

BOSTON

Follow Boston's famed Freedom Trail, and you'll walk in the shadows of some of the most vibrant Jewish immigrant neighborhoods in the Northeast – but you won't know it. Sadly, little remains to mark the time when Eastern European Jews swelled North End neighborhoods between 1880 and 1920, creating something as close to a "Lower East Side" as Boston ever experienced. Other immigrant-era conclaves existed in the West End as well as sections of the South End – but most of the synagogues, schools, homes, and sights of significance were razed or rebuilt in urban renewal efforts. What few sights remain, however, are outstanding and do a lot to bring the history of Jews in Boston to life.

The city's founding fathers may have considered themselves "Christian Israelites," but they offered a less-than-friendly welcome to Jews during the Puritan beginnings. The stern New Englanders turned to their Old Testament for guidance and taught Hebrew at Harvard from its earliest days. But they remained wary of the few Jewish merchants and peddlers in the 1600s and through the Revolutionary period. Public records indicate a concern that Jewish newcomers might become public charges.

A handful of Jews played important roles during the Revolution. But the slow stream of shopkeepers and peddlers didn't build to a significant population until the late 1840s. At that time, the first congregation, Ohabei Shalom, was organized.

By the mid-1850s, a German Jewish community was firmly rooted in the South End, and grew as the Civil War brought an industrial boom to New England. But it wasn't until the wave of immigration from Eastern Europe (1870-1920) swept the East Coast

that Boston's Jewish numbers spiked. The population flooded the North End, then the West End.

Today, nearly 214,000 Jews live in Greater Boston, most of the population concentrated in suburbs of Brookline, Brighton, and Newton. Despite the loss of many historical structures that testified to Boston's historic Jewish presence, fascinating examples remain. Additionally, a rich academic legacy leaves wonderful archives, museums, and collections of Jewish interest. Galleries, monuments, and even architectural attractions round out a healthy sightseeing agenda.

It may take some effort to track down the sights listed in this profile – Boston's confusing street patterns (or lack thereof) pose challenges to getting around. Guided tours are recommended (some resources are mentioned), and additional detail has been given when possible along with addresses. It is always advisable to call specific sights ahead to verify hours and get directions.

SIGHTSEEING HIGHLIGHTS

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

American Jewish Historical Society Museum, Two Thornton Rd., Waltham, accessible only through Brandeis University, ☎ 781-891-8110. Its holdings – 15 million archival documents and tens of thousands of paintings, photos, artifacts, and museum objects – are the largest in the world relating to the Jewish experience in America. Although its library and many of its collections have now moved to the new Center for Jewish History in Manhattan (see page 135), its two small exhibition galleries are must-sees. A permanent exhibition showcases portraits, miniatures, objects, and documents of early American Jewry. There are also a number of changing temporary exhibitions. Hours: Monday-Friday, 9-4:30. Call in advance for special Sunday programs. No admission charged.

Starr Gallery, Leventhal-Sidman JCC, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, ☎ 617-558-6485. Jewish history and culture are showcased in historic and contemporary rotating exhibits, at the largest dedicated Jewish exhibition site in the Northeast. There's also a schedule of workshops and lectures. Hours are Monday-Thursday,

10-4; Friday, 10-2; Sunday, 11-4; Tuesday and Wednesday evenings, 6-9.

HISTORIC SITES

Plenty of tour companies offer historic walks through Boston proper, and some will point out plaques, buildings, or other attractions connected to Boston's Jewish legacy. Specifically, Boston Walks, Jewish Friendship Trail spotlights Jewish sites that may go unnoticed – tucked at the end of an alley, buried by new construction, unmarked by plaque or marker.

❖ DID YOU KNOW?

In the West End at Otis Place stand the homes once occupied by two prominent Boston Jews – **Justice Louis D. Brandeis**, the first Jewish Supreme Court Justice, and **Edward A. Filene**, department store patriarch. The homes are privately owned and not open for touring, but worthwhile to see from the outside.

Vilna Center for Jewish Heritage, Inc. 14-18 Phillips St., near north slope of Boston's Beacon Hill and Freedom Trail, ☎ 617-523-2324. Web site: shamash.org/places/boston. This National Historic Landmark is a museum and cultural center in the making. The structure served as the Vilna Shul from 1920 – when many of the Lithuanian immigrant congregants pitched in to build it – until the early 1980s. The modest structure, typical of a small, working-class shul, is a rare find – it's the only immigrant-era synagogue that survives in Boston. Currently, the center is open irregularly and visitors should call ahead for hours or to schedule a tour. In the works are plans for special events, concerts, lectures, and permanent and visiting exhibits.

Columbus Avenue A. M. E. Zion Church, 600 Columbus Ave., South End, ☎ 617-266-2758. In the stained-glass windows that face Northampton Street, passersby can distinguish the stars of David, indicating the building's origins as a synagogue – Temple Israel. A highlight of the well-preserved structure is the striking great rose window that faces Columbus Avenue. This steepled building, erected in 1885, provided an architectural model for two

generations of synagogues in Boston, although it has served as a church for nearly 100 years. Hours: Wednesday, 11-2; Saturday, 11-3.

Two other South End sights are worth at least a walk-by. Both the **Greek Orthodox Church**, 11 Union Park St., and the **Charles Street Playhouse**, 784 Warrenton St., were once home to the Temple Ohabei Shalom congregation. The second location is acknowledged as the oldest building (1839) still standing that was once a synagogue in Boston.

Museum of Afro American History, 8 Smith Court (off Joy Street on north side of Beacon Hill, West End), ☎ 617-739-1200. This museum marks the site of the first free Black Baptist church in the New England area. Built in 1805, the African Meeting House is just one component of the museum site and the Black Heritage Trail. So what's the Jewish connection? From 1899 until the early 1970s, the historic structure served congregation Anshe Libawitz. The building, a National Historic Landmark, has been beautifully restored, and of special note is a lovely circular staircase – it once led to the women's section of the Orthodox synagogue. Hours: Daily, 10-4; closed weekends from Labor Day to Memorial Day. No admission charged; donations appreciated.

SUBURBAN SYNAGOGUES

Two synagogues in Roxbury and one in Chelsea are worth a drive-by. **Adath Jeshuran**, 397 Blue Hill Ave., Roxbury, is today the First Haitian Baptist Church of Boston. The immigrant-era synagogue has recently been declared a National Historic Landmark. At the corner of Elm Hill Avenue and Seaver Street is **Mishkan Tefila**. Ellen Smith, curator of the American Jewish Historical Society, calls it the “Crown Jewel” of Boston synagogues. This magnificent 1925 structure, which suffered from neglect until recently, has been restored as a church.

In nearby Chelsea, **Agudas Sholom**, also known as the Walnut Street Shul, still serves a dwindling congregation. A highlight is the cloud-painted ceiling, says David Kaufman, synagogue expert and co-author of *The Jews of Boston*.

MONUMENTS, MARKERS & MEMORIALS

The **Edward A. Filene Memorial** is a plaque at the corner of Boylston St. and Carver, near the entrance to Boston Common. The patriarch of the department store dynasty is honored as one of the founders of the credit union movement.

The New England Holocaust Memorial, Carmen Park, on Congress Street near Faneuil Hall and Freedom Trail, ☎ 617-457-0755. At night the six glass towers pick up the lights of the city and cast a greenish glow, reminding passersby of a menorah – or death camp chimneys. The towers are etched with six million numbers in memory of the Jews who died in the Holocaust. Blending into the heart of Boston, near the Freedom Trail and Faneuil Hall, the solemn monument provokes reflection on freedom and human rights. Visitors often leave stones and flowers on the surfaces of the memorial.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Coolidge Corner, Harvard Street in Brookline. If you're looking for the "Jewish neighborhood," travel to the suburb of Brookline. Here you'll find an ethnically diverse area, with plenty of kosher restaurants, Judaica shops, and Jewish soul. From the 1960s, this area has served as the heart of Jewish Boston.

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Brandeis University, 415 South Street, Waltham, ☎ 781-736-2000. Named for famed Boston resident Louis D. Brandeis, the first nonsectarian Jewish-founded university in the Western Hemisphere has attracted students to its inviting campus overlooking the Charles River since 1948. There are too many worthwhile sights to list, but highlights include the **Three Chapels** area, with Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant houses of worship, grouped around a heart-shaped pool. The **Holocaust Monument**, a bronze statue of Job by Nathan Rappaport, is modeled after the original, which stands at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem. Pieces from the **Tumen Collection of Judaica** are always on display in the Goldfarb Farber Libraries.

Hebrew College, 43 Hawes St., Brookline, ☎ 617-232-8710. Just a few blocks from the Coolidge Corner area, Hebrew College offers the visitor a number of treasures in a jewel-box setting. The centerpiece of the campus is a turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts mansion, containing an extensive library of rare books. As you walk through the halls, you'll enjoy Judaic artwork, including sculpture, paintings, and wall hangings. The museum in **the Benjamin A. and Julia M. Trustman Hall** holds a small collection of ritual objects from 19th- and 20th-century Eastern and Central Europe. Museum and library hours: Monday-Thursday, 9-9; Friday, 9-noon; Sunday, 9-3. No admission charged.

❖ DID YOU KNOW?

Arthur Fiedler was the father of the much-loved Boston Pops Concerts that have entertained outdoor summer crowds since 1930. An appropriate honor, then, to name a bridge after a man who connected people to an art form many considered beyond their reach. The **Arthur Fiedler Bridge** connects Beacon St. with the park along the Charles River where Hatch Memorial Shell is located.

GENERAL-INTEREST SIGHTS WITH JEWISH CONNECTION

Boston Public Library, 700 Boylston St., ☎ 617-536-5400. In the John Singer Sargent Gallery, the wall painting, *The Synagogue*, once attracted controversy; many found its depiction of the synagogue as a haggard old woman to be anti-Semitic. The painting is dark and in need of restoration. Perhaps of greater interest today is Sargent's *Frieze of the Prophets*, depicting Moses with the tablets and prophets, their names labeled in Hebrew.

Boston University, Mugar Memorial Library, 771 Commonwealth Ave. ☎ 617-353-2000. The Samuel Weisberg Memorial Collection of Jewish Ritual Silver contains menorahs, Torah ornaments, seder plates, besamim, and other ritual objects, and is located on the first floor of the Mugar Memorial Library. Library hours: Monday-Thursday, 8am-midnight; Friday-Saturday, 8-11; Sunday, 10am-midnight. Call for summer hours.

Paul Revere House, 19 North Square, ☎ 617-523-2338. No, Paul Revere wasn't Jewish. But this stop on the Freedom Trail does have some Jewish connection. A tour of the two homes, the Paul Revere House and the Pierce/Hichborn House next door, includes commentary about the ethnic populations that once lived in the North End. And evidence indicates that around the turn of the century, a Jewish-owned grocery store operated from the Paul Revere House. Hours: Daily, mid-April through October 31, 9:30-5:15; November 1-April 14, 9:30-4:15. Admission: \$2.50; \$2 seniors and students; \$1 children ages five-17.

SYNAGOGUES

Most of Greater Boston's synagogues will be found in the outlying suburbs of Newton, Brighton, and Brookline, with a few exceptions. Call the Synagogue Council of Massachusetts (☎ 617-244-6506) for more listings and more information.

ORTHODOX

The Boston Synagogue, 55 Martha Rd., ☎ 617-723-2863. Identified as Orthodox in the Synagogue Council directory; however, the congregation defines itself as Traditional, with separate and mixed seating for men and women. It is one of the few synagogues in Boston proper.

Congregation Agudas Achim-Anshe Sfard, 168 Adams St., Newton, ☎ 617-730-4183. This synagogue, also referred to as the Adams Street Shul, is the oldest congregation in Newton (1912), and one of the oldest in the Boston area. It's listed on the National Registry of Historic Buildings.

Congregation Beth El-Atereth Israel, 561 Ward St., Newton, ☎ 617-244-7233.

Congregation Beth Pinchas, 1710 Beacon St., Brookline, ☎ 617-734-5100. The Bostoner Rebbe's congregation.

Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe, 113 Washington St., Brighton, ☎ 617-254-1333. Next door is the Daughters of Israel mikvah.

Congregation Shaarei Tefillah, 35 Morseland Ave., Newton, ☎ 617-527-7637.

Young Israel of Brookline, 62 Green St., Brookline, ☎ 617-734-0276.

CONSERVATIVE

Temple Emanuel, 385 Ward St., Newton, ☎ 617-558-8510.

Temple Emeth, 194 Grove St., Newton, ☎ 617-469-9400.

Congregation Kehillath Israel, 384 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-277-9155.

Temple Mishkan Tefila, 300 Hammond Pond Pkwy., Newton, ☎ 617-332-7770. Contains a small museum with an interesting collection of ritual objects.

Temple Reyim, 1860 Washington St., Newton, ☎ 617-527-2410.

REFORM

Temple Beth Avodah, 45 Puddingstone Ln., Newton, ☎ 617-527-0045, Web site: 222.shamash.org/reform/uahc/congs/ma/ma007.

Temple Israel, Longwood Ave. and Plymouth St., ☎ 617-731-1557, e-mail tisrael@shore.net. Of special note is a 20-foot sculpture, *Covenant, Covenant*, by renowned sculptress Louise Nevelson, and a memorial garden with Biblical flowers and plants.

Temple Ohabei Shalom, 1187 Beacon St., Brookline, ☎ 617-277-6610. The second-largest Byzantine-like structure in the United States, the synagogue stands like a beacon in Coolidge Corner, its dramatic dome a neighborhood landmark.

Temple Shalom, 175 Temple St., Newton, ☎ 617-332-9550.

Temple Sinai, 50 Sewall Ave., Brookline, ☎ 617-277-5842.

KOSHER DINING

Café Aviv, 14A Pleasant St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-9780. A meat restaurant, with Middle Eastern and Moroccan flavors. Eat in or carry out. Open for lunch and dinner, Saturday after sundown.

Casa Mia, 9 Babcock St., Brookline, ☎ 617-739-1515. An Italian meat menu offers other Mediterranean dishes as well. Eat in or carry out. Open for lunch and dinner, Saturday after sundown.

Café Shiraz, 1030 Commonwealth Ave., Brookline, ☎ 617-566-8888. The focus is on Persian and Middle Eastern, with both meat and vegetarian items on the menu. Open for dinner only, and Saturday after sundown.

Galilee Restaurant, 406 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-1818. For an upscale ambiance, diners seek out dairy, fish, and vegetarian entrées, as well as pizza and ice cream. The restaurant also offers carry-out.

Milk Street Café, Post Office Square, 50 Milk Street, Boston, ☎ 617-542-3663. This dairy establishment offers soups, salads, pizza, and sandwiches cafeteria-style for breakfast and lunch. Open for breakfast and lunch; and Sunday brunch during summer.

Milk Street Café, The Park at Post Office Square, corner of Congress and Franklin Streets, ☎ 617-350-7275. The deli side of the establishment specializes in hot dogs and chili dogs. Open for breakfast and lunch.

Rami's, 324 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-738-3577. A taste of Israel with a meat menu that includes felafel, shwarma, and other Middle Eastern favorites. Open for lunch.

Rubin's Kosher Delicatessen & Restaurant, 500 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-8787. Eat in or carry out from this meat deli. Open for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Ruth's Kitchen, 401 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-734-9810. In addition to a full Chinese menu, Jewish and American meat and vegetarian entrées are available. Eat in or carry out. Open for lunch and dinner.

Shalom Hunan Restaurant, 92 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-9760. A meat menu presents Chinese favorites. Open for lunch and dinner, Saturday after sundown.

Vittorio's Pizza, 1398 Beacon St., Brookline, ☎ 617-730-9903, www1.usa1.com/leibco/vittorios/. Dairy favorites include pizza, felafel, and ice cream. Eat in or carry out. Open for lunch and dinner, Saturday after sundown.

Zaatar's Oven, 242 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-6836. Mediterranean dishes, baked-on-site flatbreads, and pizza highlight this dairy menu. Eat in or carry out. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, Saturday after sundown.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTERS

Leventhal-Sidman JCC, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, ☎ 617-558-6522. www.lsjcc.org. The Newton location includes the Starr Gallery, fitness facilities, pool, and theater. Beautifully restored 19th-century structures share the campus with modern facilities, and hint at the area's history, originally as a Jesuit seminary, and later as an orphanage.

Striar JCC, 445 Central St., Stoughton, ☎ 781-341-2016. The full-service facility offers fitness and amenities for out-of-town members seeking reciprocal privileges. A central courtyard is worth a visit – its walls are built from Jerusalem stone.

SHOPPING

Israel Book Shop, 410 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-566-7113.

Kolbo Gifts, 435 Harvard St., Brookline, ☎ 617-731-8743.

LODGING

Four Seasons Kosher B&B, 15 Madoc St., Newton Centre, ☎ 617-928-1128. Joe and Miriam Behar welcome guests into their modern home with the look of a charming country cottage. They serve

kosher breakfasts, provide a *Shomer Shabbat* atmosphere, and offer a homey base within walking distance of three Orthodox synagogues and two Conservative congregations. The B&B is within easy commute to Boston. Miriam's full breakfasts are highlighted by her homemade breads, and occasional frittata. Miriam will prepare Shabbat meals for an extra charge, if arranged in advance. Two rooms are available. No children under 12. The rates are quite modest, well under \$100 for two.

EVENTS

Boston Jewish Film Festival, Waltham, ☎ 617-244-9899. A series of films, classics and currents, is scheduled during November.

Jewish Chamber Orchestra, Leventhal-Sidman JCC, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, ☎ 617-965-5226. The orchestra performs twice a year, and features notable musicians as well as undiscovered geniuses of the Jewish music world. Call for dates of performances.

The Jewish Theatre of New England, Leventhal-Sidman JCC, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, ☎ 617-965-5226. Its season runs from October to May, and features contemporary and classical performances within the context of the Jewish experience – everything from Klezmer concerts to Jewish soloists to theatrical works, as well as some children's programs. Box office hours: Tuesday-Thursday, noon-5.

HERITAGE TOURS

Boston Walks, Jewish Friendship Trail, 50 Grove St., Belmont, ☎ 617-489-5020. Native Bostonian Michael Ross regales participants with tales of Boston's Jewish past, as he points out synagogues, historic businesses, and other points of interest in the West End, North End, South End, and Cambridge. Many of the city's most intriguing sites are well-hidden. Ross offers walks as well as bicycle tours. Scheduled tours are more frequent in warm weather, generally on Sunday afternoons. But given enough notice, he will arrange private tours as well. The tours typically last from one to 2½ hours and cost \$20 or less.

RESOURCES

Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, Inc., 126 High St., ☎ 617-457-8500, www.cjp.org.

❖ DID YOU KNOW?

Since the TV series *Star Trek* soared into the entertainment universe in the 1960s, Jews have wondered about parallels between Captain Kirk's Federation and Jewish institutions similarly named. Key character Spock frequently flashed the sign of the Kohane (creating a "V" shape by splitting the fingers), inciting further speculation. The fact that actor Leonard Nimoy (who portrayed Spock) is Jewish creates even more. Nimoy is the son of a Boston barber.

The Synagogue Council of Massachusetts, 1320 Centre St., Newton Centre, ☎ 617-244-6506.

This body, a joint venture of state UAHC (Reform), USCJ (Conservative), Orthodox, and Reconstructionist congregations, publishes a directory of synagogues and may be a helpful source for visitors seeking information about specific congregations in the Greater Boston area.

Jewish Advocate, 15 School St., Boston, ☎ 617-367-9100, Ext. 20, www.neponset.com/jewish_advocate. The Jewish community's weekly newspaper. Its Web site is a great place to find listings of local organizations, as well as editorial and news.

www.jewishboston.org has the lowdown on all things Jewish in the Greater Boston area, from synagogue listings, to kosher dining, to a calendar of community events.

Alef Cable Network, Bureau of Jewish Education, 333 Nahanton St., Newton, ☎ 617-965-7350. Presents Jewish public affairs programming, with both local and international content. Call for a listing of channels in the Boston area.

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, PO Box 610366, Newton Highlands, MA 02161-0366, ☎ 617-283-8003, www.jewishgen.org/boston/jgsgb.html.

The Jews of Boston, edited by Jonathan D. Sarna and Ellen Smith (Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, 1995).