

# How to Give a Tour: Guide for Docents

## DOWNSTAIRS (SANCTUARY) – no longer than 25 minutes

- Welcome/introduction: Start out by introducing yourself by name and pointing out that visitors are free to take photos, but that we don't allow flash photography in the museum; encourage questions; remember that we are to engage people as well as educate them; cover the 3 points below:
  - congregation has long history (since 1733) yet is still active
  - unique among US congregations because of full documentation/artifacts to tell our story
  - began before the birth of US, you can follow the history of the nation through our eyes
- Briefly tell early history from 1492 to 1742; cover points below:
  - Inquisition in Spain and Portugal; life in Lisbon for the Nunez family; escape to England in 1726
  - life in London (Bevis Marks, etc.) and voyage to Georgia
  - arrival in Savannah in 1733; departure of Sephardic Jews in c. 1742
- play audio tape
- take time for questions – usually about current Jewish life and community in Savannah
  - CMI has 380 families or 1000 people; total Jewish population is 4500 out of 350,000 in SMA
  - 3 congregations (Mickve Israel, B'nai Brith Jacob, Agudath Achim), JEA, day school, etc.
- take group up on the bimah and open the ark; show Torahs

## UPSTAIRS (MUSEUM) – 30 min.; refer to 33 page guide for details as needed; as you approach each Theme area, please read the introduction and the quote that follows it

- TORAHS (have group stand around the torah case, looking at either of the two old torahs)
  - oldest Torahs in the US, handwritten by scribes on deerskin in the mid-1400's
  - first Torah (yad and photo of Torah being used at anniversary service in the past)
  - second Torah (wimple from 1794)
- TIMELINE (walk over to timeline mounted across from ship model)
  - begin by reading aloud the main exhibit theme on the left ("From the beginning, we were here...")
  - pre-arrival period (Inquisition, Portugal/Dr. Nunez, London/Bevis Marks)
  - voyage to Savannah on the *William and Sarah* (point out ship model)
  - 1733 arrival in Savannah
  - 1742 Battle of Bloody Marsh/War of Jenkins Ear (most Sephardic Jews left Savannah); STOP and go on to the next section, Primary Sources, to the right of the entrance
- PRIMARY SOURCES (point out uniqueness of having so much primary documentation)
  - Graphic panel:
    - Sheftall diaries (personal records)
    - Seal and charter (incorporation)
  - Case:
    - 1<sup>st</sup> minutes book (Congregational records)
- BUILDING FOR A CONGREGATION
  - Wall:
    - corner stone
    - coins from time capsule
  - Graphic panel:
    - photo of current building at top
    - Early past due notice from 1793, services held in rented house, notice from landlord, rent paid with goods from M Sheftall's store

- Sheftall Sheftall and the organ: he heard it at Indep. Pres. Church in 1819; point out invitation; borrowed for 1820 dedication; 1<sup>st</sup> use of instrumental music in Jewish worship in US
- dedication of 1<sup>st</sup> synagogue in 1820: picture of Dr. Jacob De La Motta, the speaker; copies of his speech sent to Jefferson and Madison who responded (letters in case to the left)
- move toward Reform: Orthodoxy vs. Reform sermon in 1867 by Rabbi Lewin (vote by congregation followed that began our road to Reform and changed practices – mixed choir, mixed gender seating, no more 2<sup>nd</sup> day of some festivals, etc.)
- cornerstone laid in 1876 for new sanctuary, consecration ceremony in 1878, picture of sanctuary c. 1896 showing gas lights, windows, chairs, columns, pews, dark wood ark

#### • COLONIAL CONGREGATION

Graphic panel:

- Sheftall diary page with list of passengers; Abigail Minis story is appropriate here if desired
- equal access to land (1734 map of Savannah)
- wood fragment from the Congregation's first ark
- 1<sup>st</sup> burial ground monument/plaque; M Sheftall land grant (gave land for cemetery); plaque for Levi Sheftall cemetery)
- Oglethorpe's Letter to the Trustees about contributions of Dr. Nunez (Georgia Medical Society plaque)

#### • AMERICAN CONGREGATION

Case 1/Colonial period:

- circumcision kit (brought with first settlers in 1733)
- chanukiyah from Inquisition era when Jews were not free to worship openly
- drawing of Mordecai Moses Mordecai in Masonic apron
- letter from Sheftall Sheftall to General Moultrie about provisions for prisoners of war (#4)
- document regarding prisoner exchange/parole of honor for Mordecai Sheftall after Rev. War (#3)

Graphic panel 1/Colonial-Revolution:

- Mordecai Sheftall (portrait, head of committee which sent delegates to Second Continental Congress; highest-ranking Jewish officer; prisoner of war)
- Sheftall Sheftall (framed picture); letter to Alexander Hamilton about war loans on left; note that images of Nellie Bush Sheftall and the shoe are in the touch screen below
- letter from Levi Sheftall to George Washington that generated Washington's letter in response on right

Touch screen I: Historical (see addendum on page 4)

Case 2/Early years of US through WWII:

- letters from Washington, Jefferson, Madison (letter from Levi Sheftall to Washington on previous panel)
- Civil War: photo of Robert E Lee and Rx for bitters from Solomons Pharmacy, Lee's friendship with Abraham Minis family (Minis' pardon issued by President Johnson after the Civil War)
- WWI: chaplain's arm band from Rabbi George Solomon (rabbi 1903-45) and his Chatham Auxiliary helmet (note that his photo appears on the Modern graphic panel)
- WWII: Georgia State Guard badge of Walter Guthman

Graphic panel 2/Civil War and Beyond:

- historical preservation at Monticello (notice Jefferson's original design drawings): Uriah Phillips Levy, his mother Rachel (picture and gravestone)

- Civil War sibling heroes: Phoebe Pember (hospital matron and author), Eugenia Phillips (spy), and Capt. Samuel Yates Levy (war hero)
- Solomon Cohen and his achievements
- Herman Myers: 1<sup>st</sup> Jewish mayor of Savannah, elected 3 times; photo and funeral; image of City Hall at bottom right

## •CONGREGATION FOR GENERATIONS

### Case 1:

- shofar: originally a call to battle, now used to awaken the conscience during High Holy Days
- haggadah (1784) of Levi and Sarah Sheftall: point out the note about the 1796 birth of daughter Abigail Minis Sheftall, also her marriage to Levy Hart 22 yrs later (their ketubah is on graphic panel)
- Havdalah set and spice box (Havdalah service marks end of Sabbath when 1<sup>st</sup> stars appear in the sky)
- early prayer books and bookplate: published in 1891 by CMI to incorporate “reforms” like more English in the service; the *Union Prayer Book* adopted in 1902 with arrival of Rabbi Solomon
- Megillah: contains the Book of Esther, read at Purim services; probably scribed in Hungary between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries
- Sabbath lamp: lit on Friday nights before sundown; figures are seraphim, mythical birds, each wearing a yarmulke/kippah

### Graphic panel:

- 1897 photo of Passover Seder at the bottom showing the same Sabbath lamp in the case
- ketubah of Abigail Minis Sheftall to Levy Hart (1818)
- religious classes began in 1853, opened to girls in 1878; 1<sup>st</sup> confirmation in 1880 (1885 photo and confirmation invitations)
- Joe Byck’s bar mitzvah in 1901 (invitation displayed) was the last for awhile (CMI became reform in 1904; bar mitvahs not resumed until 1946)
- photo of early 1900’s wedding reception of David Amram Byck and Ida Boley at residence now Mrs. Wilkes’ Boarding House and Restaurant

Touch screen II: Modern (see addendum on page 4)

### Case 2:

- Guthman family and the real Miss Daisy: photo of Aaron Guthman and sisters, (3<sup>rd</sup> from the left is Lena Fox, the inspiration for Daisy in *Driving Miss Daisy* by Alfred Uhry, her grandson); playbill
- Simon Byck’s walking stick (1871 installation as president of B’nai Brith)
- Community wedding ring: 18<sup>th</sup> century ring with hinged house and tiny wine cup
- Matzah cover: used on Rabbi Solomon’s Passover Seder table, donated by his nephew A J Cohen as one of the museum’s first gifts
- Confirmation chain (begun 1935)

## •A MODERN CONGREGATION

### Graphic panel:

- Girl Scouts: founded in Savannah in 1912 by Juliet Gordon Low, 3 congregants among 1<sup>st</sup> five GS leaders (Mildred Guckenheimer’s certificate); 1<sup>st</sup> camping trip photo
- photo of Rabbi Solomon’s graduating class at UHC (rabbi for 42 years!)
- pattern of cooperation with nearby churches; CMI used space at Wesley Monumental Meth. Church following 1927 fire; favor returned in 1953 (letter of appreciation, article about Wesley fire)
- photo of Interfaith program at CMI
- Shalom Y’All Jewish Food Festival (since 1988, now attracts >10,000 to Forsyth Park)

Case: Under renovation (will include artifacts and photos related to the activities of the congregation in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

•PRESIDENTIAL LETTERS

This display contains several letters from American presidents to the Mickve Israel congregation. It includes letters from Washington, Jefferson, Madison and nine others.

## **ADDENDUM: TOUCH SCREEN DISPLAYS**

Two touch screen displays are available to supplement your tours if there is time. They contain a number of images from the Museum's collection; you may want to show one or two to enhance a particular story or anecdote. It is NOT intended for you to show all of the images to the visitors; there simply is not enough time to do that.

Available images include:

### TOUCH SCREEN I: HISTORICAL (18 images)

1. Francis Salvador and Jacob Isaac Suasso – fundraisers from Bevis Marks
2. River Street Plaque – landing sight of CMI's founders
3. Mordecai Sheftall's shoe buckle and travel kit
4. Ketubah of Mordecai Sheftall and Frances (Fanny) Hart (1761)
5. Marriage Record of Levi Sheftall and Sarah De La Motta (1768)
6. Marriage Record of Isaac Cohen and Rebecca Sheftall (1816)
7. Nellie Bush Sheftall and Sheftall Sheftall's shoe
8. Sheftall Sheftall Hat
9. Civil War soldiers from CMI (Confederate and Union)
10. "Ladies' Ram" ironclad warship from the Civil War
11. 2<sup>nd</sup> Synagogue building (1838)
12. 1<sup>st</sup> Mordecai Sheftall Hall (1902)
13. Fire photo (1927)
14. 2<sup>nd</sup> Mordecai Sheftall Hall (1957)
15. 2003 Renovation/Addition
16. Telegrapher's Certificate of Lazarus Wortsman
17. Transcription of the above telegrapher's certificate
18. Telegrapher's pin of Lazarus Wortsman

### TOUCH SCREEN II: MODERN (14 images)

1. Girl Scout cookie invoice from Gottlieb's
2. Five Girl Scouts from CMI
3. Mrs. Hoover and CMI Girl Scouts
4. Jane Feiler/David Byck photo in 1<sup>st</sup> museum
5. Bicentennial photo of President Ford with rabbis from the 6 colonial congregations
6. 275th Anniversary – photo of Rabbi Arnold Belzer, Mandy Patinkin, and Elizabeth Levy
7. Rabbi Belzer and Pope John Paul II
8. Backback Buddies – certificate
9. Photo of congregant (Virginia Bradley) with her Woman of Valor certificate
10. Savannah Interfaith Certificate
11. Slany Torah
12. Photo of Rabbi Robert Haas at the monument to Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> aviators who were shot down over Slany
13. Scribing of the Solomon Torah
14. Alan Gaynor