

## Traveling with Jewish Taste<sup>®</sup> Baltimore – Vibrant Jewish Life

By Carol Goodman Kaufman



Meetings scheduled in Baltimore, I steered myself. The popular television programs, *Homicide* and *The Wire* had portrayed the city as a vast warren of drugs and violence. But, the Barry Levinson series of films portrayed his hometown with fondness.

Which Baltimore would I find?

As a major port of entry on the East Coast, Baltimore has attracted waves of immigrants over the centuries, including the Jews. By the early 1900s, more than 40,000 Jews called the city home. As their numbers grew and they thrived, they spread out to the suburbs. The greater metropolitan area now counts about 100,000 Jews, almost sixty synagogues, and a dozen Jewish day schools, all indications of a vibrant Jewish life.

Beginning in the 1960s, however, Baltimore began a steep decline. Many working class neighborhoods were devastated by the loss of manufacturing jobs and tax base. Middle-class families fled to the suburbs. Drug use and the scourge of HIV spread, and the crime and gang activity, as a result of drug use, ballooned. Added to the mix were slumlords, property flippers (those who purchase real estate only for quick resale), and predatory lenders.

The end result was a mad spiral of deterioration. In one recent six-day period in



Attman's Delicatessen – "New York Style Corned Beef" ...and a museum

August, the police reported sixteen shootings; hence the inspiration for movies and TV shows portraying Baltimore as a very dangerous place to live.

In the past decade, however, city-private partnerships have begun to revitalize the town, including the "Inner Harbor."

The waterfront area is now a major tourist attraction, with hotels, restaurants, and shops. And, docked right there, and all within walking distance of each other, are the Historic Ships, billed as "one of the most impressive collections of military vessels in the world."

The ships include the U.S.S. Constellation, the US Submarine Torsk, the US Coast Guard Cutter Taney, and the Lightship Chesapeake. All were built between the mid-19th century to the mid-1980s, and feature an array of artifacts, including everything from dishes to uniforms that would have been on board in their days on the high seas.

A trip through Baltimore history would not be complete without a tour of the Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine. A ten-minute film will orient you before you embark on the hour-long self-guided tour of the fort.

The Battle of Fort McHenry served as the inspiration for Frances Scott Key to write the "Star Spangled Banner." During the War of 1812, Key had been dispatched to the British ship HMS Tonnant to negotiate the release of prisoners. The commander

of the ship, fearing that Key would reveal the British intention to attack Baltimore, held him on board. Unable to return to shore, Key had to witness the bombardment of the city from the ship's deck. When he saw that the flag was still waving the next morning, he penned what is now our national anthem.

As for the Jewish history of the area, Baltimore is one of a handful of cities that has a Jewish museum, so a trip to the Jewish Museum of Maryland is a must. Located just blocks from the Inner Harbor, its three galleries feature exhibitions that explore the history and culture of the Jewish American experience. Special programs and events are regular features on the calendar. In addition, a research library and family history center attract students of history and genealogy.

The museum campus includes two of the oldest synagogue buildings in America, the Lloyd Street Synagogue, built in 1845, and the Moorish revival B'nai Israel Synagogue, built in 1876 and still home to an active congregation. Lloyd Street features the original communal *matzah*-baking ovens and one of the oldest *mikvahs* in the country.

As a border town between North and South during the Civil War, Baltimore has been a crucible in the historical development of American Jewish life.

Opening October 13 and extending through February 28 is a special traveling exhibition "Passages Through the Fire: Jews and the American Civil War." On loan from the Yeshiva University Museum, the exhibition looks at the influence on and by Jews – ninety percent of whom had only arrived in the United States in the twenty years prior to 1861 – on the events "leading up to the Civil War, the war itself, and the war's aftermath" and "proposes that these challenges and opportunities acted as a crucible that rapidly transformed American Jewry."

The former Temple Oheb Shalom building on Eutaw Place, modeled on the Great Synagogue of Florence, Italy, is another reminder of the vibrant Jewish community that once thrived in the city.

Rabbi Benjamin Szold was the then-Orthodox congregation's first spiritual leader. Szold may now be best known as the father of Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadasah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America; the director of the Youth Aliyah movement that rescued thousands of children from Nazi-occupied Europe; and the founder of the Russian Night School that served as a model for settlement houses

JEWISH TASTE, continued on page 14



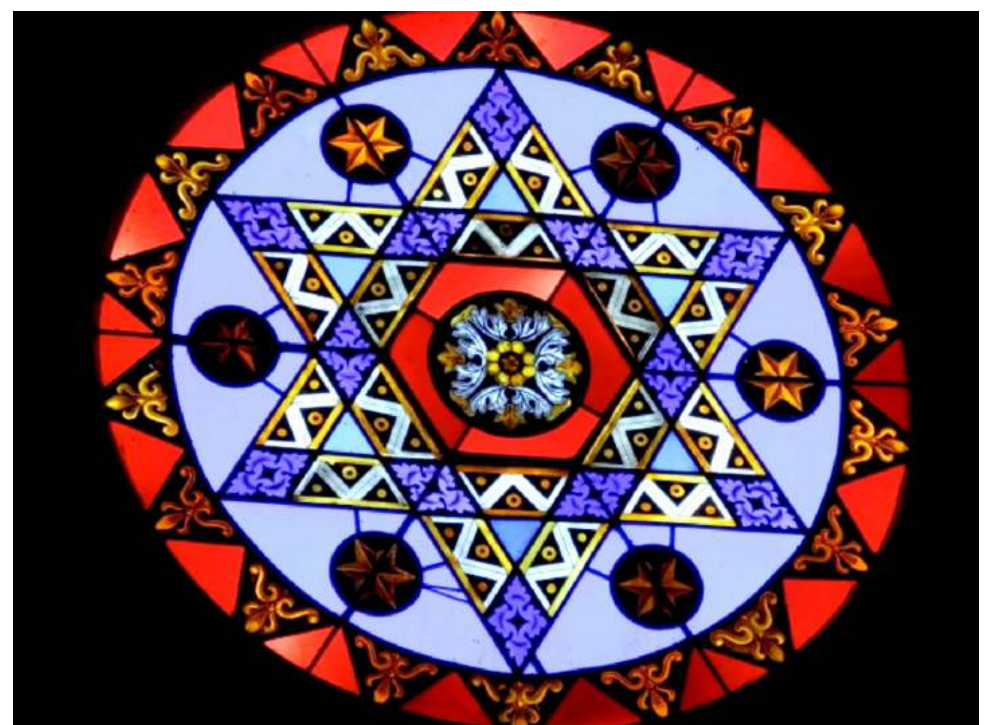
Rabbi Benjamin Szold: his daughter Henrietta founded Hadassah, but he was a power in his own right



The 'Star Spangled Banner' at Fort McHenry



The U.S.S. Constellation, launched in 1854 and the last all-sail ship of the United States Navy



Stained glass window at the Lloyd Street Synagogue

**JEWISH TASTE**, *continued from page 11*

across the country.

But he was a powerful figure himself in the late nineteenth century, a leading scholar and model of communal activism. Henrietta recalled looking out the window of her home as a five-year-old and seeing her father among the dignitaries marching alongside the funeral cortege of the slain President Abraham Lincoln.

Like many other congregations, the now-Reform Oheb Shalom has since moved to the suburbs, where it is housed in a Bauhaus style structure with an ark so stunning that it was recognized with an award by the American Institute of Architects.

Kosher restaurants and bakeries are numerous in the area; you may find them by visiting <http://www.associated.org/page.aspx?id=247129>, which is maintained by "The Associated, the Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore."

Only two delis remain on Corned Beef Row (once known as "Jewtown"), neither of which remain kosher. One indulges the history buff: Attman's features a little museum on the premises which, "through recreated rooms, taped conversations, street scenes, pushcart displays, and photographs, tells the story of a century of life in the neighborhood."

*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](http://carolgoodmankaufman.com). She invites visits and comments.*

*This column is copyrighted © by Carol Goodman Kaufman and the Berkshire Jewish Voice. It may not be reprinted or reproduced, in whole or in part, in any manner. All rights reserved.*



The bimah at B'nai Israel Synagogue – a view from the top

### The Margolis Family Fund for BRCA Gene Mutation Detection to Prevent Breast & Ovarian Cancers

A local resource for information, support, and financial assistance for families in the Berkshire Community whose members may be appropriate for genetic testing, as well as individuals who may be preparing for or recovering from preventative medical intervention.

For further information, please contact Margo Golos at (413) 442-4360, ext. 19

You may request that the *Berkshire Jewish Voice* be mailed to your home. Just email us at [jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net](mailto:jfb.berkshirevoice@verizon.net) for information.

## 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](mailto:jfb.volunteer@verizon.net)



Brothers and soldiers, Edward Jonas (Union) and Charles H. Jonas (Confederate) from the exhibition 'Passages Through the Fire: Jews and the American Civil War,' at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, October 13 through February 28, 2014

### Baltimore Coddies

As readers of this column know, I try to include a recipe for a food considered emblematic of the place. So, what is one of Baltimore's quintessential foods? A very simple treat called "coddies," a hand-formed, lightly seasoned fish-mashed-potato-and-cracker mixture deep-fried and served at room temperature topped with yellow mustard and between two saltine crackers. The Jewish answer to crab cakes? Perhaps. But, bloggers and locals tell me that they are delicious by themselves, and don't need to compete.

Coddies actually have their origins in the Jewish immigrant experience, and according to several bloggers, the best ones were to be had in Jewish delis, particularly those on the diminished "Corned Beef Row" in Baltimore. But, before they were served in delis, Jewish merchants sold them from pushcarts in the early twentieth century.

I also hear that, to make a perfect meal, one must pair the coddies with a chocolate soda.

Makes 12 cakes



#### Ingredients:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 1/4 pound salt cod (the traditional ingredient, but you can substitute fresh cod) | 2 eggs, lightly beaten                            |
| 1 pound potatoes, peeled and diced  | 1/2 teaspoon black pepper                         |
| 2 tablespoons milk  | Canola oil for frying                             |
| 8 saltine crackers, crushed   | Additional saltines                               |
|   | Mustard (yellow is traditional, but I like brown) |

#### Directions:

- Soak salt cod for 24 hours in a bowl of water, changing the water every 6 to 8 hours.
- Place cod in a pot and cover with fresh water. Bring to a boil.
- Drain water from pot and cover with water again and bring to a boil.
- Simmer for ten to fifteen minutes.
- Drain and break up with a fork; let cool. Boil potatoes until tender.
- Drain potatoes, mash (leaving them a bit lumpy) and add the milk; cool.
- In a large bowl, combine the cod, mashed potatoes, crushed saltines, eggs and pepper.
- Form into small patties.
- Fry in a one-quarter inch of hot oil about four minutes on each side, or until brown.
- Drain on paper towels.
- Serve between saltine crackers, with yellow mustard.