

## Traveling with Jewish Taste<sup>®</sup>

### Portsmouth, New Hampshire

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Poet laureate Donald Hall's Caldecott Award-winning *Ox-Cart Man* ignited my love of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. In addition to a wonderful story, the book features Barbara Cooney's beautiful illustrations of a long-gone pastoral life and a charming New England town.

Luckily for us, the real people of Portsmouth understood the importance of their architectural heritage and have preserved much of that for visitors to enjoy. In recognition of the restoration, the National Trust for Historic Preservation has designated the city as one of the "Dozen Distinctive Destinations" in the country.

Due to its strategic location on a river and a harbor, Portsmouth was once one of the nation's busiest ports and shipbuilding cities. In fact, the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was the first federal navy yard in the country.

Famed naval hero, John Paul Jones – "I have not yet begun to fight" – boarded nearby and the house in which he stayed now houses the Portsmouth Historical Society Museum.

With the riches accumulated during the port's heyday, the city's wealthy class erected fine buildings. Visitors to this town by the river will see examples of Colonial, Georgian, and Federal style architecture. These buildings have survived in large part due to regulations enacted after a devastating fire in the early nineteenth century that claimed hundreds of buildings. All new construction required brick and slate.

Well before any Europeans ever set foot on what is now New Hampshire, Native American tribes lived and thrived there. The first known European to explore the area came in 1603, followed by English settlers in 1630.



A Barbara Cooney illustration from *'The Ox-Cart Man'*

Portsmouth was then called Strawberry Banke, after the wild red berries growing along the river bank. At the town's incorporation in 1653, it was re-named "Portsmouth" in honor of the colony's founder, one John Mason, captain of the British port of Portsmouth – a century later, Paul Revere would ride into town to warn that the British were coming, but this time they were not to be honored.

Jews didn't arrive in Portsmouth until about 1780, when one couple, Abraham and Rachel Isaac, arrived from Prussia. Like many of our coreligionists, Isaac became a retailer, opening a discount shop. Although the Isaacs were religiously observant, they were the only Jews in town, so their only son intermarried. That story repeated itself over the next fifty years or so when the few Jews who came from Germany assimilated or left town.

By the late nineteenth century, however, there was a small group of about sixteen Jewish families that wanted to maintain their heritage. They recruited others to join them and, by the turn of the century, the census had increased to about thirty Jewish families.

In 1905, a man named Morris Port moved to Portsmouth and led the formation of a group that elected officers and raised money to rent a room for religious services. They dubbed themselves the Temple of Israel. In short order they hired a religious leader, established a Jewish cemetery (still in use today), and purchased a building to be used as a synagogue.

The building, only a block from the immigrant Puddle Dock neighborhood, was converted from its use as a Methodist church in 1912, and its opening was celebrated by a parade with the Navy Band and speeches by dignitaries. The census had grown by this point to thirty-eight families that supported two kosher butchers, a bakery, and three Jewish grocery stores.

Although Portsmouth has a population of only about 21,000, the town offers a



John Paul Jones



Shapiro House at the Strawberry Banke Museum

### Old Portsmouth Orange Cake

I was surprised to learn that this orange cake is so closely identified with New Hampshire, especially given that oranges definitely do not grow in that Northern state. However, this spongy and sweet cake is a favorite of many New Hampshire natives who consider it a traditional summertime treat. Some bakers ice it with an orange flavored cream cheese frosting, while still others add New Hampshire cranberries to the batter.



#### Ingredients:

##### For the cake:

1/2 cup plus two tablespoons of cake flour  
1/4 cup all-purpose flour  
1/2 teaspoon baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
3 tablespoons of milk  
2 tablespoons of unsalted butter  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract  
5 large eggs, at room temperature  
3/4 cups of granulated sugar  
1 teaspoon of orange zest  
2 tablespoons of orange juice

##### For the frosting:

12 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
3/4 grated orange  
1-1/2 cups confectioners' sugar  
Pinch salt  
2 teaspoons of orange juice  
1/2 teaspoon of vanilla extract  
1 tablespoon of milk

##### To assemble the cake:

Two oranges

#### Directions:

##### For the cake:

Pre-heat the oven to 350 degrees and adjust a rack to the center position.

Coat two nine inch round cake pans with vegetable spray and line the bottoms with parchment paper.

Whisk flours, baking powder, and salt in a medium bowl

Heat milk and butter in a small saucepan over low heat until butter melts. Remove from heat and add vanilla. Set aside.

Separate three of the eggs, placing whites in bowl of standing mixer fitted with a whisk. Reserve the three yolks plus remaining two whole eggs.

Beat the three whites on high speed until foamy. Gradually add six tablespoons of sugar while beating to soft, moist peaks.

Transfer whites to a large bowl and put the yolks and remaining whole eggs in the mixing bowl.

Beat yolks and whole eggs with the remaining six tablespoons sugar at medium-high speed until eggs are very thick and a pale lemon color, about five minutes.

Add the orange zest and juice and beat to combine, about 30 seconds. Return beaten whites to the bowl; sprinkle the flour mixture over eggs and whites. Mix on lowest speed for ten seconds.

Remove bowl from mixer, make a well in one side and pour melted butter mixture into well. Fold mixture with a large rubber spatula until combined.

Immediately pour batter into prepared pans and bake until cake tops

are lightly browned and spring back when touched, about sixteen minutes.

When cool, run a knife around perimeter of first pan and invert pan onto plate. Peel away parchment paper and invert cake onto cooling rack.

Repeat with second cake.

##### For the butter cream:

In the bowl of electric mixer fitted with the whisk, beat butter on medium high speed until smooth.

Add zest and beat to combine.

Add confectioners sugar and salt and beat at medium-low until the sugar is moistened.

Scrape down sides of bowl and add orange juice, vanilla, and milk and beat at medium speed until incorporated. Increase speed to medium high and beat until light and fluffy, scraping sides of bowl once or twice.

##### To finish the cake:

Using a sharp knife cut away orange peel carefully until no traces of pith remain. Cut oranges horizontally into one-quarter inch slices and then cut slices into one inch strips.

Place one layer of cake on a cake round or serving plate. Arrange orange pieces on top of bottom layer.

Spread a very thin layer of butter cream on the bottom side of the second layer and place the frosted side on top of the orange pieces.

Spread the remaining butter cream evenly over the top and sides of the cake. Serve immediately or refrigerate until twenty minutes before serving.



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wide range of attractions, from the cultural to the recreational. One “must-see” for visitors wanting to learn about Portsmouth’s history is the Strawberry Banke Museum.

This living history museum consists of forty-two buildings dating from 1695 to 1950, including houses, shops, and wharves.

The Jewish immigrant experience is highlighted at the museum’s Shapiro House. At the turn of the twentieth century, immigrants from Ireland, England, Canada, Italy, Poland, and Russia lived in and around the Puddle Dock neighborhood, where housing was affordable.

Among those newcomers were Jewish immigrants Abraham and Sarah Shapiro. *Becoming Americans: The Shapiro Story, 1898-1928* features the family’s fully furnished home, and their story is a fair representation of the lives lived not only by the thirty Jewish families living in Puddle Dock at the time, but of every immigrant group to arrive in this country.

Across the street, on the banks of the Piscataqua River, sits Prescott Park. Extensive flower gardens and demonstration plots attract thousands of visitors every summer. The flowers also provide a beautiful backdrop to the annual Prescott Park Arts Festival in July and August, where musical and theatrical performances entertain the crowds.

Less than a mile away, a piece of both the town’s ship-building history is on display in the *USS Albacore*. The *Albacore* was one of the most advanced



*The USS Albacore in dry dock*

naval submarines built before the atomic era, and was the prototype for modern submarines. Tours of the sub are available year-round.

For scenery, Peirce Island, a twenty-seven-acre riverfront property, offers walking trails connecting five waterfront overlooks, as well as a city-operated boat launch. The island’s history includes a role in both the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812, as the site of Fort Washington

On a hot summer’s day (something to look forward to as you don eight layers of clothing in January), a trip to Water Country is in order. The water park is New England’s largest, with over a dozen slides and rides, and a great destination for parties with kids.



*SpongeBob SquarePants, an appropriate attraction at ‘Water Country’*



*Arlo Guthrie at the Prescott Park Arts Festival*



*Prescott Park boasts extensive flower gardens and demonstration plots*

After all the touring, you may be thirsty. If so, a visit to the Redhook Brewery – on the site of the former Pease Air Force Base – one of America’s largest craft brewers, may be in order. And when you have built up an appetite, Portsmouth’s Market Square area is chock full of four-star restaurants, cafes, and brew pubs.



*Redhook Brewery – on the site of former Pease Air Force Base*

*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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*Temple Israel’s antique sanctuary*

**A Legal “Check Up”**

At 1 p.m. on Thursday, January 26, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will sponsor the program, “Plan for your future...Get a Legal Check Up!” with attorney Paula Almgren.

At a cost of \$3, and open to the public, the program will be held at Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, and cover such topics as: how to protect your home and assets; using revocable and irrevocable trusts; how to avoid or minimize estate taxes; how to avoid probate; how to obtain home-care benefits; and how to obtain benefits for veterans, frail spouses, and widows of veterans.

Almgren concentrates her practice in elder law, estate and tax planning, Medicaid eligibility, probate law, estate administration, and veterans benefits.

Clerk of the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Chapter of the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys and a member of the Fairview Hospital Ethics Committee, the Alzheimer’s Association,



*Attorney Paula Almgren*

the Berkshire County Estate Planning Council, and the Massachusetts and Berkshire Bar Associations, Almgren – a graduate of Williams College and Albany Law School of Union University – is an accredited attorney with the Department of Veterans Affairs.

For further information, please call Nancy Maurice Rogers, Program Director, at (413) 442-4360, ext. 15.

**“Topics in Nutrition”**

At 1 p.m. on Thursday, February 2, the Jewish Federation of the Berkshires will sponsor the program, “Topics in Nutrition,” with Jim Conzo, Complementary Nutritionist, with The Nutrition Center in Great Barrington.

At a cost of \$3, and open to the public, the program will be held at Congregation Knesset Israel, 16 Colt Road, Pittsfield, and cover such diverse topics as detoxification, heart health, gut health, inflammation, and the history of food.

Conzo holds a Masters Degree in Nutrition from the University of Bridgeport and is a Certified Nutrition Specialist. As a Massachusetts Licensed Dietician Nutritionist, Conzo is certified to practice one on one consultation.

Having taught nutrition at the college level and with past associations including Canyon Ranch and the UltraWellness Center, with Dr. Mark Hyman, in Lenox, and the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health in Stockbridge, Conzo has



*Nutritionist Jim Conzo*

been with The Nutrition Center since 2007.

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