



The Birmingham
JEWISH FEDERATION

Update



Huntsville Works To Preserve Jewish History

July 24, 2016

A great article on Huntsville, Alabama's Jewish community highlighted native Margaret Anne Goldsmith, a descendant of the first four Jewish families to settle in Huntsville. She has donated her collection of family heirlooms to the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia (NMAJH). A number of these artifacts are now being exhibited in the Museum's core exhibition, according to the article published by MyJewishLearning.com.

Huntsville is about 100 miles from Birmingham and the Birmingham Jewish Federation has a great relationship with the Jewish community there. We especially admire Huntsville's efforts to preserve the small Jewish community's history. Margaret Anne also has a fun in the Birmingham Jewish Foundation to

ensure the strength of the Jewish community in Huntsville and to help Jews around the world.

The Museum was particularly interested in Margaret Anne's collection since the story it tells provides a meaningful addition to the more well-known stories of the Jewish communities in large northern cities.

MyJewishLearning.com asked Margaret Anne about why preserving Southern Jewish history is important. We at the Birmingham Jewish Federation wholeheartedly agree with her answer! Here is what Margaret Anne had to say:

I think it's important that people all over the country know more about the total Southern Jewish experience. Some people think that the Jewish experience in the South was a negative one, involving the Klu Klux Klan, the experiences of young Jews who came to the south during the Civil Rights Movement and the [Leo Frank](#) case. To most people, those were the experiences of Jews in the south. However, those events don't paint the complete picture.

Jews were welcomed in the South from the very beginning. When the early peddlers came, they were invited into their customers' homes. From my own family's experience, we were most welcome and were able to quickly blend into the larger Huntsville community. My two great-great-grandfathers served on the board of the city's main bank. One great-great-grandfather was Treasurer of City Government during Reconstruction. Each generation was philanthropic and participated in the larger Huntsville community. It was our home; preserving those realities of Southern Jewish history matters to me.

Photo is of Margaret Anne Goldsmith with some of her family's artifacts.