

## National museum creates online home for Jewish Americans to share family stories

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While nothing can quite replicate flipping through a dusty collection of sepia-toned photographs and seeing what a grandparent or great-grandparent looked like when they were younger, a new project seeks to capture and share some of that magic and history online.

Launched by the National Museum of American Jewish History (NMAJH), Re:collection allows users worldwide to share content such as images, video, audio and text online in a dynamic and visually engaging way.

“When you share history, you make history,” said Ivy Barsky, NMAJH’s CEO. “The pictures on your mantel, the candlesticks brought to America by your grandparents, precious letters and recipes — your personal items help characterize our nation’s identity. They will have a safe home within Re:collection.”

Designed to be easily searchable, the website’s content can be tagged by location, time or category, and displayed via maps, timelines and other means. The platform is mobile-friendly, easy to use and free.

Re:collection expands the reach of the NMAJH beyond its physical walls in Philadelphia, giving Jews across the country an easy means of preserving and sharing their history, whether it’s a family anecdote, a black-and-white photograph or an old home movie.

“The project was inspired by a long-time board member,” said Josh Perelman, chief curator and director of exhibitions and collections for the NMAJH. “He envisioned taking the model of our ‘it’s-your-story’ booths, which are in the museum, and making it possible for individuals and families around the country to share their stories and memories and to connect with one another.”

Located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, the NMAJH’s mission is to trace and preserve the 360-plus-year history of the Jewish American experience.

“What’s been really fun and inspiring is to see the different types of stories that are surfacing,” Perelman said. “Also very interesting is that the project has attracted a number of millennial generation people in their 20s and 30s who are exploring their own family stories and in the process learning more about their own heritage.”

The NMAJH is partnering with Oakland-based tech company Enwoven to build and manage the online platform. Enwoven helps groups and individuals preserve fragmented physical and digital assets, while also helping organize and present the information in an engaging, narrative format.

Re:collection is currently seeking stories and other content about the Jewish immigrant experience and Jewish cuisine for two community projects.

“The community projects are a way for the general public to contribute one image, one video or one document about either immigration and migration or food and food ways — that ubiquitous thing which always has memories and stories that bring us together,” Perelman explained.

Re:collection is also interested in more intimate stories, such as how parents met, the origins or meaning behind a family name or how and why a family originally immigrated to the U.S.

“It’s been pretty interesting to watch it grow,” Perelman said. “It’s these little gems of stories, which then connect to the other content uploaded by users. To see them together really helps us. We’re two weeks in and what we’ve seen so far really gives us an expanded sense of how meaningful these things are to the larger Jewish community.” **JN**

*Explore the collection and learn how to upload your own memories by visiting [recollection.nmah.org](http://recollection.nmah.org).*