

Museum Review (Virtual): Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio, San Antonio, Texas

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San Antonio is full of history, including the Alamo, the missions, and numerous museums. Most of it definitely has a western theme. However, I recently discovered a historical gem in San Antonio that I had no idea existed: The Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio (HMMSA). My wife told me about the museum and I had to check it out. Unfortunately, the museum is closed to visitors due to the pandemic. However, it has a robust on-

line presence. This museum has many resources for historians, educators, and the general public that allow for a fantastic learning experience.

There are three main ways to go through the museum. First, the museum offers a personal touch. Groups of 200 or more can schedule a docent to come to their location for a presentation. Additionally, docents can meet with a group of any size for a zoom question and answer session. Another

option is to meet with a “second generation” speaker (the child of a survivor). This would be great for a class or other group interested in the Holocaust. Finally, one can simply go through to the site and navigate through the information @<https://www.hmmsa.org/>. This is the method I used.

The site has virtual tours, beginning with *The Permanent Exhibit: The Holocaust*. This virtual walk-through of the exhibits was very interesting, with lots of written information. There is also a video walk-through that lasts about 17 minutes. However, I could not get the sound to work, even when I went to YouTube. I am not sure if it is my computer, or the walk-through has no narration. Narration would definitely be a huge help—without it, it is difficult to get context for the displays. There are other sections in the virtual walk-through that are not on video. These sections include *In America 1933-1945: Response to the Holocaust*, which traces American reaction and involvement (both good and bad) in events unfolding in Europe. There are five subsections, one of which shows how the San Antonio community reacted and helped during the Holocaust.

Other sections include: *Times of Betrayal & Defiance*, “the story of one man who risked his life to help his Jewish employers, and how he was betrayed by those closest to him”; *Seeking Justice: the Real Nazi Hunters*, highlighting the real-life stories of people tracking down Nazi war criminals; and *Isolation*, the story of how Nazis used propaganda and censorship to isolate groups from



Max Reiter (1905-1950) founded the San Antonio Symphony in 1939, the first Jewish symphony conductor in San Antonio, and served as its conductor until his death. From the Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio.

society—ultimately culminating with ghettos, and finally death camps; *and the Czech Memorial Scroll*, one of the 1564 Czech Memorial Torahs which were saved from destroyed Jewish communities during Nazi occupation. It is on permanent loan from the Westminster Synagogue in London, England.

The “Learn and Remember” online exhibit contains panels on themes such as isolation, intimidation, exclusion, separation, loss, survival, and the aftermath of the Holocaust. It is actually a series meant for educators and schoolchildren as an online event, but



Czech Memorial Scroll: The Torah scroll on display here, which was copied onto parchment by a pious scribe in 1830, was removed from a synagogue in Slaný, Czechoslovakia. Because it is badly damaged, it can no longer be used for worship services. The scroll, numbered 534, is one of the 1564 Czech Memorial Torahs which were saved from destroyed Jewish communities during Nazi occupation. It is on permanent loan from the Westminster Synagogue in London, England. From the Holocaust Memorial Museum of San Antonio.

since the event is over, one can peruse the site. There are worksheets and links to the *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, as well as online conversations. Each theme is full of personal snapshots, discussions of the themes (including how they persist today), and recordings of holocaust survivors talking about these issues. It is very interesting, insightful, and educational.

The museum site has resources for students and educators with links to numerous interesting sites for those interested in the Holocaust, including the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Anne Frank Center, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission, just to name a few.

There also is an events link. From there one can see upcoming events as well as recordings of past events, such as the Texas Holocaust Remembrance Week events that occurred from Jan 25-29, 2021. This event link provides recordings of teacher workshops and presentations, as well as lesson plans and other educational activities and links.

There is a TON of information on this website, with pictures and explanations of documents in the museum. A visitor can spend hours going through it all. If what you are looking for is not there, you can easily link to other sites covering the Holocaust. There is also a section that allows one to get involved, through volunteering, internships, and docent training.

In conclusion, the Holocaust information and research. I can't wait to Memorial Museum of San Antonio is visit it in person. truly a wonderful source for Holocaust

The museum is now open now, by appointment only, Monday thru Friday between the hours of 9AM - 3PM, but recently announced it will reopen on Monday, October 4th with unspecified hours. Perhaps it will return to its pre-pandemic hours of Monday - Friday, 9AM - 3PM, and Sunday 1PM - 4PM.

Holocaust Memorial Museum San Antonio
12500 NW Military Hwy, San Antonio, TX 78231

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