TRAILBLAZER: Connecticut Jewish Women Making History

A New Exhibition from the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford
October 4 - October 30, 2019 at the University of Connecticut
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, 405 Babbidge Road, Storrs, CT

To celebrate the centennial anniversary of women’s suffrage, the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center and the Center for Judaic Studies and Contemporary Jewish Life present Trailblazer: Connecticut Jewish Women Making History. This exhibition celebrates the successes and contributions of women in history in the United States and around the world. This traveling exhibition – developed and curated by the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford – highlights the stories of 12 female pioneers, teaching us what it meant, and what it means to be a Trailblazer.

From women’s rights activists to artists, journalists, and health and education reformers, these pioneering women overcame obstacles of gender, social class, and religious identity to make changes that continue to impact our lives today. Some of these women include:

Beatrice Fox Auerbach was a lifelong advocate of Hartford, taking over and expanding her family’s retail business, G. Fox and Co. into the largest privately-owned retail store in the US, instituting labor reforms such as a 5-day work week and advancement opportunities for African-Americans, women and veterans.

Esther Rome grew up in Connecticut and was an advocate for women’s physical and mental health, co-authoring the book, Our Bodies, Ourselves, in 1970. She later advocated for strong regulation and research of silicone-gel breast implants.

Rebecca Affachiner spent part of her adult life in Hartford, making a lasting impact on the community, becoming Superintendent of the United Jewish Charities and helping to establish Jewish Big Sisters and Big Brothers organizations. Working at her home under enemy fire, Affachiner had cut up a bed sheet, sewn into it a six-pointed blue star and two stripes, and colored it with blue crayon. When David Ben Gurion announced the formation of the Israeli state, Affachiner joyfully hung her homemade flag from the window of her apartment.

Costumes on loan from the
Estella M. Sprague Collection of Historic Costumes and Textiles, UConn School of Fine Arts

This exhibit was partially funded by a grant from the Beatrice Fox Auerbach Fund/Koopman Share at the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Hartford and the generosity of individual donors.

This exhibit debuted in the Mandell Jewish Community Center from September 3 – October 2, and is currently on loan from the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Hartford through October 30, 2019.