

# Experience Culture, History and Baseball at Jewish Museum Milwaukee

BY MOLLY DUBIN, CURATOR OF JEWISH MUSEUM MILWAUKEE



Hedy Strnad dress design from the exhibit, *Stitching History from the Holocaust*; courtesy of Jewish Museum Milwaukee

Jewish Museum Milwaukee (JMM) was established in 2008 as a vehicle for presenting Judaism and Jewish history through the lens of southeastern Wisconsin. Stemming from a base of materials collected in the two previous decades by what was then known as the Jewish Historical Society, JMM has grown in mission and purpose to become a cultural destination for Milwaukee and the Midwest.

JMM is open to all, serving the Jewish community and diverse communities throughout the region. Visitors to JMM include groups that are both local and statewide. These include synagogue and church groups, professional organizations, performing and visual arts organizations, and individual cultural enthusiasts. Since its opening, over 600 groups have toured the permanent exhibit, many participating in docent-led discussions and activities related to their specific interests, or area(s) of study.

The eclectic schedule of shows in the changing exhibit gallery coincide with such permanent exhibit themes as immigration, intolerance and the Holocaust, Jewish traditions and historical events, and through different mediums and perspectives, explore the continuum of the Jewish experience. Occasionally these themes unite and the past and present come together resulting

in extraordinary outcomes. Such was the case with the originally developed exhibition, *Stitching History from the Holocaust*, viewed by over 7,000 people. Working from design renderings sent to a family in Milwaukee in 1939 by a Czech victim of the Holocaust, it was donated to the Museum's collection whereupon a team from the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's Costume Shop fashioned eight dresses and an unrealized dream came to life. Through their contemporary creation, the ensembles have added a new chapter to a story dormant for over 70 years, one that current generations can take ownership of and build upon into the future.

The importance of legacy is an idea that can be approached from many positions. This summer JMM looks at it from vantage points on baseball, in the outfield and high up in the stands. The exhibit, *Chasing Dreams: Baseball and Becoming American*, explores baseball's legends and myths, its heroes and flops, its struggles and its moments of triumph. Celebrating well-known Jewish heroes and iconic baseball pioneers, as well as baseball's extended family of vendors, team owners, minor leaguers, broadcasters, journalists and especially the fans, the exhibit features a core panel display on loan from the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. Additional features include locally borrowed arti-



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*Hank Greenberg after Connection; Home Run: Hank Greenberg hitting a third inning homer against the Philadelphia Phillies, April 29, 1947; image courtesy of the National Museum of American Jewish History*

facts from collectors and organizations, including the Milwaukee Brewers. Baseball has long served as an arena in which values, identity, ethnicity, and race have been projected, contested, and occasionally solidified.

You could say that this beloved pastime activity is woven into the fabric of America—a fitting concept for JMM.

American Jewry is rooted in thousands of years of searching for freedom and equality and the Museum is committed to sharing this story and the life lessons and public awareness it brings with it. So whether you're looking for enrichment or entertainment, or a mix of both, plan a visit this summer to the Jewish Museum Milwaukee and experience everything it has to offer.

Jewish Museum Milwaukee, a program of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, is located at 1360 N. Prospect Avenue and is open Monday through Thursday, 10am-4pm, Friday 10am-2pm and Sunday 12pm-4pm. For more information, please call (414) 390-5730 or visit [www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org](http://www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org). ●



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