



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(May 4, 2016) Dallas, TX - In a morning ceremony, Robert M. Edsel, Founder and Chairman of the *Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art*, announced the donation of two important objects to the *Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance*. The first is a seven-branch menorah, one of thousands stolen or displaced during World War II as the Nazis exterminated Jewish communities and looted their belongings.

At war's end, the United States faced an enormously challenging and heartbreaking issue: what to do with the hundreds of thousands of religious and cultural objects that belonged to victims of the Holocaust found in the U.S. Zone of Occupation. While the Monuments Men sorted and inventoried millions of books and other cultural treasures stolen by the Nazis, various Jewish organizations united to create an organization known as the JCR (Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.). The JCR later served as trustee to heirless cultural property and made decisions about the distribution of these items guided by a commitment to perpetuate the cultural heritage of the Jewish people. Over the next few years, they redistributed hundreds of thousands of books, Torah scrolls, and other religious objects to organizations in Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and other countries in Western Europe. Today's donation of the menorah to the Dallas Holocaust Museum follows in that same vein.

The second object is a wartime album containing 46 tipped-in photographs showing daily work activities of the Monuments Men at the Offenbach Archival Depot, one of three principal collecting points for cultural treasures and works of art looted by the Nazis

during World War II. Monuments Man Corporal Rouben Sami received this album from Monuments Officer Captain Isaac Bencowitz, Director of the Offenbach Archival Depot, in recognition of Sami's work at that facility. Five Monuments Men have been identified in the photographs, including Monuments Officer Lieutenant Colonel Richard Howard, the third director of Dallas Museum of Art. Included with the album is a handwritten note to Sami from Bencowitz's secretary. The Rouben Sami album now joins the list of other known albums at the Algemeen Rijksarchief in The Hague; at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; at the New York Public Library in New York City; and at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland.

“The Monuments Men Foundation is pleased that after some 70 years, this menorah will now have a permanent and appropriate home at one of our city's most important cultural institutions, the Dallas Holocaust Museum/Center for Education and Tolerance,” said Robert Edsel. “Now, after a very long journey, it will serve future generations as an ever present reminder of the horrors inflicted on humanity by Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. The Foundation is also excited that the album of photographs documenting the work of the Monuments Men in identifying and returning some of the millions of objects stolen during the war will reside at the Museum. The Foundation continues to receive leads through its toll free tip line 1-866-WWII-ART (1-866-994-4278) about works of art and other cultural items, in particular those which veterans may have brought home as souvenirs. I would like to thank Ms. Suzanne Sherr, who had possession of the menorah, which she received from a friend of an American soldier who brought it home as a souvenir after the war. We hope her example will encourage others who may have cultural property that was in Europe during the war to contact the Foundation. Our thanks also extend to Rouben and Lee Sami, and to their daughter Rene, for the generous donation of this important album documenting the work of the Monuments Men after the war.”

“We're thrilled to receive this cherished album and beautiful menorah. As symbols of repair and restoration after the horrors of Nazi aggression, as well as of Jewish continuity and perseverance, we will proudly display them in the new facility we plan to build in

Dallas' historic West End," says Dallas Holocaust Museum President and CEO Mary Pat Higgins. "The Monuments Men Foundation, in continuing the work of the Monuments Men, assures that our cultural heritage is protected and restored to its rightful place. The Foundation and its work inspire us to never forget what happened in those dark years and to redouble our efforts to fight prejudice, hatred and indifference for humanity's benefit."

The work of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives section is the subject of the 2014 Sony Pictures and 20th Century Fox film *The Monuments Men*. The film, which stars George Clooney and Cate Blanchett, among others, is based on Robert Edsel's book *Monuments Men: Allied Heroes, Nazi Thieves and the Greatest Treasure Hunt in History*.

### **About the Monuments Men Foundation**

The Monuments Men Foundation for the Preservation of Art is a recipient of the National Humanities Medal, the highest honor given in the United States for excellence in the Humanities field. The Foundation was created to raise public awareness of the 345 men and women from fourteen nations, many of whom were museum directors, curators, and educators, who protected monuments and other cultural treasures from the destruction of World War II. By 1945, these heroes of civilization had tracked, located and later returned more than 5 million artistic and cultural items stolen by Hitler and the Nazis. For more information about the Monuments Men Foundation, please visit [www.monumentsmenfoundation.org](http://www.monumentsmenfoundation.org).

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