

Traveling with Jewish Taste[®] Concord: Revolutionary and Literary

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



This summer, after the barbecue grill has cooled, the last notes of the 1812 Overture fade in the night, and the Fourth of July fireworks are just a puff of smoke in the sky, a visit to Concord is in order. It was here in April 1775 that the Battle of Lexington and Concord launched the Revolutionary War, more than a year before John Hancock affixed his signature to the Declaration of Independence.

Concord, and Massachusetts in general, were never major gathering points for the Members of the Tribe, Puritan intolerance making settlement by non-Christians impossible. In fact, although the first mention of any Jew in the colony is in 1649, and there are occasional references to Jews in Boston in the next century, it wasn't

until 1842 that Boston had enough Jews – eighteen, to be precise – to establish the city's first congregation, Ohabei Shalom ("Lovers of Peace") – whose synagogue today seats 1,750!

With increasing financial success, Jews left the old neighborhoods in and around Boston and moved to the suburbs, but didn't arrive in Concord in any great numbers until the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with the explosion of the high-tech industry along the Route 128 corridor and the influx of thousands of scientists and engineers. The town and its neighbors now boast several synagogues representing every stripe.

Although the People of the Book weren't found here, Concord was home to a significant number of prominent thinkers in the nineteenth century, the most recognizable being Ralph Waldo Emerson, Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Louisa May Alcott, and her father Bronson. In fact, Concord was home to such a congregation of outstanding writers that fellow scribe Henry James called Concord "the biggest little place in America."

Concord may indeed be small in area, but it packs a real punch culturally. In fact, you will not be able to see everything in town in one day, or even two. Plan to spend a long weekend in the area.



The Battle of Concord

One of the very nicest ways to spend an afternoon is to rent a canoe or kayak at the South Bridge boat house and paddle down the Concord River to the North Bridge, from whence the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired.

The sound of the water lapping against the boat is soothing, the view of homes and gardens along the way is grand, the workout is not too hard, and at the end you can enjoy a picnic at the Minute Man National Park.

If you liked *Little Women*, you will love visiting Orchard House, the historic home of Louisa May Alcott and her family. The desk at which she wrote the book is on display in this meticulously preserved property. In fact, eighty-percent of the items on display actually belonged to the Alcotts when they lived there in the late nineteenth century.

Walking through the house you can almost imagine the author gazing out at the apple orchard her father, teacher, and transcendentalist Amos Bronson Alcott, so loved.

Orchard House offers a "Summer Conversational Series," whose topic this year will be "Chaos, Cosmos, and the Oversoul: The Influence of Transcendental Philosophy on the Life and Writing of Louisa May Alcott."

One of the leading figures in the transcendental movement was writer and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson, and you can visit the two homes in which he lived.

Emerson's grandfather, the Rev. William Emerson, built "The Old Manse" before the Revolutionary War. Situated right next to the North Bridge, it provided an ideal position from which his grandmother and father witnessed the "Concord Fight." Emerson wrote his seminal work, *Nature*, while living in this home for a period with his step-grandfather, Ezra Ripley.

Writer Nathaniel Hawthorne rented "The Old Manse" for a three-year period, using an upstairs room as a study, and none other than Henry David Thoreau established a vegetable garden there for his friend. Unfortunately, Hawthorne and his wife were ultimately evicted from the home for nonpayment of rent. Other than this temporary rental, members of the extended Emerson-Ripley family lived in the house until 1939, when it was turned over to the Trustees

of Reservations.

The Ralph Waldo Emerson House is also a National Historic Landmark. Emerson, desirous of returning to his hometown, purchased the house on the occasion of his second marriage, to Lydia Jackson, and lived in it for the rest of his life. The home was a regular gathering place for leading thinkers of the day, including Thoreau and the Alcotts, as well as for "The Transcendental Club." The home remains in the family and operates as a private museum, featuring original furnishings and Emerson memorabilia. However, Emerson's books and the furniture from his study are on display at the Concord Museum, just across the street.

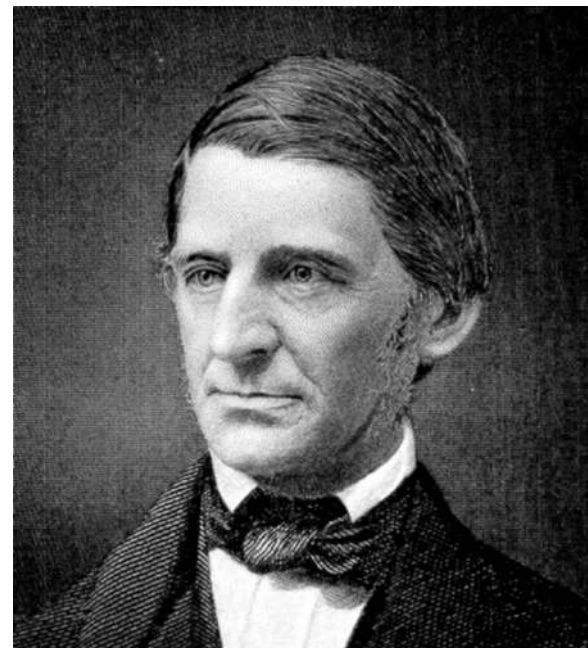
Emerson's lecture schedule was lucrative enough that he managed to acquire many acres of land, and it was on his property at Walden Pond that Henry David Thoreau built his one-room cabin.

Walden Pond State Reservation, now part of the Massachusetts Forests and Parks system, spreads over 335 acres and includes the iconic glacial pond, a National Historic Landmark. Hiking trails run throughout Walden Woods, almost 2,700 acres of undeveloped land, and you can walk on

one of them to a replica of the one-room cabin in which Thoreau lived while developing his ideas of naturalism and transcendentalism. Park interpreters provide tours and ongoing educational programs.

The Concord Museum houses one of the oldest collections of Americana in the country, including literary records, artifacts, and decorative arts that chronicle the area's great history. This year, the museum features a special program, "Early Spring: Henry Thoreau and Climate Change," through September 15, an exhibition documenting three hundred years of seasonal natural phenomena in Concord. This is a most fitting tribute to the memory of Thoreau, probably America's first environmentalist.

You will probably get hungry and thirsty after touring, but in Concord, Massachusetts, you won't be able to purchase a bottle of water to quench your thirst. The town has become one of the first communities in



Ralph Waldo Emerson



In the Concord Museum, one of the two lanterns Paul Revere ordered hung on April 18, 1775, in the belfry of the Old North Church to signal the route of an expected British advance



Margaret Fuller, American journalist, women's rights advocate, and transcendentalist



Louisa May Alcott wrote 'Little Women' in Concord

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On the Concord River at the North Bridge, where the "shot heard 'round the world" was fired – peaceful now



Ohabei Shalom, once eighteen members, can accommodate 1,750 today

the United States to ban the sale of single-serving plastic water bottles. However, you may be able to purchase a glass of grape juice, made from real Concord grapes.

Although commercial grape production dates back thousands of years, it was not until 1854 that Ephraim Wales Bull developed the Concord variety to withstand the cold New England winters and its rocky soil. He named it after the Massachusetts village where it was grown.

A glass of Concord grape juice with a spritz of seltzer will provide you with a refreshing, and historical, cooler at the end of a long day of touring.

Carol Goodman Kaufman is a psychologist and author with a passion for travel and food. She recently launched the blog "Food for Thought," on her website at carolgoodmankaufman.com. She invites visits and comments.

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Replicated: Inside Henry David Thoreau's cabin

Concord Grape Pie

While most Members of the Tribe may associate the Concord grape with Mogen David or Manischewitz, this plump, round fruit also makes an excellent addition to your baking repertoire. So, what better way to celebrate your visit to Concord than with a genuine Concord grape pie? The preparation of the grapes is a real *potschke*, but the result is worth the effort. Unfortunately, you will have to wait until August to get the first of the crop of the midnight blue globes.

Ingredients:

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| Pastry for a 9-inch double pie crust | 1 tablespoon of lemon juice |
| 5-1/2 cups of Concord grapes | 1-1/2 tablespoons of butter |
| 1-1/4 cups of white sugar | 1 egg, beaten |
| 1/4 cup of all-purpose flour | Sugar for dusting |
| Pinch salt | |

Directions:

- Wash grapes, and remove the skins. Save the skins. *
- Place grape pulp in a large saucepan; mash a few at the bottom to release their juice.
- Cook over medium low heat until grapes come to a full boil.
- Remove pulp from heat, and press through a food mill to remove seeds.
- Combine pulp and skins in a large bowl. Stir in lemon juice.
- In a separate bowl, mix sugar, flour, and salt.
- Stir into grape mixture.
- Spoon into pastry shell and dot with butter.
- Top with second pastry shell.
- Flute edges, and cut little slits in the top crust for steam to escape.
- Brush with beaten egg – sprinkle with sugar.
- Bake on baking sheet 45 to 60 minutes at 350 degrees, or until crust is brown and juice begins to bubble through slits in top crust.
- Cool.

Serves 8

*** An easy way to peel the grapes:**

Remove the grapes from the stem, put into a plastic container, and place in the freezer for at least two hours. Remove and rinse under warm water. Most of the grapes will slip out of their skins as they thaw. For the grapes whose skins do not fall off, make a small slit in the end of the grape with a sharp knife and slip the skin off

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