

Holocaust Reading Room lays groundwork for study center

With the creation of the Schwab Family Holocaust Reading Room, Penn State Harrisburg has a visible centerpiece in its effort to establish the first Holocaust study center in the region.

A community and University focal point for Holocaust education, the Schwab Family Holocaust Reading Room is the result of a generous donation from Harrisburg resident Linda Schwab and the late Morris Schwab. The Reading Room in the first floor of the college library creates a resource devoted to the study of the Holocaust and preservation of local connections to it.

The Reading Room includes materials from Penn State Harrisburg's extensive Holocaust and Genocide Collection of books and other media, now totaling more than 1,000 titles, and provides space for gallery presentations of art and documents of the Holocaust and Jewish experience. The collection is the largest specifically devoted to Holocaust studies in Central Pennsylvania.

The Reading Room's video and audio recordings of survivors, liberators, and witnesses in Central Pennsylvania allows visitors to learn about local connections to the Holocaust, while special collections, exhibits, documents, and oral histories provide additional perspectives. The room's collection continue to grow as additional interviews and documents with Central Pennsylvania survivors, children of survivors, and liberators are added with ongoing special projects and coursework.

For more information: harrisburg.psu.edu/chjs



Remnants and Renaissance: Photographs by Ruth Ellen Gruber of Europe's Jewish Heartland

KURKLIAI, LITHUANIA (August 2006) The little wooden synagogue in Kurkliai, used as a barn after World War II, is one of about a dozen small wooden synagogues in Lithuania that survived because of their size and simplicity.

MÁD, HUNGARY (July 2005) The synagogue in Mád, a small village in the Tokaj wine region of northeastern Hungary, was built around 1795. It forms a triangle with the village's Catholic and Protestant churches. Left ruined after World War II, the synagogue was restored in 2004.

SIRET, ROMANIA (September 2009) This photograph shows some of the beautifully carved tombstones in one of the three Jewish cemeteries in Siret, in northern Romania just at the border with Ukraine. The front tombstone shows hands placing money into a charity box and holding a book, denoting that the deceased was learned and charitable.

BUSK, UKRAINE (July 2006) A young woman walks through the abandoned Jewish cemetery in western Ukraine. Jews were known to be there before the 16th century and about 1,900 Jews lived there when German forces entered in July 1941 and established a ghetto. Surviving Jewish residents of Busk formed a society in Israel and a B'nai B'rith branch in New York.

OŚWIĘCIM, POLAND (July 2009) A tourist steps away after crossing the shadow cast by the "Arbeit Macht Frei" gate at the entrance to the Auschwitz Nazi death camp, which is now a memorial museum. To me, this picture symbolizes the enduring shadow cast by the Holocaust over the Jewish experience in Europe – but it also symbolizes the distance from the Shoah, the fact that people are moving forward and first-hand memories are fading.

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (December 2009) At Hanukkah, Robert Vajda chants the blessings over the candles, using a make-shift menorah set up on the bar of Siraly, a café in the old Jewish quarter that serves as an informal alternative Jewish culture center for young Jews. Candles are lit in the bar on each of the eight nights of the holiday. There is no "shtetl nostalgia" at



Siraly. Aside from the mezuzah on its door it looks like any other funky downtown café, and the background music favors hip-hop and jazz rather than klezmer.

ŁÓDŹ, POLAND (March 2005) When I first visited the Anatewka Jewish-style restaurant in Łódź, the waiter was dressed as a Hasid, complete with ritual fringes. To me, the restaurant is one of the most compelling examples of how “Jewish” can become a brand. A giant carved wooden Jew greeted us at the door. Paintings of bearded sages and saintly rabbis looked down from the walls. There were candles, old furniture, a piano, an old sewing machine. Anatewka is the name of the fictional shtetl where Tevye the Milkman lived – and in the main room, a sort of thatched roof affair stretched across one wall. Beside it, on a platform attached to the wall, a young woman sat – playing Yiddish tunes on a fiddle.

BÜHL, GERMANY (February 2008) A memorial stone stands in the center of the small town of Bühl in western Germany, at the site of the synagogue built in the 1820s that was destroyed in the Kristallnacht pogrom on November 10, 1938. An Italian ice cream parlor now stands on the spot.

KRAKÓW, POLAND (July 2008) In Kraków’s old Jewish quarter of Kazimierz, a poster for the annual Festival of Jewish Culture is affixed next to the gate leading to the 16th-century Remuh synagogue. Founded in 1988 by two young non-Jewish Poles, the nine-day Festival has grown to include more than 200 separate events. It draws thousands of people, the overwhelming majority of them non-Jewish Poles. As many as 30 or more Jewish festivals of one sort or another take place in Poland each year, most of them in towns where few if any Jews now live.

KRAKÓW, POLAND (November 2007) Jewish kitsch is for sale inside the Ariel Jewish-style café and restaurant on Szeroka street in Kraków’s old Jewish quarter of Kazimierz. The Ariel is one of the most brashly commercial “Jewish” cafes, where Jews and Jewish culture are blatantly commodified – and where refrigerator magnets bearing typical anti-Semitic profiles of Jewish faces are sold.

KRAKÓW, POLAND (June 2008) The American cantor Ben Zion Miller sings during a concert of cantorial music held in the 19th century Tempel synagogue as part of the annual Festival of Jewish Culture. Built in the 1860s, the synagogue was restored in the 1990s under the auspices of the Polish government and the World Monuments Fund.

KRAKÓW, POLAND (July 2010) During the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, the Jewish dance instructor Steven Weintraub organized a “flash mob” Yiddish dance and music happening in the Rynek Główny – Kraków’s main square.



About the Artist:



Ruth Ellen Gruber

Ruth Ellen Gruber is the author of *Virtually Jewish: Reinventing Jewish Culture*; *Upon the Doorposts of Thy House: Jewish Life in East-Central Europe, Yesterday and Today*; *National Geographic Jewish Heritage Travel: A Guide to Eastern Europe*; and *Letters from Europe (and Elsewhere)*. She has served as UPI’s chief correspondent in Warsaw and as a contributor to the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and *Boston Globe*. She has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation and National Endowment for the Humanities for her writing, and has received the Simon Rockower Award for Excellence in Jewish Journalism, and the Michael Hammer Tribute Research Award, among others.

The exhibition **Remnants and Renaissance: Photographs by Ruth Ellen Gruber of Europe’s Jewish Heartland** is part of programming organized by the Penn State Harrisburg Holocaust and Jewish Studies Center. The center acknowledges the support of Dr. Mukund Kulkarni, chancellor, Penn State Harrisburg; Dr. Kathryn Robinson, director of the School of Humanities; Dr. Gregory Crawford, library director; Dr. Madlyn Hanes, Eileen Zagon, Kurt and Doris Moses, Harry Yaverbaum, Linda Schwab, and Irwin and Nancy Aronson.

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