



Rare collection of Holocaust artifacts coming to Billings

CLAIR JOHNSON Of The Gazette Staff | Posted: Tuesday, November 11, 2008 11:00 pm

A rare collection of World War II era mail and documents related to the Holocaust is coming to Billings for a public exhibit Dec. 7.

The Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch will host the exhibit from 1 p.m. to 4 at the old Garfield School gym, 3212 First Ave. S. Admission is free.

The collection includes more than 250 envelopes, post cards, letters, specially designated postage stamps used exclusively by concentration camp inmates and counterfeit Bank of England currency created by slave laborers for the Nazis' failed plot to undermine England's economy. The exhibit also has a torn fragment of a hand-written Hebrew parchment scroll that was used for mailing a parcel.

The collection is owned by the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation, which acquired the items from a private researcher to preserve and offer them for public education around the world about the Holocaust and genocide.

Andrea Kenney, public relations director for the Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, said the Spungen Family Foundation offered the exhibit as a gift to the community. Foundation board member Danny Spungen is a supporter of the ranch, she said.

Spungen, along with Steve Feller, a physics professor at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and author of the book, "Silent Witness: Civilian Camp Money of World War II," also will present an educational program about Holocaust-related money in conjunction with the public exhibit.

The Congregation Beth Aaron in Billings will take the exhibit to classes at West and Senior high schools on Dec. 5, and the congregation will have a private showing Dec. 6, said Diane Kersten, president of Congregation Beth Aaron.

The Spungen Family Foundation, based in Illinois, was established in 2006 to support charitable and educational causes.