

# Student's internship recaptures Harrisburg history

Penn State Harrisburg's commitment to archive and chronicle the history of the Jewish experience in Harrisburg has been given a productive boost from one of its students.

And as the only college in the region concentrating on the documentation of regional material specifically profiling Central Pennsylvania's Jewish history, Penn State Harrisburg is equally committed to sharing the results of its work with the community.

The newest chapter in that effort, a photo exhibit depicting nearly 100 years of Jewish history in Harrisburg, is on public display in the Schwab Family Holocaust Reading Room in the college library through spring 2009.

The internship project of Lebanon resident and American studies graduate student Kelli Rae Curtin, the exhibit titled "A Considerable People: The Jewish Community of Greater Harrisburg" was produced to

capture representative images and restore aging photos from a collection gathered by Simon Bronner, distinguished professor of American studies and folklore.

"No other institution locally can provide the library resources and campus involvement coupled with community engagement that we are able to in Holocaust and Jewish studies," Bronner said, pointing to the college's Center for Holocaust and Jewish Studies which has the Reading Room as its focal point.

Curtin's involvement came as a result of Bronner's call for interested students to accept an internship to create the exhibit. "I should note that she was not the only one who expressed interest, but she was chosen because of her experience and commitment to public heritage work," he added.

Creating the exhibit from scratch utilizing old, uncatego-

rized photos stored in a carton was a challenge Curtin willingly accepted. "I looked at the culture surrounding the images. A photo exhibit should be more than history. It should be a cultural study," Curtin said. Bronner, who oversaw the internship said, "It was historical research, Kelli took the time to learn about Jewish history in Harrisburg to strengthen her effort to produce the exhibit."

Curtin, who also holds an undergraduate degree in American studies from Penn State Harrisburg and plans to pursue a doctorate, added, "Through examining the collection of photos, I considered what story or stories the exhibit should tell. As a result, I broke it down into three subtitles in the Jewish experience - synagogues and the Jewish Community Center (structures), the legacy of the Holocaust (survivors and monuments), and social and cultural life."

The exhibit of more than 30 images shows the faces and places of Jewish culture ranging from 1920s basketball teams, to Holocaust survivors, to youthful swimmers at a day camp, to the 1912 wedding portrait of Bessie Smuck and Ike Woolf.

"When she had chosen the photos, Kelli was then able to take advantage of the range of technology available to Penn State Harrisburg students," Bronner observed. "Here's an intern who used that technology to scan, preserve, enlarge, and even enhance historic photos. She then utilized the resources of our art studios to mat and frame the photos for public display. With the college's modern digital technology at her disposal, Kelli brought the aging photos back to life and made them available to the public. They now have a new life and can be digitally archived."

Linda A. Ries, head of history and archival programs for

the Pennsylvania Bureau of Archives and History, who attended the recent unveiling of the display said, "I think the exhibit and lecture are a great step forward in celebrating and rediscovering the rich heritage of Harrisburg's Jewish population. It is a great beginning and I hope we see more of this in the future."

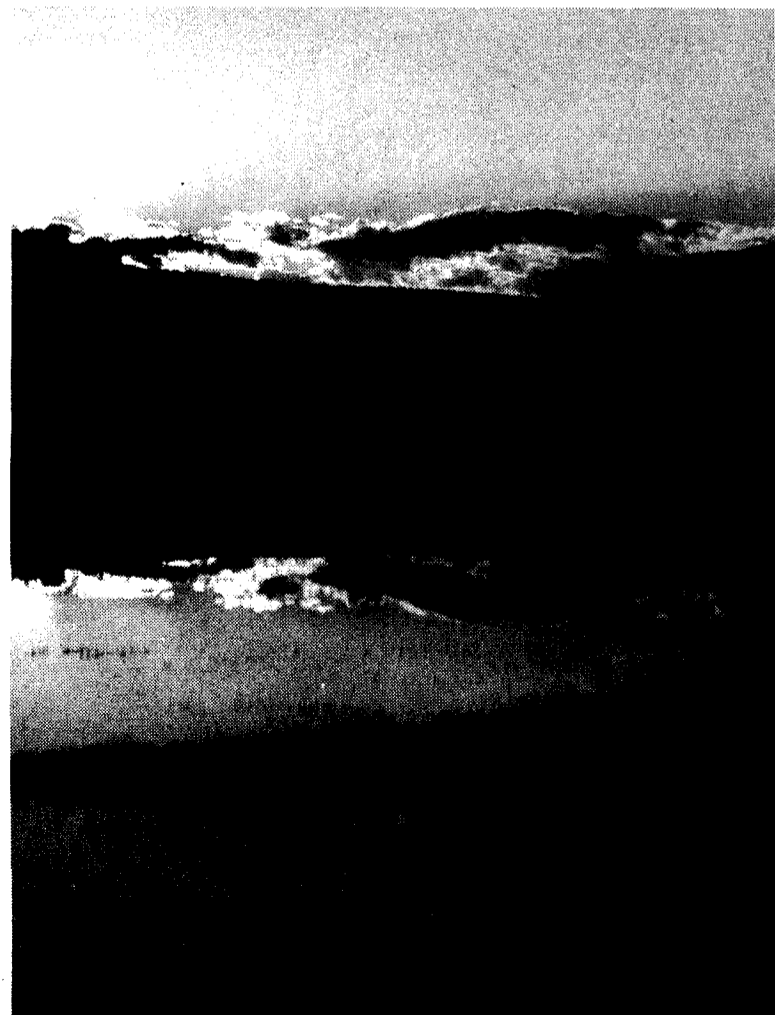
"An internship should be a learning experience and something you can carry with you into professional life. Kelli certainly accomplished that and much more with her project," Bronner added. "Her project fits perfectly with the college's commitment to share its resources and scholarship - both faculty and student - with the community."

Story courtesy of Penn State Live ([www.live.psu.edu](http://www.live.psu.edu))

## Photo Club contest winners: End of Fall 2008 semester



**FIRST PLACE**  
"Pacific Coast Highway" by Tayyaba Bhatti



**RUNNER UP**  
"Upside Down" by Mikhail Vorobeychik