

Traveling with Jewish Taste® Boston: A Treasure Trove of Jewish Culture

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Boston is a fantastic destination for any traveler, but the Jewish visitor has a virtual treasure chest awaiting. A good place to start your visit is at the Vilna Shul, Boston's Center for Jewish Culture.

The last remaining immigrant era synagogue in the city of Boston, it is set among the old tenement buildings of Beacon Hill. While its 1840s-era pews and antique chandeliers give a peek into past artifacts, the Shul also offers exhibits, various courses, and lectures on Jewish history in Boston.

Their current exhibit, "Reconnect the Tapestry," weaves together the stories of the Jews of the North End, South End, West End, and East Boston, and their development between 1850 and 1950.

While there, pick up a copy of the guidebook *Bostonwalks' the Jewish Friendship Trail Guidebook: Jewish Boston History Sites: West End, North End, Downtown Boston, South End, Brookline & Cambridge*, by Michael A. Ross. Ross's book provides the Jewish answer to the Freedom Trail: walking tours highlighting eighty-five years of European Jewish immigration into Boston.

The Boston area is home to over fifty institutions of higher learning – over 250,000 students matriculate in Boston and Cambridge alone. Brandeis University, in Waltham, and Hebrew College, in Newton, are two with strong ties to the Jewish community.

Founded in 1921 in Roxbury, Hebrew College now sits on a beautiful, Moshe Safie-designed campus in Newton, training Jewish professionals in both classical Jewish texts and contemporary Jewish studies in degree and certificate programs.

Since 2003, it now also prepares rabbis in its pluralistic seminary. Believing that Hebrew forms the link between Israeli and Diaspora Jewry, the college once taught all its courses in Hebrew. Today, while most classes are conducted in English, Hebrew remains a focal point of the curriculum; "ulpan" classes are available at every level for non-matriculating students, as well as "Me'ah," an innovative adult learning program.

Brandeis University was founded only in 1948, but it has made its mark on the academic scene. Named for Louis Dembitz Brandeis, the first Jewish member of the United States Supreme Court and an advocate of myriad social justice causes, Brandeis is a small, Jewish-sponsored, yet secular university that welcomes students from around the world. On any given day, one can see a Sikh turban, a "kippah," and a "hijab" in successive study carrels in the library.

The campus, with an excellent theater department, offers dramatic productions in its Spingold Theater complex, lecture series, and the Rose Art Museum. The museum's collection focuses on modern and contemporary art, and it offers a varied program of lectures, musical performances, and film screenings. On October 7th two exhibitions opened: "WaterWays" and "Regarding Painting." The former explores how art uses water as "subject, metaphor and muse" while the latter emphasizes "paint as an act and an object."

The newest educational kid on the block is the Jewish Women's Archive (JWA), based in Brookline. Founded in 1995, its mission "is to uncover, chronicle, and transmit to a broad public the rich history of American Jewish women." In addition to an annual professional development Institute for Educators, JWA maintains an

extensive collection of material on American Jewish women that can be accessed at no cost via the internet.

JWA's offerings include an online encyclopedia about Jewish women, lesson plans and other educational materials, virtual exhibits, and book and film study guides.

JWA founding director, Gail Twersky Riemer, was the creative brain behind the film festival darling, "Making Trouble," documenting a century of Jewish women comedienne from Molly Picon and Fanny Brice to Gilda Radner and Wendy Wasserstein.

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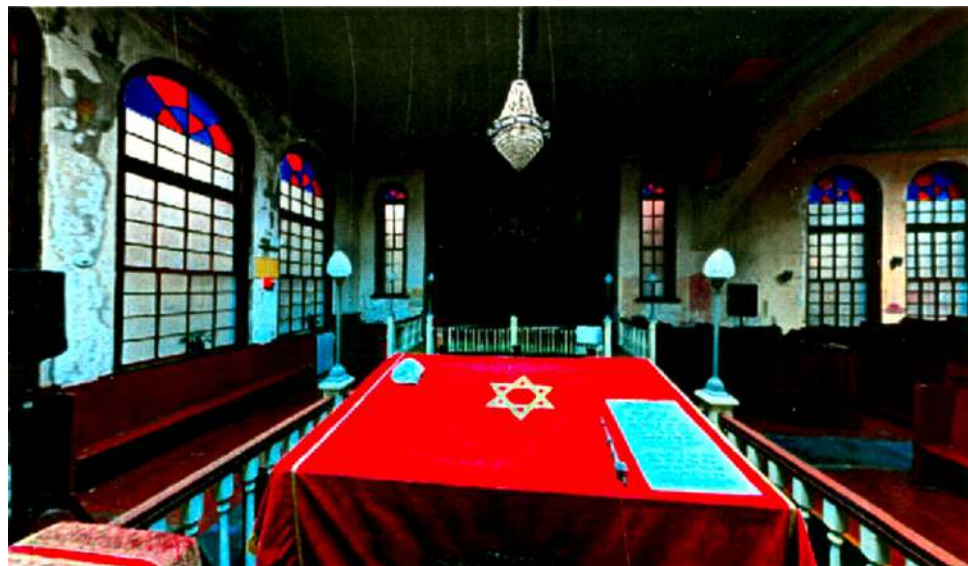
"Forget It! Forget Me!" by Roy Lichtenstein from the exhibition "Regarding Painting" at Brandeis University's Rose Art Museum



Rabbi Sam Seicol, formerly interim rabbi at Pittsfield's Temple Anshe Amunim, taught Hebrew at Vilna Shul this past summer



A contemporary retelling of the story of Adam and Eve, the French-Israeli production "Lost Paradise" is a highlight of the 2010 Boston Jewish Film Festival



The sanctuary of the historic Vilna Shul



"Hecuba" on the Spingold stage at Brandeis University

Fish Chowder

Boston may be known as "Beantown" but the quintessential Boston food has got to be "chowdah." This kosher version is thick, delicious, and easy to make. To save fat and calories, I substitute milk for the cream.



Ingredients

2 tablespoons butter	2 cups light cream
1 cup onions, chopped	2 cups boiling water
1 cup carrots, sliced	1 1/2 pounds cod or haddock
1/2 cup celery, sliced	Salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
2 large Yukon Gold potatoes, cubed	

To Prepare:

1. Sauté the onions and celery in butter until soft, but not brown.
2. Add remaining vegetables, seasoning and water and simmer until tender, about 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Add the fish to the pot. Cook another ten minutes until the fish can be broken into pieces.
4. Add cream and reheat. Do not boil.

Serve with salad and a crusty peasant bread or hard rolls.

FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS

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Speaking of film, the Boston Jewish Film Festival (BJFF) is a highlight of November, screening contemporary films on Jewish themes at several sites throughout the area. In recent years, the BJFF has added monthly screenings year-round. But, film watching is only part of the experience. Lectures and panel discussions by documentary filmmakers, directors, and others involved in the film industry enliven the events.

Other Boston-based cultural gems include the Zamir Chorale and the Klezmer Conservatory Band. The Zamir Chorale is "dedicated to raising awareness of the breadth and beauty of Jewish culture through performances, recordings, symposia, publications, and musical commissions." Led by Founder and Artistic Director Joshua Jacobson, the Chorale's volunteer singers perform Jewish music from throughout history and the world, including newly commissioned pieces. Zamir enjoys an international reputation due to its tours and recordings, as well as a PBS-aired documentary about the group.

The Klezmer Conservatory Band, formed in 1980, has performed internationally to rave reviews in venues as varied as Minnesota Public Radio's "A Prairie Home Companion," the PBS special "In the Fiddler's House" with Itzhak Perlman,



Hebrew College prepares rabbis in its pluralistic seminary

and at Wolftrap, Radio City Music Hall, Saratoga, and with the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. If "the Band" is performing during your visit, don't miss it; you may just find yourself dancing in the aisles.

While Boston is a foodie mecca in general, dining for the kashrut observer is not difficult. You will find the greatest variety in Brookline, with its Jewish population at about 35%. Kosher offerings include deli at Rubin's, Israeli food at Rami's (the best shwarma!), Chinese at Ta'am China, Café Eilat for Mediterranean (and, according to online reviews, fantastic pizza). Newton has Shiraz Café, offering Middle Eastern food; while in downtown Boston, the Milk Street Café offers a variety of meat, pareve and dairy/vegetarian dishes prepared in their three kitchens.



Internationally acclaimed, The Klezmer Conservatory Band may have you dancing in the aisles

The American Jewess Magazine

Among the undertakings of the "Jewish Women's Archive," is the archiving and digitizing of *The American Jewess* magazine.

Published between April 1895 and August 1899, *The American Jewess* was the first English-language publication directed to American Jewish women. Part of the emergence of new public identities for Jewish women, *The American Jewess* offered an evocative range of features that included demands for synagogue membership for women; health, household, and fashion tips; early expressions of American Zionism; short fiction – and reflections on the propriety of women riding bicycles.



The American Jewess represented the changing aspirations of America's prosperous and acculturated Jewish women. The magazine's title reflected an emerging belief that this group constituted a new entity in Jewish life: women who did not experience the religious and national aspects of their identity as in conflict with each other. Thoroughly American and thoroughly Jewish, the "American Jewess" felt fully at home in her overlapping worlds of American and Jewish culture. *The American Jewess* magazine set out to explore the challenges and possibilities inherent in this new identity. At its height, the magazine claimed a circulation of 31,000.

More may be learned at www.jwa.org/research/americanjewess.

www.jewishberkshires.org

Where you belong.

Berkshire Country Day School

Preschool Play Date

Saturday, November 13 at 9:00 a.m.

Join our preschool educators for a 45-minute playgroup that highlights our educational philosophy of learning through purposeful play. Tour BCD's 27-acre campus and meet members of the administration to learn more about what makes BCD's Preschool program so special.

Please contact Amy Freeman, Director of Admission and Financial Aid, to register by Nov. 10.

Preschool through Grade 9

55 Interlaken Road (Route 183), Stockbridge 413 637 0755 berkshirecountryday.org

The Jewish Federations of North America support JDC's fundraising campaign for victims of Haiti's devastating earthquake. JDC has raised more than \$7.3 million to help provide hundreds of thousand of tent-city dwellers with clean drinking water; temporary schools for displaced children; medical care in remote coastal communities; state-of-the-art medical rehabilitation equipment, and other relief and recovery projects.

VOLUNTEER? IT'S VITAL!

Contact: Susan Frisch Lehrer, Coordinator of Volunteers
Jewish Federation of the Berkshires
(413) 442-4360, ext. 14 • jfb.volunteer@verizon.net