Yiddish Book Drive Begins

MONTICELLO — A city-wide drive to collect old Yiddish books began recently in Sullivan County. Anita Carlick, area spokesperson for the National Yiddish Book Center, announced plans to round up discarded and unused Yiddish books from cellars and attics throughout the city. Collected volumes will be sent to a central repository in Amherst, Massachusetts, where they will be restored and made available to teachers, students and university libraries.

Yiddish literature once enjoyed enormous popularity among the area’s immigrant Jewish population. Sets of Sholom Aleichem, Y. L. Peretz and other Yiddish classics were to be found in almost every Jewish home. In later years, however, assimilation took its toll. Books which had been treasured by parents and grandparents were often packed away and forgotten by a new generation of American-born Jews, who read no Yiddish.

Efforts to collect Yiddish books began nationally in June of 1980 with the founding of the National Yiddish Book Center — a non-profit agency dedicated to the preservation and dissemination of Yiddish literature. Administered by faculty members from Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke and Smith Colleges and the University of Massachusetts, the Center has retrieved more than 150,000 rare and out-of-print Yiddish volumes in its first three years of operation.

Organizers hope that many needed volumes will be found in local homes. All donations of Yiddish books and periodicals are welcome. Books should be brought to the area drop-off point, located at the Crawford Library on Broadway in Monticello and the Jewish Community Center on Park Avenue, Monticello.

Pick-up service is also available. For more information please phone Anita Carlick at 794-6504, or Bernard and Ruth Jacobs at 794-6753.

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