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Pernambuco/Brazil: Gateway to New York

September 8, 2004 - December 31, 2004

**Exhibit Opens To Coincide with Festivities of “Celebrate 350”
in New York City and the Nationwide Launch of the
350th Anniversary of Jewish Settlers in North America**

New York, New York, September 1, 2004 – Two distinguished partner institutions of the Center for Jewish History -- the American Sephardi Federation and the Yeshiva University Museum will co-sponsor a special exhibition, Pernambuco/Brazil: Gateway to New York, from September 8 to December 31 2004. The exhibition will depict the historical and cultural life of Portuguese Jews from their first settlement in the early 1500's in Recife, Brazil until the historic exodus in 1654 of twenty-three members of the community who landed at New Amsterdam in what is now known as New York harbor.

Organized by Dr. Tania Kaufman, Director of the Arquivo Historico Judaico de Pernambuco (Jewish Historical Archive of Pernambuco) in Recife, the exhibition consists of models, photographs, paintings, and videos that will illustrate the day-to-day lives of Sephardic Jewish settlers in Recife and who were later to form the first Jewish community in North America.

The exhibition begins with the landing of Portuguese explorers who first arrived in Brazil in 1500 (the first expedition included a Jewish interpreter) and the early settlers known as “New Christians” (Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity, but secretly maintained Jewish practices), who came to Brazil throughout the 16th and 17 centuries. During the

Dutch control of Pernambuco (1630-1654), Jewish life thrived in the region and Jews were finally allowed to openly observe the rituals of Judaism. Drawn to the lucrative colonial sugar trade, Dutch Jews began to migrate from the Netherlands to share in the prosperous economy, but they later returned to Amsterdam or traveled to Dutch colonies following the re-claiming of Pernambuco by Portugal in 1654.

Highlights of the exhibition include:

- Architectural models of the Rua dos Judeus (Street of the Jews) in Recife, the site of the first synagogue built in the Americas
- Archaeological artifacts uncovered during the excavation of the synagogue
- Examples of the types of early equipment used in the processing of sugar

Among the dignitaries who will be present at the opening of the exhibition on Wednesday, September 16 will be Vice Governor of Pernambuco, Jose Mendonca Filho and Julio Cesar Gomez dos Santos, Consul General of Brazil in New York.

Two lectures will be presented that will explore the largely unknown history of the Jewish influence in Brazil and the nearly forgotten era of Dutch rule in Brazil. These are: “Jews, New Christians and Calvinists in the 24-Year Dutch Period in Brazil – 17th Century” on Tuesday, November 16 and “1654, A Pivotal Year in the History of American Jews,” on Tuesday, December 16, at the Center for Jewish History, 15 West 126th Street, New York, N.Y. 10011. For information on speakers and ticket information contact Ilana Sperling at the American Sephardi, (212) 294-8350.

For the information on the exhibition, contact Tamara Moscovitz, Public Relations Director (212-294-8303), email tmoscovitz@cjh.org or ?

ABOUT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

Since its founding in 1973, Yeshiva University Museum's changing contemporary art and historical exhibits have celebrated the culturally diverse intellectual and artistic

achievements of over 3,000 years of Jewish experience. In 2000, Yeshiva University Museum moved to the Center for Jewish History, 15 West 16th Street, New York City, where it occupies four spacious galleries, a children's workshop center, a docent room, and an outdoor sculpture garden. Other features of the building include a 250-seat auditorium, a shop, and the kosher Date Palm Cafe. Visit www.yumuseum.org for more information about Yeshiva University Museum.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN SEPHARDI FEDERATION *WITH SEPHARDIC HOUSE*

The American Sephardi Federation *with Sephardic House* is a national Jewish organization dedicated to strengthening and unifying the American Sephardic community and promoting its unique history, cultural and social traditions through archival conservation, publications, cultural and academic programming dealing with the Sephardic experience including the International Sephardic Film Festival, the only permanent Sephardic exhibition gallery and an on-line library. Since its arrival at the Center for Jewish History, the archival holdings and library of ASF have been enriched with valuable records of personal and community history. For more information, call 212-294-8350 or visit www.sephardichouse.org