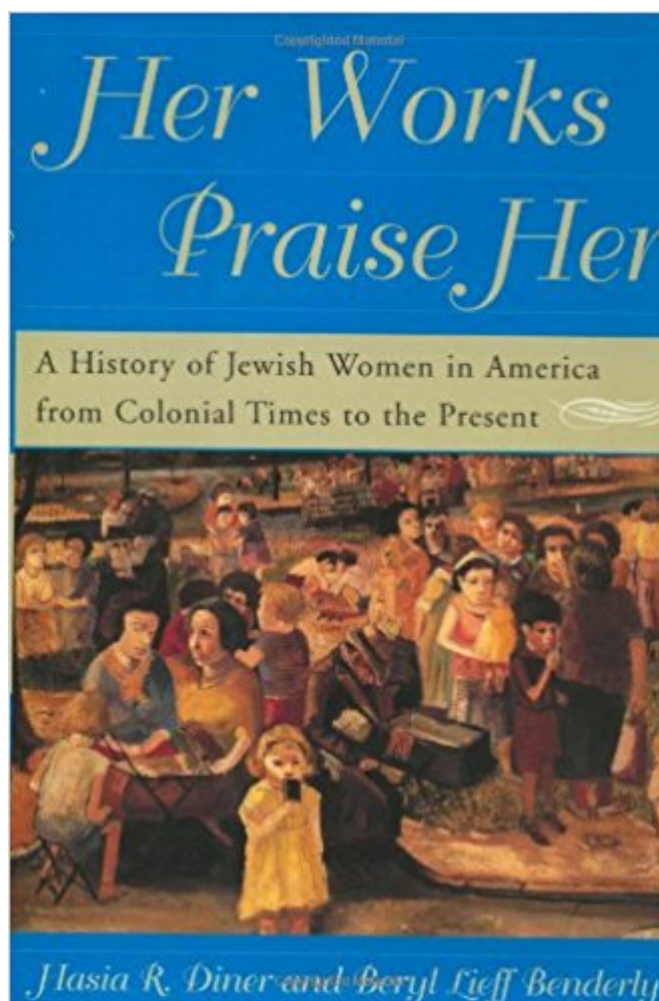


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Her Works Praise Her: A History Of Jewish Women In America From Colonial Times To The Present



Synopsis

From salons in Federal Philadelphia to Frontier homesteads to settlement houses in city slums to 1970s consciousness-raising sessions, American Jewish women have brought a distinctive sense of self and community to bear on the economic, social, and family life around them. Hasia R. Diner and Beryl Lieff Benderly draw upon long-neglected public records, private diaries, memoirs and letters to overturn the widespread notion that Jewish life began at Ellis Island and happened only in New York. They offer a complex portrait of flesh-and-blood characters such as Emma Lazarus, Mrs. Wyatt Earp, Ethel Rosenberg, Betty Friedan, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg. The result is a comprehensive account of how America transformed generations of Jewish women--and how these women transformed America.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

New York University historian Diner (*Lower East Side Memories*) and award-winning journalist Benderly (*Dancing without Music*) present a well-researched and consistently absorbing chronicle, the first social history of American Jewish women, according to the publisher. From the moment they arrived in New Amsterdam (to the displeasure of Peter Stuyvesant, who referred to them as "enemies and blasphemers of the name of Christ"), Jewish women have (like other women, and men for that matter) struggled to pave their way in American society and to improve the lot of others. That this country is home to the "largest, richest, freest Jewish community in the world," the authors contend, "is largely the work of women doing the sacred tasks of Jewish womanhood." By the late 1700s, they were initiating charity projects and realizing the Jewish concept of *tzedakah*, and while

their primary loyalty was to other Jewish immigrants, they became involved with the wider community as well. When Christian interest in proselytizing increased, Jewish women took the lead in resisting it. Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869), for example, hired a tutor to teach her Hebrew and arranged for family members to attend lessons. The 20th century witnessed the ascendance of Jewish women to the forefront of just about every social justice movement: they were involved in organizing labor unions, building hospitals and settlement houses, running vocational programs and establishing job-referral agencies. But while the authors give considerable attention to Jewish women's passionate involvement in the feminist movement, they ignore their significant contributions to the gay and lesbian movement. This is a minor point, however, in a fundamental contribution to women's and Jewish studies that is certain to inform and engage. 16 pages of b&w illus. not seen by PW. Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Jewish tradition defines the ideal Jewish woman as strong, industrious, virtuous, wise, and generous, an active partner in marriage and an invaluable member of the community. Historian Diner and journalist Benderly use this vision as a gold standard for the women, both unknown and famous, they so insightfully profile in this cascading history of American Jewish women, from the first female Jewish immigrants to land here, in 1654, to the present. As the authors chart the diverse fortunes of Jewish women in America, they also chronicle the cataclysmic events that brought millions of European Jews to the U.S., the admirable evolution of Judaism in the New World, and changing mores regarding marriage, education, and careers. Dramatic stories of isolated Jewish frontier households give way to intense tales of poor urban Jewish working women as the authors introduce intrepid women entrepreneurs, activists, teachers, rabbis, feminists, philanthropists, actors, and countless women devoted to their families, an ennobling litany of accomplished American Jewish women who helped improve every aspect of Jewish and American life. Donna SeamanCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

Great book if you're looking to read about Judaism in America! Bought to write a report for my Gender and the Construction of Judaism class and enjoyed it a lot!

I loved this book! Every Jewish woman (and man) and everyone interested in Jewish life in America should read it. It gives a view of American and Jewish history I had never seen before, and it is beautifully written. It is full of moving stories of real women working to build America at every period of history. I had never understood how important women have been in creating the American Jewish

community. Just wonderful!

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