



JEWISH HOMEGROWN HISTORY:
IMMIGRATION, IDENTITY AND INTERMARRIAGE

A Work in Production by The Labyrinth Project

Jewish Homegrown History: Immigration, Identity and Inter-marriage is an interactive cultural history of Jews in America. It includes both an on-line multimedia archive and a traveling museum installation. The project is being developed under the direction of The Labyrinth Project, a research initiative on interactive narrative at the University of Southern California's School of Cinematic Arts.

By relying on our innovative "homegrown history" software, this project enables you to collaborate with scholars in writing Jewish cultural history. When you answer a simple questionnaire about your own history and contribute family photographs and home movies, these contributions automatically call up related historical texts, archival photographs, movies—that contextualize your own materials. By publishing your own histories through this user-friendly interface, you are able to see the immediate effect of your own digital storytelling on the public record and the way it enriches, complicates or challenges what is already known.

Thematically, our project explores what successive waves of Jews have contributed to the vibrant diversity of American culture. It focuses on Jewish immigration trajectories and the kinds of identity issues they have spawned, requiring immigrants to negotiate rival allegiances to Judaism and America, to the cities they left behind and the new ones where they settled, and to the kinds of Judaism with which they were affiliated. It also addresses patterns of intermingling with other ethnic communities encountered within these new locales. By focusing on these themes of immigration, identity, and intermarriage that recur in all émigré communities in the USA, the project strives to reach a broad public audience not limited to Jews.

In 2010, a "pilot" exhibition on California will premiere at the Judah L. Magnes Museum in Berkeley, the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles, and the New Americans Museum in San Diego. Each exhibition will feature the local region in which it is exhibited while still retaining the national scope of the Jewish experience in the U.S. and networked global connections to other sites throughout the world. The project demonstrates that all three contexts—the local, the national, and the global—are "shifters" whose meanings depend on the location and perspective of the observer. The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia will host the installation in 2012, and The New York Jewish Museum has expressed "serious interest" in being the primary New York venue.

The Labyrinth Project's Institutional Partners:

Museum Partners:

Judah L Magnes Museum and Western Jewish History Center, Berkeley

The National Museum of American Jewish History, Philadelphia

The Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles

New Americans Museum, San Diego

Autry National Center, Los Angeles

Research Partners

The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West

The USC Casden Institute for the Study of the Jewish Role in American Life

The USC Center for Religion and Civic Life

The USC Libraries

The USC School of Cinematic Arts

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