May is a time when we gather to share the pride of what American Jews have accomplished and contributed. Since all of us are immigrants or descendants of immigrants, this year’s kick-off event at the Jewish Museum of Florida is “Coming to America.” Stephen Whitfield of Brandeis University will speak on the topic of “The Jewish Impact & the Jewish Response.”

RSPV for this free event by calling 786-972-3175 or email info@jewishmuseum.com. We look forward to your attendance.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Broward County are co-sponsoring this event with the Jewish Museum of Florida.

WHAT IS JEWISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH? Initiated by the Jewish Museum of Florida, with the effort led by Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz, President George W. Bush signed a resolution in 2006 that each May would be Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM).

Like other groups’ months, JAHM is a time to celebrate the contributions of American Jews to the fabric of our nation’s lives. America has been both a haven and a home to Jews. Many arrived as immigrants seeking escape from persecution, and in finding freedom, tolerance and opportunities here, have given back in all areas to enrich our national culture.

Each May, the President of the U.S. issues a Proclamation and, for the past two years, President Barack Obama has hosted a reception in the White House.

2012 OBSERVANCE

The theme is Immigration. Since arriving in St. Augustine, Florida in the 1500s (as Convenos) or in New Amsterdam (present-day New York City) in 1654, the Jewish people have achieved great success in America, treading tirelessly in strengthening the nation and in their commitments to faith and family.

The speaker, Stephen Whitfield, says, “A century ago, over two million Jews came to the United States from eastern and central Europe (from 1881 until 1914). The impact of this migration has been innumerable. The changed America. No other Diaspora community has ever been larger or more powerful or more secure. But America also changed the newcomers. Their magnitude, their influence, their success also led to a rethinking of how the nation defined itself - and Jewish thinkers and writers felt compelled to address the question of how their allegiance might be reconciled with American citizenship, so that any tension would be creative.” Along with examples of Jewish writers and thinkers, Whitfield will discuss the impact of Jews on Hollywood and music.

Stephen Whitfield, author of eight books, was raised in Jacksonville, Fl. and teaches in the American Studies Program at Brandeis University. He earned his Ph.D. from Brandeis University in 1972 in the History of American Civilization, as M.A. from Yale University and a B.A. from Tufts University. Whitfield has had Visiting Professorships at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and at the Catholic University of Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve, twice at the University of Paris IV (Sorbonne), and at the University of Munich. He was the JAHM speaker in 2007 on the Contributions of American Jews to American Music.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM

The Jewish Museum of Florida is housed in two adjacent lovingly restored historic buildings on South Beach that were once synagogues for Miami Beach’s first Jewish congregation. The Museum’s focal point is its core exhibit MOJIC: Jewish Life in Florida - 1783 to the Present and temporary history and art exhibits that change periodically. Currently on display: Max Miller: Final Mourners’ Kaddish - 333 Days in Paintings through May 13 and the exhibition Lithuania & The Florida Connection through September 30, 2012. A Collections & Research Center, several Films, Timeline Wall of Jewish history, Museum Store filled with unique items. The Museum’s Bistro complete the experience for visitors of all ages and backgrounds. The Museum is accredited by the American Association of Museums.

Open daily 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. except Mondays, Civil and Jewish holidays. General admission: Adults/$6; Senior/$5; Families/$12; Members and children under 6/Always Free Saturday/Fees are $101 Washington Avenue, Miami Beach 33139. For information: 305-672-5044 or www.jewishmuseum.com.