The storied, 350-year journey of Jews in America reached an epic milestone Sunday, Nov. 14, with the dedication of the new 100,000-square-foot home of the National Museum of American Jewish History, just a stone’s throw from the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

The event, culminating a weekend of grand opening festivities, including a star-studded Gala the previous evening, was hailed by a parade of dignitaries led by Vice President Joe Biden.

“I see it as an institution that celebrates the Diaspora’s past and illuminates the contributions made by Jewish Americans in our shared future,” Vice President Biden said of the five-story, $150 million Museum. “The exhibition’s narratives are Jewish stories, to be sure, but they are American stories above all else.”

The Grand Opening Ceremony began with 50 shofar blowers and the presentation of colors by the Continental Color Guard, Honor Guard Company, 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment, United States Army, followed by the singing of “The Star Spangled Banner” by The Philadelphia Singers. During the program, Rabbi Irving “Yitz” Greenberg, one of the country’s foremost rabbinc scholars and teachers, and Founding President of The Steinhardt Foundation for Jewish Life, affixed a mezuzah to the doorpost of the Museum’s entrance.

“This Museum is at once a statement of “mir zeinen doh”/we are here, [and] a celebration of the freedom of religion and dignity of existence, as well as the achievements of our people in the land of the free,” Rabbi Greenberg said. “Symbolically this Museum is part of Independence Mall, where all Americans come to celebrate the birthplace of our national existence, the initiation of a government of the people, by the people, for the people that would extend liberty and justice to all. It is altogether proper and fitting that we establish it here. Given America’s openhearted blessing, Jews became a blessing for all the families of the land. Our people joined in every facet of national life; we opened new frontiers everywhere. Fulfilling the prophet Jeremiah’s call (29:7), we sought the welfare of this land and in its prosperity, we prospered. All this, this building shows.

“In a larger sense, however, we are not here just to dedicate a completed museum. Rather, it is for this living generation of covenantal Jewry to dedicate ourselves to the unfinished task of renewing our faith and deepening our community and culture – which those who built this edifice have so remarkably advanced. It is for us to be inspired by the memories and
President’s Message

After a spectacular Opening Weekend, I am pleased to report that we have now moved to an exciting new phase of our development as a national destination museum, the only one anywhere dedicated to telling the story of the American Jewish experience.

Our Museum is now “open for business” and, despite the harsh winter weather, we have a steady stream of visitors enjoying our exhibition and the other attractions we offer.

We hope you will soon be one of them. Below are some tips to enhance your visit.

First, please be aware that for the safety of our other visitors and staff, everyone entering the Museum must go through a security screening. To speed your screening, please leave unnecessary metal items at home, as well as anything that can be construed as a weapon, including pocket knives.

Also, please refrain from bringing food and drink into the Museum as we are a kosher facility, and do not allow food or drink into the exhibition.

We have many wonderful volunteers stationed throughout the Museum to help direct you and answer questions. We also have highly trained docents available every day (except Mondays when we are closed) at 12:30 p.m. for walk-in visitors. The walk-in tours are limited to 15 people and are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, so please ask for a voucher from the front desk as soon as you enter if you wish to join the walk-in tour.

The Museum is open on Saturdays but, in recognition of Shabbat, tickets must be purchased either in advance on our website, nmajh.org, or on Saturdays at either the Bourse building, next to the Museum, or the Independence Visitor Center a block from the Museum. (You can find a story about the Museum’s Shabbat policy on our website in the Press Room.)

The Museum is also busily booking group visits at special group rates – more than 1,000 schools, groups and organizations from across the country are making arrangements to visit the Museum. Visit nmajh.org/groupvisits or call the Group Sales Department at 215.923.3811 x 141 for additional information or to book a visit.

We are also planning a range of public programs that will help us and our visitors explore the full range of the American Jewish experience. You can read more about some of the programs we are planning on page seven and on our website.

I hope this information is helpful. I look forward to seeing you at the Museum.

Politicians Praise New Museum

Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter said Philadelphia was the logical venue for the Museum because “nowhere else but in Philadelphia – in the cradle of liberty – can this story be told so well and so honestly.”

Jewish history has been a source of pride for then – Pennsylvania Governor Edward G. Rendell, who said at the ceremony that his father counseled him and his brother as children to “never forget your heritage … the struggles Jewish people have endured for thousands of years.” He added that the Jewish experience is “a great story – it’s a story of values, it’s a story of principles, it’s a story of commitment. The beauty of what you’ve done here,” he offered, “is you’ve made sure the story will always be told.”

At the Grand Opening Ceremony, Museum President and CEO Michael Rosenzweig announced the establishment of the Gwen Goodman Museum Directorship, named for the Museum’s longtime director.

During his remarks, Board Co-Chairman George M. Ross proudly told the audience that the Museum had exceeded its campaign goal of $150 million, having raised a total of $154 million in gifts and pledges, thanks to several major gift commitments in the week leading up to the
Chairmen’s Message

We are delighted to report that critical reaction to our new Museum has been nearly unanimously positive. We want to share with you a few of the comments we’ve seen.

“The New York Times” wrote:
“... [The location of this new Jewish museum is] weighty with significance, and the museum has embraced the possibilities. Freedom — American freedom — is its theme. And while Philadelphia does not instantly come to mind as a national center for Jewish culture, this emphasis, and sheer ambition, gives the museum an immediate importance.

“The museum’s argument is that the success of the Jews in the United States can be attributed to the unprecedented character of American liberty. And that becomes evident. The museum is careful to not turn celebration into a cartoon; there are many struggles along the way. It also points out that not all Jews were unambiguously devoted to ideas of freedom, nor, as it notes in passing, was liberty always an unalloyed blessing for Jewry — it implicitly accommodated assimilation and intermarriage.”

In reviewing the building’s architecture, “The Washington Post” noted:
“... [I]n its opening state, at least, the new ... Jewish Museum on Independence Mall turns out not only to do justice to its subject, but in some cases makes the material soar. Its three themed floors, plus a ground-level hall of fame, are layered with the kind of substance from which three- and four-hour visits can be wrought. It’s a serious place of learning and, in quiet, airy coves overlooking Independence Hall and its environs, contemplation.”

“The Philadelphia Inquirer” said in its review:
“... [I]n its opening state, at least, the new ... Jewish Museum on Independence Mall turns out not only to do justice to its subject, but in some cases makes the material soar. Its three themed floors, plus a ground-level hall of fame, are layered with the kind of substance from which three- and four-hour visits can be wrought. It’s a serious place of learning and, in quiet, airy coves overlooking Independence Hall and its environs, contemplation.”

“The Jewish Daily Forward” reported:
“... [T]he museum is self-consciously family-friendly. In the section that describes the westward movement of some Jews, there is a wagon to climb on; and to get a feel of 1950s Jewish America, kids can play in a fully outfitted suburban kitchen.

“In addition ... the curators have worked hard to avoid the triumphal tone of ethnic achievement that could have easily turned such a museum into no more than an exercise in kitsch.”

“The Wall Street Journal” said:
“Both architecture and exhibition mirror the tension in the museum’s mission, between full-throated celebration and careful delineation of the challenges American Jews have faced—both to their identity as Jews and their citizenship in the U.S.”

As gratifying as these reviews have been, we are even happier with the responses of our visitors, many writing unprompted notes after a visit, such as this one:
Janet Shapiro, from Wayne, N.J., posted on the Museum’s Facebook page, “I went to the NMAJH a few weekends ago. It is so fantastic. I can’t find enough superlatives to describe it. Everyone must put it on his/her to-do list.”

We would love to hear your reactions as well, and hope you will visit soon.
Present," was co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program of the University of Pennsylvania and the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University. This panel, moderated by Dr. Deborah Dash Moore, Director of the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies and Frederick G.L. Huetwell Professor of History at the University of Michigan, addressed how the meaning and rhetoric of freedom have changed for Jews throughout their history in America.

The panel featured the Museum's consultant team of historians: Dr. Jonathan D. Sarna, the Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and the Museum's Chief Historian, Dr. Michael Berenbaum, Director, Sigi Ziering Institute: Exploring the Ethical and Religious Implications of the Holocaust, and Professor of Jewish Studies at the American Jewish University, Dr. Pamela S. Nadell, Patrick Clendenen Chair in Women's and Gender History, Professor of History and Jewish Studies, American University, and Dr. Beth S. Wenger, Associate Professor of History and Director of the Jewish Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania.

The second panel, the Murray Friedman Memorial Roundtable co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, featured four prominent architects who have worked on civic and monumental projects in Philadelphia, and addressed how public space is designed in America. Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic for “The New Yorker,” served as moderator. The panelists were the late Bernard Cywinski of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (Philadelphia), Laurie Olin of Olin (Philadelphia), James S. Polshek of Polshek Partnership (now Ennead Architects LLP) N.Y., the architect of the National Museum of American Jewish History, and Billie Tsien of Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects (N.Y.).

Friday also featured an Open House for Museum members.
Sunday Festivities and Fanfare Continue at Independence Mall

The Museum's Saturday night Gala was hosted by Jerry Seinfeld and featured entertainer Bette Midler. Barbra Streisand, one of three living members featured in the Museum's Only in America® Gallery/Hall of Fame, was a guest at the Gala.

Museum Board Member Ed Snider, who is Chairman of Comcast-Spectacor, one of the nation's leading sports and entertainment organizations, and is the major benefactor of the Only in America® Gallery/Hall of Fame, recognized Ms. Streisand and the other individuals represented in the Gallery, saying, “they instill a sense of pride, a sense of community and a sense of awe at their accomplishments in every facet of American life. They show that ‘Only in America,’ with the amazing freedoms we enjoy, can someone aspire to achievements that literally change the world.”

Also recognized that night was philanthropist Sidney Kimmel, the founder of Jones Apparel Group Inc., and the Museum's lead benefactor, who made a gift of $25 million to the institution.

In her remarks, Mr. Kimmel's wife, Caroline, noted, “his father was a Philadelphia cab driver who, despite the times, would share his tips with other, less fortunate men, even when it meant a sacrifice for his own family.

“Those values were a wonderful gift, passed from father to son, and exemplify what this Museum is all about. Sidney had the freedom to capture opportunity, the drive to grow it, and the values to share his success in unparalleled ways.

“You are just one person who chose to make a difference,” Mr. Kimmel said, “and in doing so, you enriched the lives of so many and have truly changed the world and I know you are far from finished.”

A series of events at the turn of the century led to the Museum’s emergence as a major national institution. Independence Hall was undergoing a facelift, Independence Mall was becoming an increasingly popular destination, and many Museum officials thought the time was ripe to move from the 15,000-square-foot location it had occupied since 1976 a half block from the new site.

The Museum's Board of Trustees approved plans to expand, a decision that was rewarded in 2005 when the location at 5th and Market streets, in the heart of Independence Mall, became available. The Mall attracts approximately four million visitors annually, and the Museum expects many of them to visit.

Sunday's Grand Opening Dedication Ceremony concluded with the singing of "God Bless America" and a burst of confetti across Independence Mall, where the program took place with the Museum as a backdrop. Andrea Mitchell, correspondent with NBC News, served as the master of ceremonies. The Dedication Ceremony can be viewed on the Museum’s website, www.nmajh.org.

Museum Executive Director Emerita Gwen Goodman was honored at the Dedication Ceremony.

The Continental Color Guard, Honor Guard Company, 3rd U. S. Infantry Regiment, United States Army, presented the colors at Sunday’s Grand Opening Ceremony.

Photos by I. George Bilyk Jordan Cassway, Mike Coppola/Getty Images, George Feder and Scott Weiner
Museum Hosts Many Events Since Opening

Since its November opening, the Museum has been the site of a whirlwind of activity with group visits, programs and tours providing insight and experiences about American Jewish history, as well as fun, for individuals and families alike.

Museum Seeking Support for Programs

Phase one of the vision is complete: to establish a world-class museum telling the story of Jews in America and what an immigrant group can accomplish when given the opportunity to live in freedom.

Now comes phase two: significantly enhancing the Museum’s endowment so that it will generate reliable income to help support the Museum’s staff, programs and operations in the years ahead.

The Museum’s efforts to increase its endowment follow a successful Capital Campaign that raised $154 million.

“The goal of the National Museum of American Jewish History is to become a national center for Jewish education, interpreter of the American Jewish experience, and advocate for civic dialogue,” said Michael Rosenzweig, the Museum’s President and CEO. “Gifts to our endowment will help ensure that the Museum will always offer a robust series of engaging public programs as well as a variety of educational offerings.”

Examples of educational projects the Museum plans to implement include a scholarship program for underfunded schools that are unable to afford the cost of transportation and Museum admission. The Museum is also planning its first evening docent course so young working adults can participate in the training program.

“These two examples reflect important aspects of our mission,” Mr. Rosenzweig said. “In the first instance, we hope to transmit a message of tolerance for all peoples by teaching American history through the lens of the American Jewish experience. In the second, we seek to engage a young constituency in the life of the Museum. By engaging the themes, text and artifacts in the core exhibition, we hope they will discover strong connections to their own identity, whether Jewish or non-Jewish.”

The Museum welcomes leadership gifts to endow and name a number of educational and public programs and positions, including its school outreach program and the development of its online education initiatives. For information on endowment giving that will permanently link your name to the Museum, please contact Irv Hurwitz, the Museum’s Director of Institutional Advancement, at 215.391.4653, or by email at ihurwitz@nmajh.org.

Museum President and CEO Michael Rosenzweig with Hollywood icon Carl Reiner. Mr. Reiner narrates a film in the Museum’s core exhibition’s Entertainment Theater about Jewish comedians during the interwar years.

Hollywood Hosts Museum

Shirley and Saul Turteltaub came from Beverly Hills, Calif. to the Museum’s Grand Opening and were so impressed with the building and core exhibition, they offered to host an event for their friends and associates at their home.

Saul Turteltaub, best-known for producing such shows as “Sanford and Son” and “Kate and Allie,” also wrote for 36 television comedy series, and put jokes in the mouths of Carol Burnett, Bill Cosby, Phyllis Diller, Redd Foxx, Jackie Gleason and Dick Van Dyke, among others.

At the event, Museum President and CEO Michael Rosenzweig spoke about the Museum and its importance as a national center for Jewish education and culture.

Additional photographs from the Turteltaubs’ luncheon will appear in the next issue of the Museum’s newsletter.
MAY 2011

Please join the Museum throughout May for a series of programs being held in celebration of Jewish American Heritage Month.

SAUL BELLOW: LETTERS

Benjamin Taylor offers a first-hand perspective on “Saul Bellow: Letters,” a never-before-published collection of letters by Bellow, Nobel Prize in Literature winner, that spans eight decades and has been called “magnificent” by “The New York Times.” These frank and intimate letters to family members, friends, wives, lovers, and colleagues span four generations and provide an extraordinary perspective on a rich and varied life.

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 7:00 P.M.
Members: $10
Non-members: $15

JEWS SOLDIERS IN BLUE & GRAY

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the start of the Civil War, join the Museum for a screening of this first-of-its-kind documentary that reveals the little-known struggles that faced Jewish Americans both in battle and on the home front during the Civil War. It features commentary by noted historians, with Sam Waterston as the voice of Abraham Lincoln. A discussion with Jonathan Gruber, the film’s director, producer and writer, will follow. This program is generously supported by Charles & Esther Lee Kimerling Charitable Foundation.

THURSDAY, MAY 12, 7:00 P.M.
Members $10
Non-members $15

GIRLS IN TROUBLE IN CONCERT
(Album Release Show)

Inspired by storyteller-songwriters such as Leonard Cohen and Joanna Newsom, Alicia Jo Rabins’ Girls In Trouble creates first-person songs based on obscure stories of Biblical women, investigating the hidden places where their complicated lives overlap with hers. On her new album, “Half You Half Me” (Jdub Records), Rabins retains the emotional vulnerability and poetic focus of Girls In Trouble’s self-titled debut album while broadening the band’s sound into eclectic, atmospheric landscapes.

SUNDAY, MAY 15, 7:30 P.M.
Members: $8
Non-members: $10
Young Friends: $10
(Young Friends program includes pre-concert reception with the band, 6:00 p.m.)

JUNE 2011

AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY LECTURE SERIES

Join leading scholars as they explore unique facets of the American Jewish experience from when Jews first came to this country to the challenges currently facing the American Jewish community.

Members $10 per lecture, $24 for package of 3
Non-members $15 per lecture, $36 for package of 3
Save 20% when you purchase all 3 lectures.

The History of Name-Changing in the U.S.
Kirsten Fermaglich, Professor of American history and American Jewish history at Michigan State University, explores Jewish name-changing in the middle of the 20th century.

SUNDAY, JUNE 12, 7:00 P.M.

Challenges to American Jewish Leaders Today
A forward-looking dialogue between two distinguished scholars about the challenges facing today’s leadership in the American Jewish community, featuring:
• Dr. Erica Brown, Jewish Federation of Greater Washington scholar-in-residence, Wexner Foundation faculty member and Covenant Award recipient for her work in education, and
• Dr. Steven M. Cohen, Research Professor, Jewish Social Policy, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and Director, Berman Jewish Policy Archive, NYLI Wagner.

TUESDAY, JUNE 14, 7:00 P.M.

Peddlers: The Big Impact of a Humble Occupation
Hasa Diner, New York University Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History, Director, Goldstein-Goren Center for American Jewish History, examines how peddling did nothing less than make possible the mass migration of Jews out of Europe and the Ottoman Empire to the “new world.”

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 29, 7:00 P.M.

Registration Form: Register online at www.nmajh.org/publicprograms.
Please indicate which programs you would like to attend.

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Register online at www.nmajh.org/publicprograms; complete this form and fax to 215.923.0763; or mail with payment to: Programs Registration, NMAJH, 101 South Independence Mall East, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2617. Make checks payable to National Museum of American Jewish History. For more information, call 215.923.3811 x 135.

Total amount $____________________

Name ____________________________________________
Address __________________________________________
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Cardholder Name ________________________________
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Expiration Date ________ Amount $__________

Check Enclosed □ AmEx □ Visa □ MasterCard □ Discover

Registration/Cancellation Policy: Pre-registration is strongly recommended; walk-in availability may be limited. Registration will not be accepted without payment. No refunds will be given one week prior to the program. Attendee substitutions may be made. Tickets will be held at the door.
Hollywood Helps Museum Open

The National Museum of American Jewish History opened in November with a show business splash, with entertainment provided by Jerry Seinfeld and Bette Midler at its Gala, which included recognition of Barbra Streisand, who was honored for her inclusion in the Museum’s Only in America® Gallery/Hall of Fame.

Museum Director/COO Named

Ivy L. Barsky will join the Museum as the Gwen Goodman Museum Director and Chief Operating Officer on July 1, Co-Chairmen George M. Ross and Ronald Rubin and President and CEO Michael Rosenzweig announced. Ms. Barsky will have overall responsibility for Museum operations, including collections, exhibitions, education, programs and visitor services.

Ms. Barsky is currently Deputy Director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York, where she supervises programmatic areas, including the Auschwitz Jewish Center (the MJH’s affiliate in Oświęcim, Poland). She is also the project director of MJH’s award-winning new media projects, including the Keeping History Center and the Online Collection.

In a joint statement, Museum Co-Chairmen George M. Ross and Ronald Rubin said, "Ivy Barsky's depth of experience and passion for her work make her a perfect choice as the Museum's new Director and Chief Operating Officer. She will bring an important voice as we create new exhibitions and continue to develop our education programs."

Ms. Barsky founded the MJH’s Education department in 1996, helped shape the content of that museum's core exhibition, and developed and supervised all education activities, public programs, interpretive strategies, and outreach to schools and adult groups there. She received the New York City Museum Educators Roundtable Award for Excellence in Museum Education (2005), and is also an adjunct professor in Museum Studies at New York University.

“We are extremely pleased and fortunate to have Ivy joining us. She has had a long and distinguished museum career, and I am very excited about the prospect of working with her," Mr. Rosenzweig said. "I am confident that she will help us realize our goals of becoming a truly national institution and a vital center of Jewish cultural life."

Museum Popular with Groups

Four hundred and counting. That’s how many groups have booked visits to the new Museum and will receive a guided tour of the core exhibition, which tells the story of American Jews from their arrival in North America more than 350 years ago to the present. Trained docents interpret for visitors the American Jewish experience across three-and-a-half floors.

In addition, more than 1,000 groups have inquired about arranging tours of the Museum. To plan a visit for your group or organization, contact the Museum’s Group Sales Department at groups@nmajh.org or 215.923.3811 x 141. Visits must be scheduled at least one month in advance. More information can also be found at the Museum’s website, www.nmajh.org/groupvisits.