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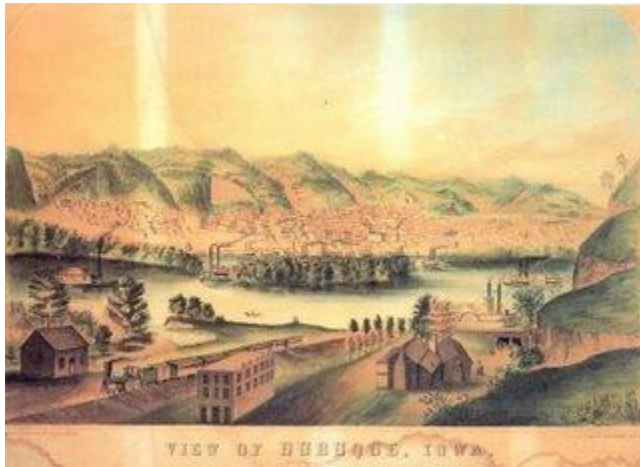
A WONDERFUL BLOG SITE FROM SCHELLY TALALAY DARDASHTI

Tracing the Tribe: The Jewish Genealogy Blog

Tracing the Tribe is a JTA blog about Jewish genealogy - All the developments, tools and resources you'll need to peer more closely into your family tree.

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Iowa: Celebrating Alexander Levi



A Dubuque museum highlights Iowa's Jewish history as it focuses on Alexander Levi, the city's first Jewish settler. "From Distant Places to Dubuque's Shores: 175 Years of Jewish Life" runs through December 30, at the National Mississippi River Museum Aquarium.

Click here for the exhibit [website](#).

In July, I received an email from lead project director Karin Pritikin who informed me about The Alexander Levi Project, and Tracing the Tribe posted [here](#) at that time.

I am posting information again as this project may be of interest to other congregations and organizations who also wish to honor early Jewish settlers or the history of a Jewish community. This is the time of year when boards get together and discuss future plans so I hope this information may capture the imagination of other groups. Funding solutions are noted which may be useful for similar projects.

Has your community or congregation carried out a project? Are you planning to develop one or are you now considering the possibilities? I'd like to hear about it. Such projects further awareness of Jewish history and provide opportunities for genealogists to get involved in important projects in diverse ways.

Pritikin is vice president of Temple Beth El in Dubuque, Iowa, and the project director of a museum exhibit conceived by a group of congregants to honor the 175th anniversary of the arrival of Levi - Iowa's first Jewish settler - designed to coincide with Dubuque's own 175th anniversary.

"From Distant Places to Dubuque's Shores: 175 Years of Jewish Presence in the Tri-State Region" focuses on the city's Jewish community, but also details how entrepreneurial "new Americans" have shaped the civic and cultural landscape.

In February, the Dubuque City Council unanimously approved funding the project as part of a competitive award designed to encourage community-based groups to participate in the city's anniversary celebration. The group has also received a mini-grant from Humanities Iowa and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Open now, the exhibit is at The National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium in Dubuque, a Smithsonian affiliate. In conjunction, Temple Beth El held a two-day Jewish Family Reunion weekend (August 23-24) focusing on past clergy, congregants and everyone with a Jewish connection to Dubuque.

For more on the exhibit, click [here](#).

Dubuque's first Jewish settler, Levi became the state's first naturalized citizen, spent 50 years as a Mason and served as Dubuque Justice of the Peace. A successful miner and mine provisioner, Levi's dry-goods establishment became one of the largest and best-known retail stores of its time.

An immigrant from France in 1833, he was followed by other French Jews. By the end of the 19th century most of the city's Jews were from Russia or Poland. Levi founded the first congregation; the community eventually founded several synagogues, a cemetery, schools and more.

Organizers received a \$5,000 competitive award from the city of Dubuque and a \$3,000 "mini grant" from Humanities Iowa/The National Endowment for the Humanities to create a multimedia exhibit. Dubuque's climate of religious tolerance is indicated by the fact that Levi was a donor for the first Catholic Church, Jews were elected and appointed to government posts at the local and state levels; and the 1939 dedication of Temple Beth El was presided over by a Catholic judge, included an ecumenical service with Methodist clergy participation and attended by residents of many faiths.

Read the story at the link above; there is also a multimedia section and more. Karin Pritikin is the lead exhibit organizer for the Alexander Levi Heritage Project, a volunteer project of Dubuque's Temple Beth El.