

WESTERN RESERVE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JUNE 17, 2011

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Jewish Archives at Western Reserve Historical Society Endowed Through Jewish Federation of Cleveland

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CLEVELAND, OH -- The Jewish Archives of Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), which houses a vast archival and artifact collection of the history of the Northeast Ohio Jewish community, has a secure future with the fulfillment of a \$2 million endowment at the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. The achievement of the endowment, through the generosity of eight primary donors, will be celebrated at a public event on Thursday, June 30th, at WRHS.

The endowment supports a full-time professional curator at WRHS to oversee the Jewish Archives which were established in 1976 through grants from the families of Rabbi Moses J. Gries and Leonard Ratner, and with support from the Jewish Federation of Cleveland. "The meaning of this endowment to WRHS and, more importantly, to the Jewish as well as the entire community, is enormous," said Dr. Gailor Davis, WRHS President & CEO. "The Jewish Archives is one of our largest community-based collections and an integral piece of telling the history of the Western Reserve region. The endowment guarantees the future of the Archives - so it will live and thrive for future generations. Preserving memory is a core value for both the Jewish community and WRHS. In this way, we are ideal partners."

Because of its importance, the Jewish Archives was included among the 25 projects of the Jewish Federation's Centennial Initiative campaign. "The Jewish community has and continues to play a significant role in the growth and development of Northeast Ohio," said Stephen H. Hoffman, President of the Jewish Federation. "To know where you're going, you have to know your roots. And that's why efforts to preserve and share our history are so vital to future generations."

The partnership and collaboration between WRHS and the Jewish Federation is unique in terms of local Jewish archives. The Federation endowment guarantees the community's connection and commitment to the WRHS Jewish Archives. Housing the Jewish Archives at WRHS ensures they are professionally maintained and accessible to the public. "This is an excellent model for preserving community history," Davis said.

In addition to ensuring the full-time curator's position at WRHS, the Jewish Archives endowment will enable the growth of the archives program and increase community outreach and engagement. "We want the community to use the archives," said Dr. Sean Martin, the WRHS Associate Curator for Jewish History. "Not only do we want to enlarge the archives by continuing to collect important

documents and artifacts, we want to work with the community to make sure they are meaningful and relevant to current and future generations.”

One of the most famous, and perhaps most important items in the Jewish Archives is known as the Alsbacher Document, an ethical testament from 1839 listing the names of the area’s first Jewish settlers from Unsleben, Bavaria. Additional materials in the Archives amount to over 3,000 linear feet of manuscript collections, including the personal papers of individuals and families, Holocaust testimonies, and institutional records from businesses, congregations, and educational, political, social, charitable, and welfare organizations. Among the largest collections are the papers of Cleveland’s foremost 20th-century rabbi, Abba Hillel Silver, and the records of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The richness of the WRHS Jewish Archives is vital to many area Jewish institutions, including the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, where the permanent exhibit features artifacts and documents from the WRHS Jewish Archives.

The June 30th program, titled “Touching Jewish History,” will offer guests the opportunity to don white gloves and see, touch and feel items from the WRHS Jewish Archives. The eight primary donors to the endowment (listed below) will be recognized and honored. The intent is to make this “White Glove” an annual event of WRHS and the Jewish community. Program details are available at www.wrhs.org.

Jewish Federation of Cleveland donors to the WRHS Jewish Archives Endowment:

Barbara & Earl Franklin
The Gries Family
Carolyn & Jack Lampl, Jr. and Family
David & Inez Myers Foundation
Lotte Schreiber Pinkus Fund advised by Kathe & Jim Mayer
Ratner Miller Shafran Families
Judah Rubinstein (of blessed memory)
Sally H. and Stanley E. Wertheim

Founded in 1867, Western Reserve Historical Society is one of the largest privately-supported nonprofit regional historical societies in the nation. WRHS preserves and uses its collections, historic sites and museums to inspire people to explore the history and culture of Northeast Ohio and place that regional experience within the larger context of state, national and global history.

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