



NATIONAL MUSEUM OF
AMERICAN JEWISH
HISTORY
A Smithsonian Institution Affiliate

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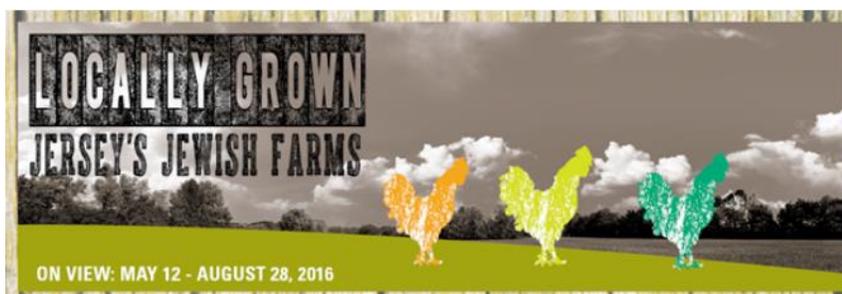
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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN JEWISH HISTORY'S EGG-SELLENT NEW
INSTALLATION EXPLORES RURAL ROOTS

Locally Grown: Jersey's Jewish Farms on view through August 28

A new installation has sprouted on the free-of-charge first floor of the National Museum of American Jewish History. *Locally Grown:*



Jersey's Jewish Farms is on view now through August 28. The show explores the story of Jewish agriculture in America through film, historic photographs, and an interactive farm-themed children's nook. Artifacts in the show include everything from **hand-made farm tools** and **land grants** to a **taxidermied chicken named Meg O'Day** and **religious articles**.

In the 1880s thousands of new Jewish immigrants fled persecution in Eastern Europe to plant crops and raise livestock in organized farming colonies. The families who settled on farms in places like Vineland, New Jersey represent a small percentage of the total Jewish immigrant population at the time, but their stories echo in today's locavores, community gardeners, and CSA (community-supported agriculture) members.



Interactive children's play corner

Part of an international movement, farming colonies sprung up all over the United States. The most successful were found in southern New Jersey's Cumberland and Salem counties; handy train lines and proximity to cities like New York and Philadelphia provided farmers there with markets and local supporters who were eager to offer spiritual and financial assistance.

Locally Grown also tells the story of philanthropists, such as internationally renowned European banker Baron Maurice de Hirsch, who wished to provide new immigrants "a new home in different lands, as free farmers on their own soil." Wary of antisemitic backlash when thousands of new immigrants fled persecution and moved into crowded urban centers like the Lower East Side of New York City, de Hirsch believed that Russian Jewish refugees "could make themselves useful to the country" through agriculture.

Family stories in the installation include:

Adolph Herbst: Adolph Herbst brought his family— and a large pocket watch that is on view in the show— from Hungary to a Jewish colony near Garden City, Kansas. They farmed there for two years before moving permanently to a successful farm in New Jersey. "This is not just the story of one family," says Velda Levitsky, Adolph Herbst's great-granddaughter. "It's the story of hundreds of Jewish families who established a thriving



Pocket watch of Adolph Herbst, ca. 1880s
Courtesy of the Levitsky family

religious and cultural life in the garden part of the Garden State.”

Golde Belopolsky: In 1908 Golde Belopolsky made the long journey—with her four young children—from the Russian empire to the tiny North Dakota town where her husband awaited them. The growing family spent ten years on the Plains, operating a general store after selling their land, before moving to Burlington, New Jersey, where they opened a grocery store.

Gus Stern: By mid-century a new population was moving into south Jersey, and towns like Norma and Alliance swelled in population as Holocaust survivors settled on chicken farms. By the 1950s New Jersey was one of the five biggest egg-producing states, and the installation will highlight the story of Meg O’Day, a prize-winning Leghorn hen owned by Gus Stern of Vineland. Meg—wittily named by Rutgers University students—won a contest when she laid an “egg a day” for one year.



Gus Stern and Meg O’Day, New Jersey, 1957
Gift of Lana M. Stern in loving memory of my father Gus Stern

Rachel Calof: *Locally Grown* is not all local; the farming colonies in southern New Jersey were part of an international movement and the installation includes the story of Rachel Calof, who moved from Russia to a homestead in Devil’s Lake, North Dakota. The handmade tools on view illustrate the hardship of life on the Great Plains , and the dedication that it took to eke out a living for her growing family.

The history of Jewish farming colonies reverberates in today’s local food movement, embraced alike by organic farmers, CSA advocates, environmentalists and educators like Hazon and Philadelphia’s Jewish Farm School. While many of the original settler’s

children moved on to college and professional lives, vestiges of South Jersey's Jewish communities remain—and many families proudly trace their heritage back to towns like Brotmanville, Rosenhayn, and Woodbine. NMAJH hopes that these families will share their stories in its *It's Your Story* recording booths; curators are also interested to learn about artifacts they may have in their homes. To contact the curatorial department, email cpingel@nmajh.org.



Taxidermied chicken, Meg O'Day
Gift of Lana M. Stern in loving memory of my
father Gus Stern

This installation was generously supported by David and Velda Levitsky.

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The National Museum of American Jewish History, located on historic Independence Mall in Philadelphia, brings to life the 350-year history of Jews in America. Tracing the stories of how Jewish immigrants became Jewish Americans, the Museum invites visitors of all backgrounds to share their own stories and reflect on how their histories and identities shape and are shaped by the American experience. An open door for all, NMAJH honors the past and contributes to a better future by sharing the power of imagination and ideas, culture and community, leadership and service, in ways that turn inspiration into action.

The National Museum of American Jewish History is located at 101 South Independence Mall East at the corner of Fifth and Market Streets in Philadelphia. Museum hours are Tuesday to Friday, 10:00 am - 5:00 pm, and Saturday and Sunday 10:00 am - 5:30 pm. From Memorial through Labor Days, the Museum stays open until 8:00pm on Wednesday evenings. Admission after 5:00 is pay-what-you-wish. NMAJH is closed most Mondays, including federal holidays and some Jewish holidays. Museum admission is \$12.00 for adults, \$11.00 for senior citizens and youth, free for children 12 and under, Museum Members, and active military with ID. For more information, visit NMAJH.org or call 215.923.3811.