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Leonard Nimoy Narrates Documentary Film for Beth Sholom Synagogue Visitor Center

Leonard Nimoy has completed the narration of a new documentary film created for Beth Sholom Synagogue to educate and engage visitors at its National Historic Landmark building. The film is about Beth Sholom Synagogue, the only synagogue designed by the legendary architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Located in Elkins Park, Beth Sholom, like Wright's Guggenheim Museum in New York, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year and is a National Historic Landmark. The completed film will be presented in a dedicated screening room in a new Visitor Center now being built within the synagogue itself. The Visitor Center will be dedicated on Sunday, November 15, 2009, with a free event open to the public featuring Paul Goldberger, architecture critic for the *New Yorker* magazine.

Leonard Nimoy is best known for his role as Spock on the original television series *Star Trek*. In addition to his long acting career, Nimoy has written two autobiographies, the first called *I Am Not Spock* (1977) and the second entitled *I Am Spock* (1995). He has also written and published several volumes of poetry, along with many of his photographs. Currently, Nimoy has reduced his acting and directing work to focus on photography, philanthropy and Jewish activities. His role in this documentary is an example of Nimoy's dedication to the Jewish community: he serves on an advisory board of the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, funds a recording project for the National Yiddish Book Center and sponsors the Temple Israel concerts, among other endeavors.

This documentary, titled "An American Synagogue: Frank Lloyd Wright, Mortimer Cohen and The Making of Beth Sholom," tells the remarkable story of this landmark structure, which arose through the fruitful relationship between Frank Lloyd Wright -- then in his eighties and at the peak of his fame as America's most prominent architect -- and the synagogue's charismatic leader, Rabbi Mortimer Cohen. Their relationship comes to life through the extraordinary, years-long correspondence between the two men, quoted in voice-over by character actors during the film. The letters show these two very different personalities uniting in the common goal of a new concept in American synagogue architecture. The film draws on a wealth of visual materials, including original architectural drawings and construction stills, as well as evocative period footage.

This film, under consideration for airing on Public Television, traces the evolution of the design of this great work of architecture, and explores how its innovative ideas emerged. The film captures the essence of the remarkable personal dynamic between the two men, which ended just as the building was about to open in 1959 with Wright's death at 91. In the decades since, the building has taken its rightful place among the landmarks of modern American architecture, and is one of most significant houses of worship built in the United States.

The film, a Picture Projects production, was co-directed by Alison Cornyn and James Sand-

ers, who also wrote the script. Sanders, an architect and writer, co-wrote and co-conceived (with Ric Burns) the landmark eight-part PBS series "New York: A Documentary Film" for American Experience, which won several Emmys and a Columbia-duPont award, and "Andy Warhol: A Documentary Film," for American Masters, for which he won the Emmy for Outstanding Non-Fiction Writing, along with a Peabody award, in 2007. Cornyn, Director of Picture Projects, is an interdisciplinary artist whose online documentary and feature work has won Peabody, Webby, Pew's Batten, National Press Club and Gracie awards.

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Beth Sholom Synagogue: Beth Sholom Synagogue (designed and built 1953-1959), a National Historic Landmark, is one of the most important works of the great American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. As Wright's only commission for a synagogue, the building is a landmark in Wright's career, mid-twentieth-century architectural trends, and in the story of American Judaism.

Picture Projects: Founded in 1995, the Brooklyn based studio of Picture Projects has gained an international reputation for high-profile new media projects that tell complex stories from multiple perspectives. The studio designs and produces virtual museums, interactive installations and exhibitions for cultural institutions. Projects have been created for the Women's Museum in Dallas, TX, the American Museum of Natural History, the Tenement Museum, and the Brooklyn Historical Society in New York City, and Harvard University's Schlesinger Library, as well as for clients such as IBM, the National Voting Rights Institute and the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. The Beth Sholom Visitor Center continues Picture Projects' practice of using new technologies and smart design to explore our history and social fabric through first-person stories, dynamic data and participatory storytelling.