

## FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS HANUKKAH

In Jewish history, Hanukkah observes the victory of Judah the Maccabee and his four brothers over the Syrian-Greeks. The Temple was recaptured and rebuilt in eight days. To commemorate the event, the holiday annually observed the kindling of lights for eight days, and Hanukkah became known as the *Festival of Lights*.

Jewish families arrived in Tottenville from Manhattan and other boroughs after 1900. In 1914 the Jewish High Holy Days were celebrated in Tottenville for the first time. The congregation met in several local locations before building a temple in 1933 on Amboy Rd. where they continue the traditions of their faith today.

*Chag Urim Sameach!*



The Tottenville Historical Society was founded in 2005 to document and preserve the history of Tottenville and vicinity. Today, these include the neighborhoods of Charleston, Rossville, Richmond Valley, Greenridge, Pleasant Plains, Prince's Bay, Huguenot, Annadale, Eltingville, and Great Kills. The Society is a member-supported, not-for-profit volunteer organization.

You can learn more about us through our website, our books, and by becoming a supporting member. As a member, you will receive our quarterly newsletter and invitations and announcements to all programs and events.

*We are located in the H.H. Biddle House,  
70 Satterlee St., Conference House Park.*



[www.tottenvillehistory.com](http://www.tottenvillehistory.com)

**NYC** Department of  
Youth & Community  
Development



## Holiday Festival of Tradition

*including the MENORAH and the  
traditions of GERMANY,  
HUNGARY, SCANDINAVIA,  
and ITALY*

**Dec. 8, 2019 - Jan. 5, 2020**

**Opening Reception: Sunday, Dec. 8, 1-4pm**

*Hours:*

Sat. & Sun. 1-4pm

Weekdays by appointment

## Tottenville Historical Society

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## HOLIDAY FESTIVAL OF TRADITION

### Festival of Trees

### Festival of Lights

The **Holiday Festival of Tradition** exhibit, which includes the Christmas *Festival of Trees* and the Hanukkah *Festival of Lights*, blends local history with culture.

The *Festival of Trees* offers a glittering display of evergreen trees individually decorated to celebrate some of the diverse nationalities of our community, past and present. These include the traditions of Poland, Scandinavia, Italy, Mexico, Germany and Hungary.

We hope you enjoy the beautifully decorated trees in this exhibit. The holidays are a special time spent with family and friends, and we encourage you to explore and create your own holiday traditions that will last for generations.

***Merry Christmas! Buon Natale!***  
***Wesołych Świąt! God Jul! Gledelig Jul!***  
***Glaedelig Jul! Frohe Weihnachten!***  
***Feliz Navidad! Boldog Karacsony!***



### ITALY

In Italy the most popular Christmas tradition surrounds the *presepio*, or Nativity scene. On Christmas Eve, as the family gathers around the presepio singing carols, the oldest woman in the household places the Christ Child in the straw bed. Afterwards the family decorates the tree with fresh and dried fruits, candies, and foil wrapped cookies.

Today, more than 18% of the foreign-born residents on Staten Island's South Shore are from Italy.

### MEXICO

In Mexican tradition, the Nativity, or *pesebre*, is the focal point of the Christmas celebration. We bring Mexican culture to our exhibit with the poinsettia, a native plant that became a Christmas tradition in Mexico in the 17th century. The red-flowered plant was brought to the U.S. a century later.

The garland (papel picado or perforated paper) on the tree is an ancient art form that is used today as a decoration during the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Since 2000 there has been a 52% increase in the Hispanic population on Staten Island, with Mexicans representing the largest jump (154%). The Mexican population in Tottenville has increased steadily as well.



### POLAND

Many of the Polish families immigrated to Tottenville during the early 1900s. Like many other European immigrants, they found work in the local factories. The focal point for the Polish community's social activities was Schule's (Schull's) Hall, Barnard Ave. Today it is a catering hall.

The Polish tree is decorated with modern Polish Star ornaments (*jezyk*), handcrafted by local residents.

### SCANDINAVIA

By the early 1900s, a large number of Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish immigrants had settled in Tottenville where they found work in the ship and dock building industries. In 1917 they established "The Norwegian Evangelical Free Church" and built a house of worship on Wood Ave., Tottenville, in 1924.

The use of Danish flags as a tree decoration started in World War II during the Nazi occupation when public flag displays were prohibited. This tradition also spread to the rest of Scandinavia. St. Lucia's Day is celebrated each year in Scandinavia on December 13 with traditional candlelight processions.