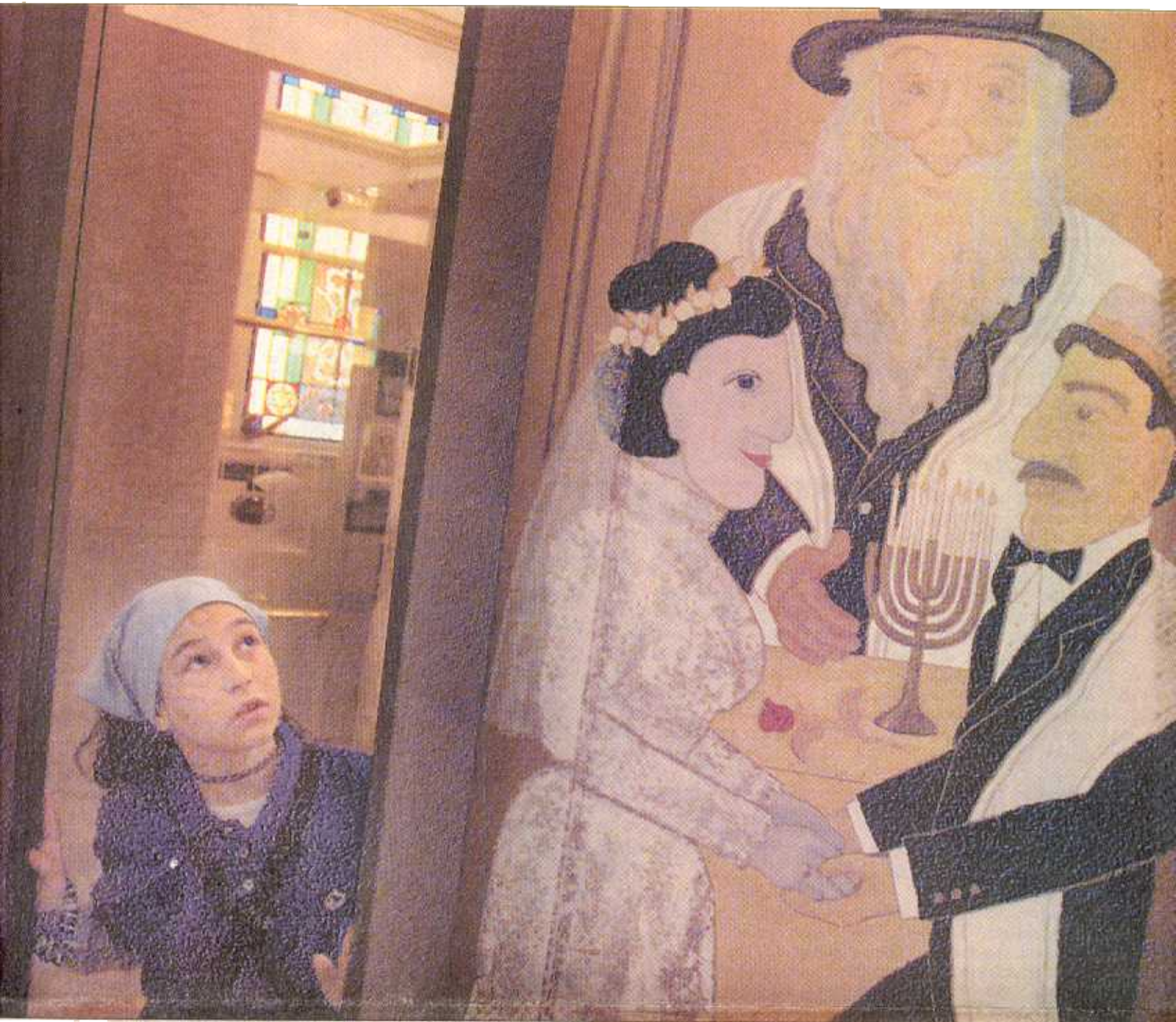


LIVING & ARTS

From menorahs to piñatas, memorabilia exhibit chronicles the journeys of immigrant families



PHOTOS BY PATRICK FARRELL/HERALD ST.

EXHIBIT: Rachel Adelman, 10, looks at a door that depicts artist Beth Grossman's great-grandmother, a Russian, getting married after settling in the U.S.

RITES OF PASSAGE

BY FABIOLA SANTIAGO

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In the German-Jewish tradition, the swaddling cloth used to wrap a baby boy at his bris is cut into strips and turned into the binding for the Torah.

The cloth is known as a wimple or a Torah binder.

Three years ago, when Debbie Niederman gave birth to a girl, grandmother Cathy put a modern spin on the tradition and made a wimple for her granddaughter, Molly Paley, who was wrapped in the pastel blue cloth for her naming ceremony.

"We wanted to do something for our daughter," says Niederman, director of the religious school at Temple Beth-Am. "We used the wimple as a way of entering her to the covenant."

The Niederman wimple is one of the traditional artifacts on display in *Passages: An Immigrant's Journey*, an exhibit of memorabilia, photographs and documents that chronicles the immigration to the United States of 24 families from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, nationalities and religions. Billed as "an experience that transcends Florida's cultures," the exhibition will be at the Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida in South Beach through Jan. 24.

► PLEASE SEE EXHIBIT, 2E



HISTORICAL BAGGAGE: Suitcase art by Beth Grossman depicts her Russian grandmother's life in the United States.

QUICK READ

SO MUCH for Mary Tyler Moore's TV sweetheart image: She's cast as convicted sociopath and killer Sante Kimes, 66, in an upcoming CBS movie, tentatively titled "The Mother, the Son . . . and the Socialite," reports People magazine.

COMING TUESDAY

AN EXPANDED stage version of the Rodgers and Hammerstein classic, "Cinderella," is opening on Miami Beach with some VIP stars. We chat with two of them, Eartha Kitt, who plays the fairy godmother, and actress and pop star Deborah Gibson, who is Cinderella.

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Memorabilia open doors to immigrants' journeys

EXHIBIT, FROM 1E

Most of the items on display came from South Floridians.

Among the highlights: a Korean bride and groom dressed in colorful, traditional clothes at their wedding ceremony. Three Nicaraguan sisters in white gowns and veils, looking like little brides on the day of their First Communion, then celebrating the occasion with a frilly white piñata in their Miami backyard.

These and many other immigrant stories unfold around a series of seven doors painted by artist Beth Grossman of Oakland, Calif. Each door is like a chapter in the life of Grossman's great-grandmother Bella, who left Russia to escape the pogroms and entered the United States at Ellis Island in the early 1900s.

The first door, all in blue, is a portrait of a lone Bella leaving with a suitcase in one hand, a menorah in the other. It is followed by Bella's arrival in the United States, a stern immigration inspector standing above the door, the lights of Manhattan twinkling in the distance.

Other paintings include a matchmaker scene — Bella's two brothers try to find her a husband through a traveling suit salesman — and a traditional wedding under the Chuppah, the ceremonial canopy, with the breaking of the glass by the groom. In the United States, Bella lives with husband Abraham behind a curtain in the back of their grocery store and celebrates the Sabbath with family and a traveling rabbi.

The last painting shows an elderly Bella passing "the light of her menorah" to Grossman as she boards an airplane for a trip to the old country.

"It's symbolic of the traditions handed down from generation to generation," says Annette B. Fromm, the museum's director of education and public programs. "She took some artistic license here because Grossman never got to meet her great-grandmother."

More symbolic renderings are contained in a stack of old suitcases. Grossman painted



PHOTOS BY PATRICK FARRELL/HERALD STAFF

FREEDOM WALL: Portraits at the Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida in South Beach partially tell the stories of immigrants.

packed until Jews no longer feel the threat of displacement."

One suitcase is painted with the items Jewish immigrants might carry on their immigrant journey: Sabbath candles, family photographs, a spice box, a Hanukkah menorah. In the last suitcase, all that's left of the original items is the menorah.

Like the doors and suitcases, the memorabilia and heirlooms immigrants bring from their homeland — or keep of their journey to the United States — tell their family history.

Some Miami-Dade school children and teachers who participated in a series of workshops about the immigrant experience provided their own treasured objects to the exhibit.

Dachelle Blanco, a Cuban-American student at Kinloch Park Elementary, is pictured with a casita jewelry box that looks like a bohío, the old peasant homes in the Cuban coun-



PICTURES ON DISPLAY: Danny Torres, a Honduran American; the Cordoba sisters, with Nicaraguan roots, pose in gowns and veils in Miami on the day of their First Communion.

wall decoration with national exhibiting her trousseau, a wedding. Genevieve Maignan,

IF YOU GO

"Passages: An Immigrant's Journey" is on exhibit through Jan. 24 at the Sanford L. Ziff Jewish Museum of Florida, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach. Admission is \$5 adults, \$4 seniors and students, \$10 families. Museum hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday. Closed on Jewish holidays. Call 305-672-5044 or visit the website www.jewishmuseum.com.

wooden chair from Haiti, its origins dating to Africa.

Some of the treasured heirlooms are valuable antiques — silver spoons, a gold-trimmed plate from Venice, a menorah used by three generations, an oversize silver tea kettle belonging to Russian-Jewish refugees.

"I can't imagine how people who left only with what they could carry in a suitcase managed to travel with this," Fromm says of the tea kettle.

Other items, like the Allen family reunion T-shirt, may seem ordinary but carry loads of emotional meaning. The family, whose members emigrated from Honduras to the United States in the early 1960s, is scattered throughout the hemisphere and comes together periodically for reunions.

Some of the stories on display carry more drama than one might realize from simply viewing it.

There is a letter, written in Greek by a relative back home, that chastises a newly arrived immigrant for not staying in touch. "At least you could have written to us," it says.

One document marks the passage of a group of Jewish refugees from Morocco to the United States aboard an American ship carrying wounded soldiers.

"You know the part in the movie *Casablanca* when the officer demands, 'Show me the papers! Show me the papers!'"