This exhibit explores the reasons for the creation of Mount Sinai Hospital and Brynwood Country Club. It provides a sense of other realms of exclusion and how these organizations grew and changed. Both of these organizations were created because of Anti-Semitism and the challenges Jews had in being accepted into social clubs, varied fields of employment and education. In visiting this exhibit, your students will gain a better understanding of the political and social circumstances in early 20th Century Milwaukee and beyond.

Exclusionary Measures: Mount Sinai Hospital & Brynwood Country Club is directed at 7th grade students and older. While the content can be modified for younger students, the material and artifacts presented work best with older students.

Areas this exhibit explores:
- Immigration and anti-immigrant rhetoric
- Anti-Semitism
- Social Action, Social justice
- Milwaukee history
BACKGROUND:
The first German immigrants came to Milwaukee in the 1840’s and became active in the city’s growth and development; this group flocked to Milwaukee because of its reputation as a “German Athens.” They created organizations that served future groups of immigrants. This German and Central European group was more assimilated and found connections within Milwaukee.

Russians and Eastern European immigrants began pouring into the country (2.5 Million Jews over 40 years) in 1880; this group did not forge the same relationships with the general community. They were more religious and generally less affluent. The organizations created by the German Jewish community helped support them, but they did not have the same opportunities open to them that the earlier Jewish population did.

In looking at Jewish exclusion, this newer immigrant population was targeted for exclusion, but the more established Jewish community was also rejected. These new Jewish immigrants were lumped in as a threat to American identity with other newer immigrant groups, like Italians, Poles and Slavs. At the beginning of the 20th Century, much energy was dedicated to passing anti-immigration laws. World War I and the Russian Revolution heightened concerns about what these new immigrants brought into this country like Communism, anarchy and crime.

In 1921, Congress took its first steps to limit immigration and this became a theme for the rest of the decade. During the debate for in Congress around the Johnson-Reed Act (1924), Senator Ellison DuRant Smith (D, South Carolina) said the following:

I think we now have sufficient population in our country for us to shut the door and to breed up a pure, unadulterated American citizenship. I recognize that there is a dangerous lack of distinction between people of a certain nationality and the breed of the dog. Who is an American? Is he an immigrant from Italy? Is he an immigrant from Germany? If you were to go abroad and some one were to meet you and say, “I met a typical American,” what would flash into your mind as a typical American, the typical representative of that new Nation? Would it be the son of an Italian immigrant, the son of a German immigrant, the son of any of the breeds from the Orient, the son of the denizens of Africa? We must not get our ethnological distinctions mixed up with our anthropological distinctions. It is the breed of the dog in which I am interested. I would like for the Members of the Senate to read that book just recently published by Madison Grant, The Passing of a Great Race. Thank God we have in America perhaps the largest percentage of any country in the world of the pure, unadulterated Anglo-Saxon stock; certainly the greatest of any nation in the Nordic breed. It is for the preservation of that splendid stock that has characterized us that I would make this not an asylum for the oppressed of all countries, but a country to assimilate and perfect that splendid type.

Who is Madison Grant? An author, lawyer and naturalist, who wrote The Passing of the Great Race (1916), which proposed:

A rigid system of selection through the elimination of those who are weak or unfit—in other words social failures—would solve the whole question in one hundred years, as well as enable us to get rid of the undesirables who crowd our jails, hospitals, and insane asylums. The individual himself can be nourished, educated and protected by the community during his lifetime, but the state through sterilization must see to it that his line stops with him, or else future generations will be cursed with an ever increasing load of misguided sentimentalism. This is a practical, merciful, and inevitable solution of the whole problem, and can be applied to an ever widening circle of social discards, beginning always with the criminal, the diseased, and the insane, and extending gradually to types which may be called weaklings rather than defectives, and perhaps ultimately to worthless race types.

Does this sound familiar?
People like DuRant and Madison Grant, who he references, built arguments based upon racial science, using much of the same thinking as the Nazi party did in establishing their racial hierarchy. This was popular thinking and was not out of place at top universities, in political circles and throughout the country.

Jews were considered less desirable immigrants and many fields and opportunities were not open to them. Top-tier Universities imposed quotas on Jews and many businesses would not hire Jewish employees. Mount Sinai Hospital was formed to address this concern. In addition to providing employment to Jewish doctors, Mount Sinai provided medical care for poor immigrants in the area surrounding the hospital (at its founding mostly Eastern European Jews). The hospital was founded on a principle of tzedakah and for much of its early institutional life, more than half of its patients were treated for free. In 1925, Mount Sinai opened an outpatient Dispensary to handle more mundane concerns. The nurses at Mount Sinai became the first line of defense against tuberculosis, making home visits so those who were infected were not in contact with other people—fear of TB and other contagious diseases was another reason why anti-immigrant or nativist sentiment was rampant.

The 1920’s were a boom in the American economy—people had more disposable income and more leisure time. Country clubs became attractive destinations to pursue sport and socialize. The first Jewish country club in the city was Woodmont; it was founded in the early 1900’s. This was primarily a German Jewish institution with very limited membership and long waiting lists. Jews were part of the founding of Michiwaukee Country Club in 1922—this was not a Jewish institution. After six years, 8 of the 22 Jewish members were asked to resign, with the following message:

**At a recent meeting of the Board of Directors it was unanimously decided that your immediate resignation as a member of the Golf Club be requested.**

The Jews who were asked to resign were prominent members in the club and the Jewish community; if they left the club, many others would follow their lead, feeling uncomfortable remaining at Michiwaukee. They were given no explanation as to why they were asked to resign. Three of the members sued, in two separate cases. While the Jewish members won in Milwaukee County Circuit, these decisions were overturned in the State Supreme Court. In one decision, the State Supreme Court felt that it was not the job of the Court to legislate prejudice. In 1929, Brynwood Country Club opened. Initially, its

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The part that is circled says, "Probably Jewish but no unpleasant evidence of it." This is from an application to Columbia Medical School.
major focus was a golf club for men, but in time more activities were added and it became a hub for its members.

Both organizations shifted as American society changed. The Jewish population moved away from the central city and was no longer the primary users of the hospital. Yet the hospital maintained its commitment to serving the less fortunate and many Jews remained active on its board and as volunteers. In the 1980’s, due in part to changes in federal funding and the way in which people were accessing healthcare, hospitals were losing revenue. Mount Sinai merged with Good Samaritan to streamline services and decrease duplication.

Brynwood’s membership declined in recent years as other clubs accepted Jewish members and younger families did not feel that membership was as important to them. The Club was sold in 2009 to the Wisconsin Club.

Important Concepts to Explain to your Class:

- **Anti-Semitism**: This term was coined in the 19th Century to deal with what had been known as Jew Hatred (*Judenhass*) before; those who initially coined the term, used it to describe themselves and their philosophies. Anti-semitism is built on ancient hatreds against the Jews related to the Church, and their marginal role in society. In the 1800’s, eugenics and other pseudo-scientific fields developed that created a racial hierarchy in which the Jewish people were seen as racially inferior. This term now refers to Jewish stereotypes and anti-Jewish activity.

- **Nativism**: Belief that immigrants are making a country worse. In the United States, this was a popular movement in the early 20th Century, at a time when millions of immigrants were streaming into the country. They felt that these immigrants would lead to a degradation of American society. In response to anti-immigrant fear, a number of laws were passed including the 1924 Johnson-Reed Act, which limited immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe to a small portion of the 1890 census, eliminating thirty years of immigration history from the newly imposed quotas. After this law passed, 86% of immigrants to the United States came from Western Europe.

- **Tikkun Olam**: This is a concept that literally means “repairing the world” and is central to Jewish belief and practice. One of the founding principles of Mount Sinai Hospital was to provide for those who could not otherwise afford health care otherwise. During the Great Depression, the Jewish community undertook a fundraising campaign to “Keep the Doors Open” of Mount Sinai and they raised enough money to care for the 17,000 free patients who used the hospital.

Rabbi Solomon Schulson, who was a past president of the Milwaukee Council of Rabbis, said, “The task of relieving distress, maintaining the poor, helping the helpless and healing the sick, has been undertaken by our people since time immemorial. To help, to give, has become second nature with us.”
RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS:

- African Americans experienced much harsher segregation in Milwaukee and beyond. The organizations that did not allow Jews to participate also didn’t allow African American involvement. Mount Sinai School of Nursing did not integrate until the 1950’s. Jews were very active in the Civil Rights Movement and Mount Sinai responded to the needs of the central city during the 1967 Riots.

- Redlining and Real Estate: Groups are not allowed to buy houses in specific neighborhoods; sometimes they are unable to because they can’t get homeowner’s insurance at the same rate that a non-minority person would be able to. This is still an issue in Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Metropolitan Fair Housing Council works to address this (http://www.fairhousingwisconsin.com/).

- Quotas in Education: Today there is controversy that it is harder for Asians to get into college today and that many colleges (including Wisconsin-Madison) have made it significantly harder for Asians to get in compared to other minority students.

Activities and Questions for your Class:

1) Research Nativism in the United States—why were Jews, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Slavs and Asians seen as less desirable immigrants?

2) In 1928, Max Polacheck sued the Board of Directors of Michiwaukee Country Club after being asked to resign. This was one of two cases brought against the club that Polacheck had helped found. While the other case was built upon a charge of bad business practices, Max Polacheck alleged that there was prejudice because he was Jewish and this was a way of intimidating all of the Jewish members of the club and getting them to resign. Act as Max Polacheck’s attorney and write an opening statement. Consider the following:
   - Why would Jews want to be part of a social club?
   - How would several key people being asked to leave influence other Jewish members?
   - How would you influence a jury to consider your client, Max Polacheck’s, side of the story?

3) Discuss the following questions:
   - Why were Jewish doctors excluded from working in hospitals?
   - What role does a hospital play in our community? How was medicine practiced before the 20th Century?
   - How does this exhibit relate to current events?
   - What does the Jewish experience teach you about other groups’ experiences with exclusion?