

NEWS AND NOTES

Congregation Mickve Israel in Savannah Wins Museum Award

The Coastal Museums Association of Savannah, Georgia, recently recognized exceptional achievement by local museums and cultural institutions during the past year. The Award of Excellence in Exhibition was presented to Congregation Mickve Israel for the Gutstein Museum Renovation Project, which modernized and updated the museum's display of the unique history of the oldest Jewish congregation in the South (see *The Rambler*, Spring 2015). The renovation included an improved and fully archival display for Mickve Israel's two 15th-century Torah scrolls, which are among the oldest in the United States. Located in Savannah's historic district on Monterey Square, Congregation Mickve Israel

welcomes visitors and offers tours Monday through Friday from 10 am–1 pm and 2–4 pm. For details, visit mickveisrael.org or call 912.233.1547.



Photo by Bill Raffel

Temple Emanuel and Polk County Team Up for Exhibit

"The Jewish Families of Polk County (1909–Present)," on view from May 17 to August 5, 2016, is the first foray into Jewish history for the Polk County History Center in Bartow, Florida. Ever since the first Jewish families came to Polk County, Jews have left their mark on the county's industries, commerce, agriculture, and politics. The exhibit provides timelines for eight extended families, offering slices of their rich lives and illustrating an intricate web of relations. For each family group, patrons can view images collected by the Temple Emanuel Archive. The pictures represent a range of subjects—from baby's first pictures to confirmations to picking first fruits. Also on display are cultural and religious artifacts with explanations of their usage and significance for Jews.

The exhibit kicked off with a well-attended lunch-and-learn event by curator Catherine Eskin. Student interns Mordechai Wellish

(photos, layouts) and Hannah Kirey (artifact displays, educational materials for Polk County Schools) assisted with the project.



Photo by Catherine Eskin

Goldsmith Collection Now on Display at National Museum of American Jewish History



Margaret Anne Goldsmith with objects she donated to the NMAJH. Courtesy of NMAJH

In 2012, Margaret Anne Goldsmith, a descendant of the first four Jewish families to settle in Huntsville, Alabama, donated a large collection of family heirlooms to the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. Recently the Museum placed many of the Goldsmith artifacts on view in its core exhibition.

The new installation focuses on the 19th-century Goldsmith-Schiffman-Herstein-

Bernstein family members and the beginnings of their lives in Huntsville. Organized by family unit, it includes artifacts and images, a family tree, and an explanatory text panel. The four families settled in Huntsville in the mid-19th century and subsequent generations united through marriage. Family members figured in every phase of Huntsville history both economically, from the agrarian 19th century through Huntsville's growth into "Rocket City" after World War II, and socially, from the time of slavery before the Civil War to segregation to the civil rights era.

"We're excited to display artifacts from Margaret Anne's extraordinary collection," Associate Curator Ivy Weingram stated. "As the only museum in the country telling the national story of 360 years of Jewish life in America, we're proud to be the stewards of a collection that offers so many ways to explore the rich and meaningful experiences of southern Jews, from the 19th century through today."

Avotaynu Seeks Genealogy Study Participants

The Avotaynu DNA Project seeks male participants for a study of Western Sephardi paternal DNA lineages. Eligible participants must be direct paternal line descendants of members of the historic Western Sephardi communities of Amsterdam, London, Livorno, Venice, Bordeaux, or Southwest France, or their New World offspring communities in Curaçao, Suriname, and North America.

The project aims to shed light on the origins of the Western Sephardim and to establish a strong dataset of DNA results, grounded in archival research, in order to stimulate further intensive studies. At least 50 men will be tested. Participants must supply an accurate paternal genealogy with as much information as possible. DNA testing kits will be provided at no cost. Individual privacy will be protected and the results of the study will be published.

If you are interested in participating or know someone who might be eligible, please contact Adam Brown at avotaynudna@gmail.com for more information.