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Rabbi's exhibition offers insight into Jewish life in early America

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Jewish history in America didn't start at the turn of the previous century when boatloads of Jews fled Europe's pogroms. And it didn't begin with Jews arriving on American shores with the advent of World War II.

Perceptions such as these ruffle Rabbi Yaakov Horowitz, whose great-grandfather came to Boston from Jerusalem in 1915. So Horowitz, of Lawrence, N.Y., founded American Jewish Legacy, a group that showcases and documents Jewish history.

Horowitz, who also is the group's executive vice president, hopes to gain recognition for the Jewish experience in the states through exhibits of writings and photographs.

The exhibit is tied to the 350th anniversary of the 1654 arrival of the first group of Jews in New York.

"There were Jews that 100 years before the creation of the United States were practicing traditional Judaism," Horowitz says. "The rules of kosher food, the Sabbath laws were being observed. This is a special opportunity to let people know about the contributions that traditional Jewish people have had in this country and the colonies before the creation [of the United States]."

Horowitz says the project will include historical narratives describing the kosher experience from colonial times until World War II. It also includes advertisements such as "splendid" kosher goose grease for Passover in San Francisco's 1864 Gold Rush, and other products by major food companies. He hopes his exhibits will tour nationally, including South Florida.

Among the things you'll learn from the exhibit:

How a kosher table was prepared by Jews in Philadelphia in 1788 at a celebration marking Pennsylvania's ratification of the Constitution.

The way Jews settling the prairie in Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas prepare for Passover. They go to great lengths to kosher their utensils.

According to Anne Rothenberg Zabel, who grew up in 1920s Sioux City, Iowa, her mother tried an easy system for keeping order in her kitchen. "Now all my mother's milchig [Yiddish for milk] dishtowels had blue embroidery on them and all the fleishig [Yiddish for meat] dishtowels had red embroidery on them, so you had no excuse for mixing them up. ... But once in a while they would mix them up anyway, and she would have a fit."

Cleaning the house for the holiday was taken seriously, too.

"When we got ready for Passover we even washed the door knobs. Erev Pesach [Hebrew for the night before Passover] my mother would make me go through every one of those books, shake them out, God forbid someone would be reading a book and a crumb would fall out. I was 15 years old before I saw the end of a Seder [the traditional Passover dinner] because I was so dead tired."

Sophie Turnoy Trupin's recollections of turn-of-the-century Passover preparations and the High Holy Days in Wilton, N.D., was boiling the utensils. "In addition, every piece of furniture was carried [outside], scrubbed and allowed to dry on the bank where the young grass was just beginning to appear."

Jews in the Gold Rush in Northern California took great pains to celebrate Passover by ordering matzo from San Francisco a year in advance.

Kosher meat was not easy to come by. A synagogue established in New York in 1654 was the first in the colonies and had a monopoly on the kosher meat supply until 1813.

On display is a letter dated July 18, 1851. It is from Samuel H. Cohen, a young English immigrant in San Francisco. He is writing to his sister describing his religious observance: "We have kosher meat, a burial-ground, and a synagogue which was formed, three days before Passover, by 12 single young men and one married man. We have now 42 members, principally English, and we have some old married men to lead us the correct way. Our form of prayers is that of the Great Synagogue [of London]. ... Our president is Mr. Joseph, an American; our treasurer, Mr. Hart, a Pole. Mr. Isaacs, of Brown's Lane, baked the matzos for Passover, with whom 12 of us youngsters passed the festival. I do not think that the Jews in any part of the world could have kept the Passover more strictly than we did, and I am happy to say he intends to keep a kosher house all the year round, so that we shall be enabled to eat lawful meats."

There are written accounts from Jewish soldiers in the Union and Confederate armies during the Civil War who talk about building a log hut for Passover services and eating kosher food at the traditional Seder.

In a cookbook published by Procter & Gamble in 1935, they also played up that their recipes were good "for the Jewish housewife."

Details like these need to be preserved, Horowitz says. So, he is appealing to Jews throughout the country to preserve and even donate historical artifacts and photos.

"It's imperative [for] people [who] have irreplaceable artifacts and records that are in danger of being destroyed; children and grandchildren have no idea what this stuff is," he says.

Can You See Yourself with The Umbrella Girl?: Morton has launched a kosher salt recipe contest for amateurs titled "Picture Yourself with an American Icon." The deadline is April 16.

Contest entrants will be vying to have their photo and original recipe displayed on the Morton Kosher Salt box.

To enter, visit allrecipes.com/community/mortonsintro.asp to submit an original appetizer, side dish, beverage or main dish recipe using Morton Kosher Salt. Judges, including food writers and professional chefs, will choose winners based on taste, popular appeal and

appropriate use of Morton Kosher Salt. The judges will pick four winners who will have their photo and recipe individually featured on the Morton Kosher Salt box.

The classic Morton Salt Umbrella Girl icon first appeared on Morton Table Salt packaging in 1914 with her slogan, "When it Rains, it Pours." The young girl spilling salt was created as part of Morton's first advertising campaign and demonstrated that Morton salt would not clump in damp weather.

books for kosher cooks: *The Jewish Kitchen: Recipes and Stories From Around the World* (Interlink Publishing, 2003, \$29.95) by Clarissa Hyman, includes 160 pages of recipes and photos for foods such as Venetian pumpkin risotto, North African coconut and orange cake and Curaçao chicken soup. Jewish families from Greece, Iraq, Venice and even "Jewbans" (Cuban Jews in Miami) and Jews on Curaçao (a tiny island where the first Jew arrived in 1643 as an interpreter) are featured. The book also includes beautiful photos and an explanation of each holiday. What I really like about this book is that the recipe directions are very easy to understand.

easy access: www.jewishboca.org. This is the home page for the Jewish Federation for South Palm Beach County. Click on "kosher" and find kosher candy stores, bakeries, markets, ice cream stores and more in the area.

Labeling Alerts: The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America put out an alert on Keebler Co.'s Chocolate Graham Pie Crust. The product is certified "OUD," but the dairy designation has been inadvertently omitted. Corrective action is being taken. However, the regular unflavored Graham Pie Crusts from Keebler bearing the OU are pareve.

Another labeling alert is on Entenmann's Devil's Food Cake Cookies. This product is not certified as kosher and does not bear the OU symbol. However, Entenmann's Devil's Food Cake continues to be certified and bears the OUD. Consumers should always check for the symbol and not rely on brand recognition.

Kosher Connection appears on the first Thursday of each month. Lisa, who keeps a kosher kitchen in her Broward home, can be reached at lhuriash@sun-sentinel.com or 954-356-4557. Be sure to include your telephone number in any correspondence or messages.