

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

OPENING

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**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY
SET FOR GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION THIS WEEKEND**

***Bette Midler, Jerry Seinfeld Perform at Gala Dinner on Independence Mall Saturday Night;
Vice President Joe Biden Delivers Keynote Address at Dedication Ceremony Sunday***

PHILADELPHIA – The National Museum of American Jewish History will celebrate the opening this weekend of its new national destination museum on Independence Mall, headlined by entertainers Bette Midler and Jerry Seinfeld at a gala dinner Saturday night and Vice President Joe Biden at a dedication ceremony Sunday.

The three-day Grand Opening Weekend begins with a symposium on Friday and includes a Grand Opening Dedication Ceremony on Sunday.

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OPENING/ADD 1

“This landmark event is a signal achievement for the American Jewish community and all Americans,” said Michael Rosenzweig, the Museum’s president and CEO. “With the help of generous supporters across the entire country, we have brought to life one of the nation’s finest and most important museums, a place for all Americans to explore, offering a highly engaging and thought-provoking look at one ethnic group’s experience with freedom.”

The Grand Opening Weekend will serve as the official opening of the [National Museum of American Jewish History](#)’s new \$150 million, 100,000-square-foot building in the heart of historic Philadelphia. It will be the only museum in the nation dedicated solely to telling the story of Jews in America.

After the Grand Opening Weekend and a series of exclusive previews for Founding Members, the Museum will open to the public on Friday, Nov. 26.

The Museum’s Grand Opening Weekend begins Friday, Nov. 12 with a symposium featuring two panel discussions. The first, from 10 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., “Jewish Encounters with Freedom: Snapshots from the American Past and Present,” is co-sponsored by the Jewish Studies Program of the University of Pennsylvania and the Feinstein Center for American Jewish History at Temple University. The second panel, “Crafting American Public Space,” from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m., is the Murray Friedman Memorial Roundtable, co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee.

Festivities continue with a Grand Opening Gala starting Saturday at 6 p.m. with a reception in the Museum followed by a dinner and special performances by Midler and Seinfeld under the stars in a clear-top tent on Independence Mall.

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Midler is still going strong after a career of more than 40 years, four Grammys, four Golden Globes, three Emmys, a Tony Award and tons of record-breaking performances. Seinfeld is an Emmy and Golden Globe Award winner, stand-up comedian, actor and writer best known for the television comedy “Seinfeld,” which he co-created and co-wrote.

Saturday evening will also include a Young Friends Gala that will feature cocktails, desserts and dancing for Museum supporters between 21 and 40 years of age, inside the Museum, from 9:30 p.m. to 1:30 a.m.

Biden’s participation in Sunday’s Grand Opening Dedication Ceremony will be the culmination of the Museum's Grand Opening Weekend. Beginning at noon, it will attract prominent elected officials, national communal leaders and other dignitaries. The program will also include the affixing of a mezuzah at the new Museum, followed by an Open House.

“Since embarking on this extraordinary initiative to create a museum exploring the American Jewish experience, the Museum’s leaders have been confident that it would join the ranks of our nation’s most important cultural institutions. The vice president’s presence as keynote speaker at our dedication confirms our achievement of that goal,” said Rosenzweig.

Biden, at age 29, was elected as one of the youngest U.S. senators in history. He served for six terms before being elected as the 47th vice president of the United States.

Andrea Mitchell, network correspondent with NBC News, is the master of ceremonies.

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A COMPLETE LISTING OF EVENTS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 12

10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Symposium/Panel Discussion #1

Jewish Encounters with Freedom: Snapshots from the American Past and Present

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, will address how the meaning and rhetoric of freedom have changed for Jews throughout their history in America.

The panel will feature 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.

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1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Symposium #2

Crafting American Public Space

The Murray Friedman Memorial Roundtable, co-sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, will feature five prominent architects who have worked on civic and monumental projects in Philadelphia, and will address how public space is designed in America. Paul Goldberger, the Pulitzer Prize-winning architecture critic for “The New Yorker,” will serve as moderator, and will be joined by panelists Henry Cobb of Pei Cobb Freed & Partners (N.Y.), Bernard Cywinski of Bohlin Cywinski Jackson (Philadelphia), Laurie Olin of Olin (Philadelphia), James S. Polshek of Polshek Partnership (N.Y.) (now Ennead Architects LLP) and the architect of the new National Museum of American Jewish History, and Billie Tsien of TodWilliams Billie Tsien Architects (N.Y.). Polshek is the architect of the new National Museum of American Jewish History.

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 13

6:00 p.m.

Grand Opening Gala

Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres in the Museum, followed by a formal dinner on Independence Mall to celebrate the creation and opening of the new Museum. The Gala will feature performances by Bette Midler and Jerry Seinfeld.

9:30 p.m. – 1:30 a.m.

Young Friends Gala

Featuring cocktails, desserts and dancing for members of the Museum's Young Friends group.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 14

12 noon

Grand Opening Ceremony

Andrea Mitchell, Master of Ceremonies

Prominent elected officials, national communal leaders and distinguished dignitaries will join Vice President Joe Biden on Independence Mall at the dedication of the new National Museum of American Jewish History.

1:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Museum Open House

The Museum welcomes visitors with tickets distributed to registrants in advance.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY

The Museum's new five-story building on Independence Mall was designed by renowned architect James Stewart Polshek, founder of Polshek Partnership Architects (now Ennead Architects).

Encompassing 25,000 square feet of gallery space on three-and-a-half floors, the core exhibition explores the challenges faced by Jews since their arrival on this continent in 1654, celebrating their experiences in every facet of American life and throughout every phase of the country's history.

Featuring more than 1,200 artifacts, as well as films and state-of-the-art technology, the exhibition showcases how an immigrant population flourished under freedom and highlights the diverse backgrounds and experiences of Jews over a period of more than 350 years. An additional 5,000 square feet will be used for changing exhibitions.

The new building also features an Education Center, the 200-seat Dell Theater, a multipurpose event space with capacity for 600 on the fifth floor overlooking Independence Mall, a café and a Museum store.

The National Museum of American Jewish History (www.nmajh.org) is located at 101 South Independence Mall East (Fifth and Market streets), Philadelphia, PA 19106. Telephone is 215-923-3811. Email is info@nmajh.org.