2, Folder 7), 1912.

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2

Empty envelope titled "General Butler, 1864", 1864.

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Photographic postcards of the Prague Jewish Cemetery and Synagogue circa 1910 and the Sarajevo Jewish Cemetery (1916), 1910-1916.

3

4

Empty envelope (perhaps from the wedding of Charles and Clothilde Cohen), undated.

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Miscellaneous letters; typewritten manuscript by Max Kohler on Judah Touro, circa 1900.

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Diary of Charles Cohen of his visit to Kingston, Jamaica, Panama, and Costa Rica, 1910.	3	7
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Constitution of Mikveh Israel Association, undated.	3	8
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Teacher's Roll Book (apparently belonging to Leon N. Elmaleh), 1899-1906.	3	9
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Clippings and notes on Jews in Rome, 1908.	3	10
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Clipping on a lecture on "Jews and Judaism in the Early Christian Period" and a note on the immortality of the soul, 1909.	3	11
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Invitation to and map of the Sinjuku Imperial Garden, 1908.	3	12
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Miscellaneous documents, notes, and receipts, including Charles Cohen's passport, 1846-1882.	3	13
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Miscellaneous letters, 1864-1877.	3	14
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Miscellaneous printed matter; certificates; circulars; programs; clippings; tickets; booklets; invitations, 1853-1880.	3	15
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Miscellaneous printed matter, undated.	3	16
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Miscellaneous printed matter; U.S. Centennial Commission, circa 1876.	3	17
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Miscellaneous letters and notes, including discussion of Rebecca Gratz and a poem by Mary Cohen dedicated to Charles and Clothilde on their wedding day, 1862-1914.	3	18
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Charles J. Cohen, "A Visit to Monte Cassino, Italy, July, 1904". Reprinted from the proceedings of the Numismatics and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia, 1910.	3	19
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Mary M. Cohen, "Woman, Poet, Patriot" reprinted from June-July Poet-Lore (Boston: Lore, 1893). [two copies, one inscribed in 1893 to Judge Mayer Sulzberger, the other to "Charles and Cladie"], 1893.	3	20
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Mary M. Cohen, "An Old Philadelphia Cemetery The Resting Place of Rebecca Gratz" written for the City History Society of Philadelphia and read by her at the meeting of Wednesday, November 14, 1906. Published in Philadelphia, by the Society, 1920.	3	21
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Clipping on "Franklin Before the Privy Council, Whitehall Chapel, London, 1774", undated.	4	1
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Miscellaneous clippings, including the famous "J'accuse" letter of Emile Zola regarding the Dreyfus Affair, translated into English (in the Jewish Exponent) and a Gaelic language newspaper, 1883-1900.	4	2
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Unbound scrapbook of Charles Cohen's writings.	4	3
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Unbound scrapbook of letters and clippings of published articles written by and belonging to Mary M. Cohen; the first page of the scrapbook contains	4	4
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writing which is difficult to read, although the words "I love you" can be made out, 1871-1882.

Bound (black cover) scrapbook (of Mary M. Cohen).	4	1
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Bound (red cover) scrapbook (of Mary M. Cohen).	5	1
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Bound (red and blue cover) scrapbook (of Mary M. Cohen).	5	2
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