

## Traveling with Jewish Taste® Philadelphia: History- American and Jewish

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Now that my son has become engaged to be married to a Philadelphia native, I figured it was time to become reacquainted with the City of Brotherly Love. Luckily, I was recently invited to speak at a conference there and thus had the opportunity to play tourist.

There is much to love about this city so steeped in history – both American and Jewish. Downtown Philadelphia offers more than twenty historic sites within a short walking radius. These include Independence Hall, the Liberty Bell Center, the Betsy Ross House, the National Constitution Center, Congress Hall, and the Old City Hall.

The best way to see these sites is with a knowledgeable – and entertaining – ranger from the National Park Service, well worth the price.

Both the First and Second Continental Congresses convened in Philadelphia, the latter having approved the Declaration of Independence at Independence Hall on July 4, 1776. Fifty-six men signed the Declaration, of whom nine represented Pennsylvania, including Benjamin Franklin. While no Jews were included among the signers, it is interesting to note a possibly apocryphal story that has circulated for decades that Franklin favored Hebrew as the official language of the newly born nation.

While Philadelphia is better known for its role in the early history of the United States, it also boasts several Jews in its past, among whom the most prominent may be Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869).

Reputed to have been the model for Rebecca, the Jewish heroine in Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Ivanhoe*, Gratz was a prominent educator and philanthropist. When only twenty-years-old, she helped establish the "Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances" to help families that found themselves in dire circumstances after the Revolutionary War.

A few years later, she was among the founders of the "Philadelphia Orphan Asylum." Perhaps her most significant contribution to Jewish life was her Hebrew Sunday School, which she directed and for which she developed curriculum. She also helped found the "Female Hebrew Benevolent Society," the "Fuel Society," and the "Sewing Society."

Rebecca Gratz and Isaac Leeser, founders of the "Hebrew Education Society of Philadelphia," and Rebecca's younger brother, Hyman, joined forces in 1856 to found a Hebrew teacher's college by establishing a trust.

In 1859, Gratz College, the first trans-denominational Jewish college in the United States opened its doors. It has been teaching Jewish studies and training Jewish professionals ever since. Today, the college offers both on-campus and on-



Philadelphia soft pretzels, a culinary delight attributed to Pennsylvania's strong Germanic influence



Did Benjamin Franklin favor Hebrew as the new nation's official language?

line programs.

Another woman who had a profound influence in Philadelphia is Henrietta Szold. Szold served as an editor, and the only female member of the publication committee, at the "Jewish Publication Society," where she was responsible for bringing out many important books of Jewish scholarship.

Szold, of course, went on to found "Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America," the largest Jewish organization in the United States. She was also the founding director of the Youth **JEWISH TASTE**, continued on page 15



Independence Hall

### Tomato Pie

Tomato pie, a uniquely Italian-American dish closely related to Sicilian pizza, is essentially a thick-crust pizza made with only a sprinkle of cheese and extra oregano and baked in a large rectangular pan. Normally served cold or at room temperature, you can find it in the Northeast section of Philadelphia and at bakeries in South Philly.



#### The Sauce:

|                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 6 tomatoes                    | 1 teaspoon oregano            |
| 3 cups tomato puree           | 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar |
| 3 tablespoons of tomato paste | 3 tablespoons sugar           |
| 4 tablespoons minced garlic   | Olive oil                     |
| 1 teaspoon basil              | Salt                          |
|                               | Freshly ground pepper         |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

Slice the tomatoes in half, sprinkle with salt and pepper, drizzle with olive oil, and roast in oven for 30 minutes.

While the tomatoes are in the oven, combine the other ingredients and let them simmer until thickened. Add in the roasted tomatoes when done and mix until tomatoes are in small chunks and sauce is very thick.

#### Pizza Dough:

|  |                              |
|--|------------------------------|
| One and a half cup warm water (110°F to 115°F) | 2 tablespoons sugar          |
| 4 tablespoons olive oil                        | 1 envelope active dry yeast  |
| 2 teaspoons salt                               | Cornmeal                     |
| 4-1/2 cups flour                               | Nonstick vegetable oil spray |

Add first 6 ingredients, "in order," to bread machine and set to "dough" function. When the bell rings (about 1 hour later), transfer the dough to a floured surface and punch it down. (Some recipes call for refrigerating the dough in a covered, oiled bowl at this point for half a day. If you have time to do this, by all means go for it.)

Roll out the dough to the size of a large rimmed, rectangular baking sheet. Spray the pan with vegetable spray and then sprinkle with the cornmeal. Lay the dough onto the pan. Spread tomato sauce on top.

Bake at 450°F for 30-35 minutes, until crust is golden and center is cooked through. Serve at room temperature or cold with a sprinkle of Parmesan or Romano cheese and oregano.

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Aliyah child rescue movement, and she established the first American night school for immigrants.

As for Jewish influence on American history in general, travelers to Philadelphia will have the opportunity to visit the just opened National Museum of American Jewish History. Just steps away from Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell, it claims to be "the only museum dedicated to chronicling the American Jewish experience."

While historic Philadelphia is best seen by foot, don't miss the chance to drive a little way outside the city to see Beth Sholom Synagogue in Elkins Park. The only synagogue ever designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, it is a National

Historic Landmark, one of only four synagogues nationwide to attain that designation. Also outside the city proper is the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, in nearby Wyncote.

When it comes to dining in Philadelphia, you will find a wide variety, as befits a large, cosmopolitan city. Many of these restaurants are good enough to have won James Beard awards.

The visitor in search of kosher restaurants will find fewer choices than one would expect in a metropolitan area with about 280,000 Jews and over sixty synagogues – yet, you can choose among eateries offering dishes ranging from sushi to pizza, Middle Eastern to Chinese.

One quintessential Philadelphia food experience can be found at a street vendor's cart – the Philadelphia soft pretzel.

(You didn't think I would write about the iconic Philly Cheese Steak or the Italian Hoagie, did you?)

The origins of this culinary delight can be attributed to a strong Germanic influence from early Pennsylvania history (over fifty pretzel manufacturers are based in the state). The true Philadelphia soft pretzel is golden brown, soft and chewy, and sprinkled with coarse salt.

Aficionados warn the uninitiated never to buy a pretzel wrapped in plastic, one that looks moist, or has been re-warmed. They do urge you to squeeze plenty of mustard onto your pretzel for the full gustatory delight.



The Liberty Bell



Beth Sholom Synagogue, the only synagogue ever designed by Frank Lloyd Wright

Carol Goodman Kaufman, an organizational psychologist and writer, is the author of *Sins of Omission: The Jewish Community's Reaction to Domestic Violence* (Westview Press, 2003). She serves on the National Board of Hadassah and chairs the Jewish Community Relations Council of Central Massachusetts. Kaufman divides her time between Worcester, West Stockbridge, and the world.

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Civic minded Rebecca Gratz, reputed to have been the model for Rebecca, the Jewish heroine in Sir Walter Scott's novel, *Ivanhoe*



The Betsy Ross House



The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College

**Hadassah Brunch Raises \$7K!**

Held at Pittsfield's Temple Anshe Amunim, on October 24 Berkshire Hills Hadassah's Donor Brunch drew some seventy and raised \$7,000 in support of the work of the Hadassah Medical Organization and its modernization through the building of the Sarah Wetsman Davidson Tower on Hadassah's Ein-Kerem Campus in Israel. Above: Berkshire Hills Hadassah Co-President Marcia Tuler (left) greets Elaine and Robert Baum of Stockbridge.



PHOTO: STUART MASTERS

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