

## FEATURES AND LOCAL NEWS



"THE DEATH OF CLEOPATRA," REGINALD ARTHUR, 1892, ROY MILES GALLERY, LONDON



Silent screen star Theda Bara as Cleopatra in 1917

Did Cleopatra commit suicide via the bite of an asp? Historians differ.



Vivian Leigh took a turn as Cleopatra in 1945



Katharine Hepburn as Cleopatra in 1960

## CLEOPATRA, continued from page 16

supported her early on during a familial civil war and continue to gild her statues well after her death; at age 39 in 30 BC.

As reflected by the accompanying photographs, through the ages art, literature, theatre, and film have – as though compelled – continued that “gilding;” occasionally grounded in rock-solid veracity, more often reveling in flights of fancy, and recurrently using the former as a base on which to build entertainments that succeed in the realm of the latter – perhaps the most enduring, Shakespeare’s 1606 tragedy “Antony and Cleopatra”; among the most celebrated in modernity, Elizabeth Taylor’s cinematic “Cleopatra” of 1963.

No matter the media, many of the recounts of Cleopatra’s life and death center – or at least lean heavily on – her romantic relationships with Julius Caesar and Mark Antony, with Schiff noting both as “political affairs as much as anything else” describing the former as “short-lived” and the latter of “eleven years and lighter hearted.”

Known for many other attributes, Schiff related that it was the discovery that the mighty

queen possessed a potent sense of humor that surprised her most.

According to the Hollywood publicity machine, that fact, and Schiff’s other veritable findings, will bring the most definitive Cleopatra ever to movie theatres in 2013.

With a screenplay by Academy Award winner Brian Koppelman, actress Angelina Jolie is currently noted throughout the Hollywood media and at the Internet Movie Data Base as set to play the charismatic and crafty “Cleopatra.”

“You need an actress,” explained Schiff, “whose intelligence practically leaps off the screen.”

Admission to Stacy Schiff’s Shakespeare & Company appearance is \$5. Schiff’s presentation is co-sponsored by Shakespeare and Company, The Jewish Federation of the Berkshires, The Lenox Library, The Friends of the Berkshire Athenaeum, The Mount, and Williams College. For tickets and information, please contact the Shakespeare and Company box office at (413) 637-3353 or boxoffice@shakespeare.org.

In a celebration of Purim, Jewish student members of the St. Petersburg Hillel took to the city’s snow-covered streets in a synchronized performance set to the music of the Black Eyed Peas’ “I Gotta Feeling.” Students danced across iconic Russian venues, like the central square in front of the State Hermitage Museum, attracting news coverage along the way. Jewish Federations support Hillel groups on more than five-hundred college and university campuses around the world, including St. Petersburg, one of sixteen centers serving thirty cities in the former Soviet Union.

## Traveling with Jewish Taste® Palm Beach, Florida

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



If it is true that “living well is the best revenge,” then Palm Beach is the place for avenging angels.

This island off the east coast of Florida is the pastel toned, beautifully landscaped, and perfectly groomed embodiment of the fantasy rich life. Of course, when oil and railroad tycoon – and notorious anti-Semite – Henry Flagler developed the desolate barrier island into a playground, he most definitely did not foresee that “Members of the Tribe” would one day not only flock here, but be among its most ardent and generous supporters.

We started visiting Palm Beach because my in-laws, after years of pooh-poohing Florida, began to spend their winters in an apartment a stone’s throw from Worth Avenue, the Rodeo Drive of the Southeast. Now, they think April is too soon to come back north. (After this winter I

tend to agree. As I write, we are having yet another storm.)

Flying into West Palm Beach is easy from many airports, but getting out of the airport is another matter. Unlike at every other airport in the world, taxis do not line up waiting for passengers, so be forewarned: try to find a friend or relative to pick you up or you may have to wait a long time for a cab.

The Jewish population has grown exponentially since the late 1960s, when Palm Beach County had only 4,500 co-religionists. Now with a population of 135,000 Jews, more than two dozen synagogues of all denominations serve the area.

A Jewish Community Center and all manner of agencies and organizations provide social services and opportunities to volunteer; and many northern organizations – Jewish and not – head south to keep in touch with their members and raise funds.

Elegant gala events fill the town’s social calendar and are documented in the society chronicle, the *Palm Beach Daily News*, affectionately known as the “Shiny Sheet.”

A large number of both “snowbirds” and permanent residents show up at the Palm Beach Synagogue on Shabbat, with services unlike those at any Conservative shul we have ever attended.

From one visit to the next, we never know what to expect. We have heard stimulating (and not-so-stimulating) lectures by prominent scholars, and even a piano and voice performance that made us feel as if we were in a Las Vegas lounge – not a Friday evening service. And, the elaborate Friday *onegs* and Saturday *kiddushes* are not to be believed.

Back to Flagler: To his credit, he did recognize that the climate and tropical beauty of the state would bring visitors: so he made sure that they would have the means to get there by bringing the railroad all the way into southern Florida.

And, he built hotels to accommodate those escapees from the cold and snow, perhaps the most famous of which is “The Breakers.”

It is well worth a trip to visit this magnificent hotel on the National Register of Historic Places, overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. The hotel offers brochures describing its history and employees enthusiastically provide commentary and color to the tourist wandering through gawking at the chandeliers, murals, and oriental carpets.

While Palm Beach has beautiful beaches, hotels, and bars, this community offers so much more than the typical college “spring-break” town. Throughout the season, Palm Beach’s Convention Center is host to all manner of art, fine crafts, antique shows, and film festivals.

Whitehall, the 55-room Beaux Arts mansion Flagler built as a wedding gift for his third wife, Mary Lily, now serves as the Flagler Museum, also on the National Register. At this first museum established in Florida one can find exhibits, programs, and lecture series. This year’s series is “The Architects Who Designed Palm Beach’s Iconic Buildings.”

One special destination is The Society of the Four Arts, two stately buildings set among handsome gardens. One, the Esther B. O’Keeffe Gallery Building, features

an art gallery that showcases exhibitions throughout the season, and a 700-seat auditorium that presents concerts, lectures, films, and children’s programs. The original 1936 building houses the Gioconda and Joseph King Library, where one can find book discussion groups throughout the season. For a small annual fee, visitors may borrow books from its well-stocked library.

Almost directly across the bridge, in West Palm Beach, is the Kravis Center for the Performing Arts, where one can attend first-rate plays, opera, and film festivals, among other productions.



The Beaux Arts Mansion ‘Whitehall,’ is now the Flagler Museum



Royal Blue Peacock at the Palm Beach Zoo ...yes, it’s real!

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**JEWISH TASTE,**  
*continued from page 17*

We attended an excellent and unusual performance of "Don Giovanni" in a sold-out house, and basked in the excitement of a big crowd in a beautiful venue.

Best of all, when the show was over, we could walk outside with no more than a light jacket.

West Palm Beach is also home to a plethora of attractions, some of which might even interest young visitors. These include the Palm Beach Zoo, the Angels Cypress airboats, the South Florida Science Museum, The Mounts Botanical Garden, and the Ann Norton Sculpture Gardens. The Norton Museum of Art is a smallish institution with a very nice permanent collection of about 7,000 items, and excellent traveling exhibits.

Current exhibits at the Norton include "Fabulous Fakes: The Jewelry of Kenneth Jay Lane;" "To Live Forever: Egyptian Treasures from the Brooklyn Museum;" and its complement, "Eternal China: Tales from the Crypt."

We were lucky to be in town for the annual Lake Worth Street Painting Festival, one of the top rated of many such exhibits that take place around the country.

Downtown Lake Worth blocks off several streets for artists working in chalk. On one street, professional artists crouch on the pavement under the sun, producing works ranging from the whimsical (Curious George with a handful of balloons) to classical (spot-on reproductions of Renaissance paintings). On a second, budding young artists draw, no doubt hoping to hit the "majors" in the future. The

festival only lasts two days – all involved must pray for no rain – so if you have the chance, go see this.

Dining in Palm Beach is a hit-or-miss affair. Given the demographics of the population, bland food tends to be the norm. Even ethnic cuisine – including traditionally zesty Italian and Middle Eastern dishes – has been lackluster in our experience.

Luckily, fish is fresh and abundant. Perhaps because this is a resort, you will find all manner of alcoholic beverages, including the Palm Beach cocktail. Too bad the drink contains grapefruit juice – a no-no for those people who take statins. Demographic irony, anyone?

If you need strictly kosher, you won't find it in Palm Beach proper unless you are attending

a catered event. However, a short drive to Boca Raton will bring you to both a certified kosher café and a pizzeria.

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**Palm Beach Cocktail**

Maybe because food on the island is bland, cocktail hour reigns supreme. Herein is Palm Beach's own eponymous cocktail – a mix of gin, sweet vermouth, and grapefruit juice.



**Ingredients:**  
1-1/2 ounces gin  
1-1/2 teaspoons of sweet vermouth  
1-1/2 teaspoons of grapefruit juice

**Directions:**  
Shake all ingredients with ice, strain into a cocktail glass, and serve.



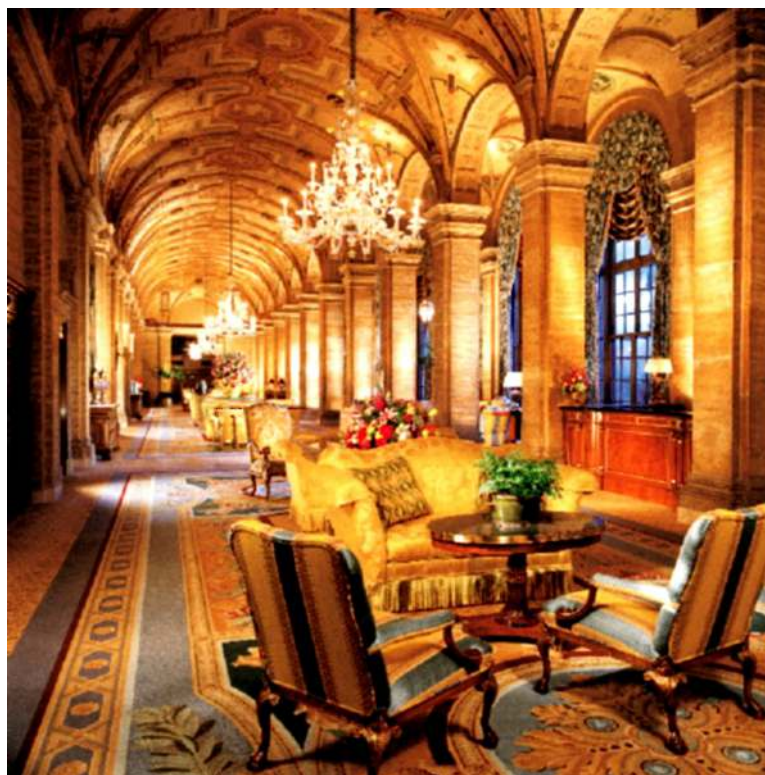
*In Palm Beach ...flowers everywhere*



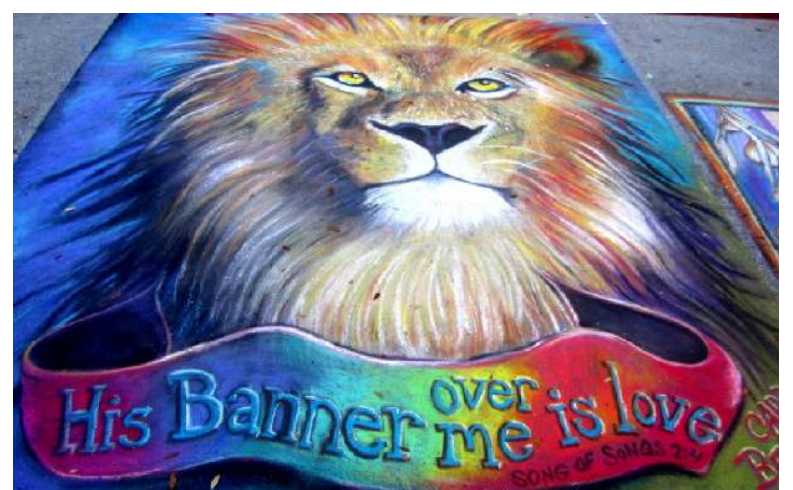
*Gracious entrance ways mark many a Palm Beach mansion*



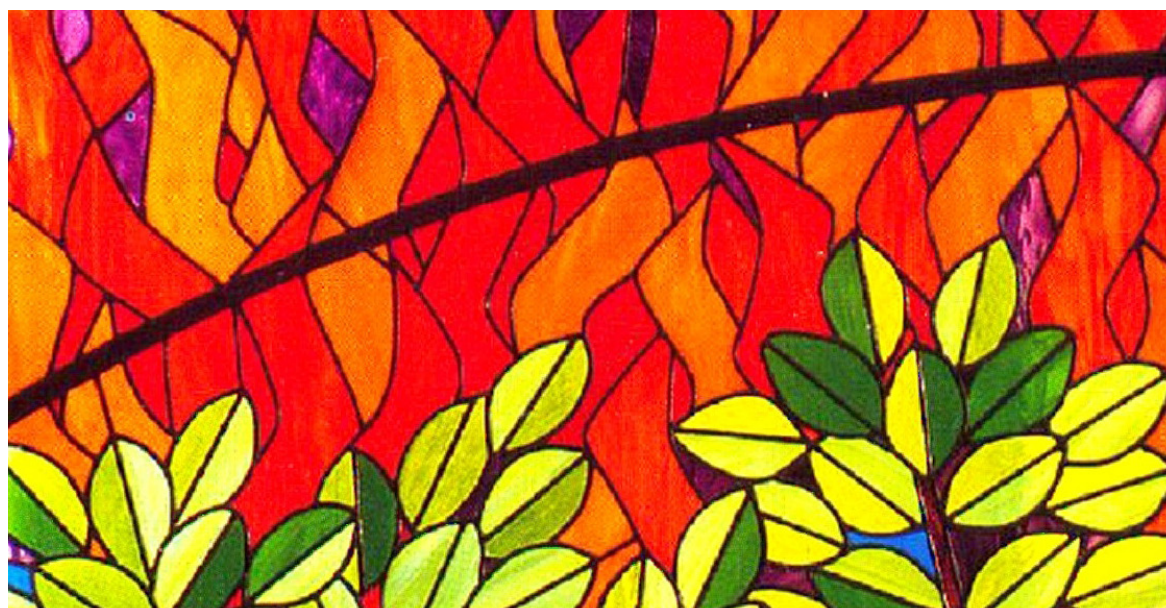
*Statue of Henry Flagler at Flagler College in St. Augustine*



*The magnificent lobby of 'The Breakers'*



*Fine Street Painting, a tradition in the Palm Beach Area*



*Stained glass window at the Palm Beach Synagogue*