

TEMPLE EMANUEL EXHIBIT FOCUSES ON HOLOCAUST-ERA FRENCH JEWS

Scholar commemorates Holocaust-era French Jews in Temple Emanuel exhibit

The exhibit, on display through the end of May, features a set of photo identification cards to illustrate how French Jews self-identified when they were forced to register.

By [TOBY TABACHNICK](#)

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Patrons peruse David Rosenberg's research on the exhibit's opening day. (Photo by Lydia Rosenberg)

David Rosenberg first set foot in Amiens, France, in 1974 when he was doing research for his dissertation on 16th-century Protestants in a predominately Catholic city.

But when Rosenberg, a labor archivist at the University of Pittsburgh, returned to Amiens in 2010 upon his retirement, his research interest pivoted from Protestants in the 1500s to the Jews of the Sommes during the Nazi occupation of France.

For the last eight years Rosenberg has returned often to Amiens, delving into archival records, and discovering “new resources unexploited by local scholars” concerning the fate of the estimated 200 or 300 Jews living in the area prior to World War II, he said.

The product of some of his research is currently on display at Temple Emanuel of South Hills in an exhibit titled “Who is a Jew? Amiens, France, 1940-45.”

“Who is a Jew?” focuses on a set of photo identification cards of French Jews from the region, exploring how they self-identified when forced to register during the Nazi occupation of World War II.

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Most of the 42 photo-identification file forms (or *fiches*) in Rosenberg’s exhibit, which was designed by his daughter, Lydia Rosenberg, can be traced back to approximately June 1942, and were compiled in Amiens at the police station before they were sent to the nearby Prefecture of the Somme.

“I wanted to commemorate the lives that were lost that I have come to know something about through the research,” Rosenberg said about the exhibit. “I wanted to give people a little bit of the experience of looking at the documents, having discovered these photos, so people can see the faces of over 40 people who had been subjected to the program, so to speak. I am trying to help make the truth of those lives inescapable.

“When you see the people, in addition to knowing about some of their experiences and their words, that cries out to you – not to be forgotten, not to be turned away,” he added.

Rosenberg will head back to Amiens this summer to continue his research. In addition to his academic interest in the subject, he is hoping to make the town “more aware of this history.”

“I’m hoping that this exhibit may be translated to French and displayed in Amiens,” he said. “That’s really my goal. To make people see what was.”

Of the 42 individuals in the group represented by the *fiches*, 27 were arrested, deported and perished in Auschwitz.

In 2013, Rosenberg was named “knight in the order of arts and letters” by the French Culture Ministry for his research, and he has worked with leaders of the Jewish community in Amiens to encourage the city to erect a commemorative plaque at the site of the town’s former synagogue.

“Who is a Jew” will run at Temple Emanuel through May 31, 2018. **PJC**

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