The following biobibliographies may serve as a model for this form and may suggest sources of information on other American Jewish women. Cf. our guidelines for Pathfinders (vol. 3, 1986-87, p. 125) – Ed.

American Jewish Women: Two Biobibliographies

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I. Rebecca Gratz (1781-1869),
Philanthropist and Sunday School Founder:

A Biobibliography

Biographical Information

Chronology

March 4, 1781  Born to Miriam (Simon) and Michael Gratz in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the seventh in a family of twelve children.

1801  With other Philadelphia women, organized and became first secretary of the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances, the first women's aid society in Philadelphia.

Sept. 12, 1808  Mother, Miriam (Simon) Gratz, died.

Sept. 8, 1811  Father, Michael Gratz, died.

Dec. 1814  Met with other women to organize the Philadelphia Orphan Society.

March 1815  First orphans were received into the asylum of the Philadelphia Orphan Society.

1818  With the help of Rabbi Solomon I. Cohen, a Hebrew scholar from Richmond, Virginia, began to educate children and adults in her home in Hebrew grammar and other subjects. Although the effort was short-lived, this was the first private Hebrew school for Jewish children in Philadelphia.

1819  Elected secretary of the Philadelphia Orphan Society and served in that capacity for forty years, until 1859. (Some sources say fifty years, until her death in 1869.)

1819  Prominent in founding of Female Hebrew Benevolent Society. This Jewish women's charity was the first of its kind in the United States.

Feb. 1838  Encouraged by Gratz, the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society passed a resolution to establish a Sunday School.

March 4, 1838  A Jewish Sunday school was opened on Gratz's birthday. Sponsored by the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, it was free of charge and open to both boys and girls. This was a milestone in the history of Jewish education in America, serving as a model for other schools that followed. Gratz served as the school's president until 1864, resigning at the age of 83.

1838?  Led in the establishment of the Ladies' Hebrew Sewing Society, which engaged young women to sew clothes for poor children and sick adults.

1841?  Influential in organizing the Fuel Society, which supplied poor families with fuel.

1850  A letter to the Occident, a monthly magazine published in Philadelphia, signed "A Daughter in Israel," was attributed to her. It suggested organizing a foster home and orphanage for Jewish children.
1855 The Jewish Foster Home, the first Jewish orphanage in Philadelphia was founded, largely through Gratz's efforts. The name was changed in 1881 to the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum.

1858 The Jewish Sunday school was reorganized and incorporated, and called the Hebrew Sunday School Society.

1866 After serving for eleven years as second director of the Jewish Foster Home, Gratz resigned and was elected an honorary board member.

Aug. 27 (29?), 1869 Died at the age of 88 in Philadelphia. Buried in the Mikveh Israel Cemetery on Spruce Street between 8th and 9th Streets.

Family

Parents: Miriam (Simon) and Michael Gratz, a wealthy merchant. Miriam (1749-1808) was the daughter of Joseph and Rosa (Bunn) Simon, early settlers of Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Michael Gratz (1740-1811), the son of Solomon Gratz, was born in Langendorf in Upper Silesia. Michael joined his older brother Barnard in Philadelphia by 1760, and they formed a business partnership. Michael and Miriam were married on June 20, 1769.

Siblings: Rebecca was one of twelve children, ten of whom lived to adulthood. Brothers Jonathan and Solomon died very young.

Frances Gratz Etting (1771-1852).

Simon (1773-1839) - With Hyman, succeeded in father's business.

Richea Gratz Hays (1774-1858).

Hyman (1776-1857) - With Simon, succeeded in father's business. Left a trust to provide for the establishment of Gratz College in Philadelphia.

Sarah (Sally) (1779-1817).

Rachel Gratz Moses (1783-1823).

Joseph (1785-1858).

Jacob (1789-1856).

Benjamin (1792-1884).

Children: Although she never married and had no children of her own, when her sister Rachel died in 1823 Rebecca raised Rachel's nine children. (The number is also reported as seven and eight.) Rebecca also provided a home for three brothers who never married.

There is a legend that Rebecca was the inspiration for the character of Rebecca in Sir Walter Scott's novel, Ivanhoe. Her beauty, faithfulness to her religion, and general reputation may have prompted her friend Washington Irving to describe her to Scott sometime before the publication of Ivanhoe in 1819. In a letter written by Rebecca to her sister-in-law, Mrs. Benjamin Gratz (Maria) of Lexington, Kentucky, on April 4, 1820, she speaks of Scott's heroine as her namesake. However, no conclusive evidence has been found to support the idea that Rebecca was Scott's model or that she refused to marry a Christian man, Samuel Ewing, because of the differences in their religions.

Historical Sites, Landmarks, Memorials

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Founded in 1740, Mikveh Israel Cemetery, Spruce Street between 8th and 9th Streets, is a national historical landmark by Act of Congress in 1956, and a local civic historical site within Independence National Park. A special plaque set into the surrounding brick wall honors Rebecca, who is buried here in the Gratz family plot.

Gratz Street, between 18th and 19th Streets, running north from Jefferson Street to Huntingdon Street, and from Cambria Street to 68th Avenue, north, is named for the Gratz family.

In the office of the Register of Wills in City Hall, Broad and Market Streets, is the will of Rebecca Gratz.

Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

In the State Museum of Pennsylvania, William Penn Memorial Museum and Archives Building, on 3rd Street between North and Forster Streets, a statue of Rebecca is incorporated into the museum's memorial gates honoring ten noted Pennsylvanians.

Ambler, Pennsylvania

Rebecca Gratz Branch of the Hebrew Sunday School Society, McCann Community Building, Park and Lindwold Avenues. The Hebrew Sunday School Society was founded by Gratz in 1838.

Cleveland, Ohio

There is a memorial area to Gratz in the Hebrew Cultural Garden, one of the cultural gardens which span 35 acres in Rockefeller Park, between the upper and lower boulevards of the city's West Side park system.

At least three portraits of Rebecca, a celebrated beauty, were painted by Thomas Sully, who also painted other members of the Gratz family. Miniatures have been done by Edward Greene Malbone and Anna Claypoole Peale. A silhouette of Rebecca - a bust portrait cut with scissors - was created by William James Hubard. Reproductions of these may be found in a variety of books, including Philipson's Letters of Rebecca Gratz (1975), The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia (New York, 1941, vol. 5, p. 85-87), Encyclopaedia Judaica (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971, vol. 7, p. 858-59), and Miniatures and Silhouettes of Early American Jews, by Hannah R. London (Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1970).
An original portrait of Rebecca, by Thomas Sully, and portraits of her father and mother, by Jane Cooper Sully, are in the Rosenbach Museum, 2010 Delancey Place, Philadelphia, PA 19103. A miniature of Rebecca by Malbone; a portrait of her sister, Rachel, attributed to Thomas Sully; and artifacts of Rebecca are in the National Museum of American Jewish History, 55 N. 5th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106.

Bibliography

Biographical Sketches About Rebecca Gratz


Shorter Works About Rebecca Gratz


Theses About Rebecca Gratz


Primary Source Materials Relating to Rebecca Gratz

Extent of collection: 45 boxes, of which 5 boxes are for Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum.
Finding aids: Guide.
Location: Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center at the Balch Institute, 18 S. 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2314.
Scope of collection: Records of this Philadelphia Jewish community child care agency and its predecessors, including the Jewish Foster Home and Orphan Asylum founded by Rebecca Gratz and other women. Includes charter, bylaws, minutes, financial records, annual reports, and roll books.

Etting Collection. Autographs and Family and Civic Papers, 1558-1917.
Extent of collection: 20,000 items.
Finding aids: In repository.
Location: American Jewish Historical Society, 2 Thornton Rd., Waltham, MA 02154.
Scope of collection: Primarily personal letters written by her to family members and friends. Papers relating to her estate. Many of the letters were edited and published by David Philipson, in Letters of Rebecca Gratz (1975).

Extent of collection: 14 boxes.
Finding aids: Guide.
Location: Philadelphia Jewish Archives Center at the Balch Institute, 18 S. 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2314.
Scope of collection: Correspondence, minutes, reports, artifacts, photographs, miscellany of a society formed by Rebecca Gratz and other women in 1838 to provide instruction for Jewish children. Some of the earliest minute books are reputed to be in her handwriting.

Miriam Gratz Moses Papers. Correspondence, 1824-1862.
Extent of collection: 336 manuscript items and 5 volumes. Gratz items number 195, from 1837-1862.
Finding aids: Guides.
Location: Manuscripts Department, CB#2639, Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC 27599.
Scope of collection: Includes letters of Rebecca Gratz to her niece, Miriam Gratz Moses Cohen (Mrs. Solomon Cohen), whom she raised. In addition to family news, there are detailed accounts of religious work, and comments on current events, literature, religion, and philosophy.

Extent of collection: 29 items.
Finding aids: Card catalog.
Location: New York Historical Society, Manuscript Department, 170 Central Park W., New York, NY 10024.
Scope of collection: Correspondence, including 21 letters from Gratz (box 4).

Gratz, Rebecca. Papers. 1799-1869.
Extent of collection: 560 items.
Finding aids: Catalog cards.
Location: American Jewish Historical Society, 2 Thornton Rd., Waltham, MA 02154.
Scope of collection: Correspondence, including letters written to Association for Jewish Children, and Orphan Asylum.

Fenno, who married Ogden Hoffman.

Gratz, Rebecca. Papers. 1799-1869.
Extent of collection: 560 items.
Finding aids: Catalog cards.
Location: American Jewish Historical Society, 18 S. 7th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106-2314.
Scope of collection: Correspondence, including letters written to Association for Jewish Children, and Orphan Asylum.


Theses About Rebecca Gratz


Henrietta Szold (1860-1945),
Zionist Leader and Founder of Hadassah:
A Biobibliography

Biographical Information

Chronology

Dec. 21, 1860  
Born in Baltimore, Maryland, the oldest of eight daughters of Sophia (Schaar) and Rabbi Benjamin Szold.

1873  
Entered the Western Female High School in Baltimore.

June 28, 1877  
Graduated first in her class from Western Female High School at age sixteen. Although she received little formal education after that, her father instructed her in various subjects, giving Henrietta the education and attention usually given to a firstborn son. After graduation, substituted briefly as principal and English instructor of Western Female High School. Later, she taught modern languages, algebra, history, botany, and other subjects for fifteen years at the Misses Adams' School in Baltimore, an academy for girls. She also taught classes in the religious school of her father's synagogue, Oheb Shalom.

1878  
Became the Baltimore correspondent for the Jewish Messenger, a New York weekly, under the pseudonym "Sulamith."

June 1881  
Traveled to Europe for the summer with her father, to visit relatives and sightsee.

1888  
Active in the Hebrew Literary Society of Baltimore, founded by a group of Russian-Jewish immigrants.

Nov. 1889  
Helped members of the Hebrew Literary Society to open a night school, to teach the large influx of Russian-Jewish immigrants subjects such as English, American history, bookkeeping, and dressmaking. This was one of the first such schools in the United States.

1893  
Helped establish Hebras Zion, one of the first Zionist organizations in the United States.

1893  
Moved temporarily to Philadelphia to accept position of editorial secretary of the Jewish Publication Society (JPS), an office she held until 1916. Played a major role in translating and editing works, in an effort to preserve and revitalize Jewish heritage.

1899  
Became a member of the Executive Council of the Federation of American Zionists, the first nationwide Zionist organization in America, founded in 1898.

Summer 1902  
Father, Rabbi Benjamin Szold, died.

1903  
Left Baltimore with her mother, for New York City, to study at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, while continuing her work for the JPS. She was the only woman student at that time. Studied with Louis Ginzberg, whom she assisted as translator and editor. Although thirteen years his senior, Szold fell in love with Ginzberg. His marriage in 1909 to a woman he met on a trip to Europe left her devastated.

1907  
Joined a women's Zionist study circle in Harlem, which called itself Hadassah, to discuss Zionism and Jewish history.

Summer 1909  
Sailed to Europe on vacation with her mother. During a side trip to Palestine, she was appalled by the low standard of health services, and returned home with an even greater commitment to a Jewish national refuge in Palestine. This visit marked a major turning point in her life.

Jan. 1910  
Returned to New York and became increasingly involved in Zionist work.

Feb. 1910  
Became secretary of the American-sponsored Jewish Agricultural Experiment Station established in Palestine by Aaron Aaronsohn.

Summer 1910  
Elected secretary of the Federation of American Zionists.
Approximately 38 women met at Temple Emanu-El in New York City to convert the women's Zionist study circle into a national organization. Szold was elected president. The Hadassah Chapter of Daughters of Zion was founded with the purpose of improving public health in Palestine and fostering Zionist education in America. The name was changed to Hadassah at the first national convention in 1914.

Hadassah raised funds to send two nurses to Palestine.

Became member of the Provisional Executive Committee for General Zionist Affairs, headed by Louis Brandeis, which became the dominant ruling body in world Zionism during World War I.

Zionist leaders provided her with a life income to cover her immediate needs, allowing her to resign from the Jewish Publication Society and devote herself to Zionist work for the rest of her life.

Mother, Sophia (Schaar) Szold, died.

Attended the founding convention in Pittsburgh, as the Federation of American Zionists was reorganized as the Zionist Organization of America. Became director of its department of education.

Forty-four doctors, nurses, dentists, sanitary engineers, and administrators arrived in Palestine with supplies and equipment to work for the American Zionist Medical Unit, organized by Hadassah.

Sailed for Palestine at age 59 to help Dr. Isaac M. Rubinow administer the American Zionist Medical Unit. It was renamed the Hadassah Medical Organization in 1921.

Dr. Rubinow resigned and she took over until a replacement arrived.

Received notice that her sister Rachel was seriously ill, and sailed for the United States. Resumed active presidency of Hadassah.

Sister Rachel died.

Resigned presidency of Hadassah and was made honorary president.

Returned to Palestine as one of three members of the World Zionist Organization’s Palestine Executive Committee, in charge of education and health.

At Zionist Congress in Zurich, was elected a member of the newly formed Jewish Agency Executive in Jerusalem.

Back in the U. S., given honorary degree of Doctor of Hebrew Letters by the Jewish Institute of Religion. This was the first such degree to be conferred on a woman.

Sailed for Palestine where she was elected to the Vaad Leumi, the National Council of the Jews of Palestine. She was given responsibility for its education and health programs, and was charged with establishing a social service department.

Appointed director of Jewish Agency's Youth Aliyah Bureau and took a leading role in efforts to settle German-Jewish children in Palestine. Made three trips to Germany in 1933, 1935, and 1937, to organize rescue operations.

Met the first Youth Aliyah Group from Germany in Haifa.

Made last trip to the United States.

Cited as one of the hundred outstanding women of the past century by the Women's Centennial Congress.

Guided Hadassah in the establishment of Jerusalem’s Alice Seligsberg Vocational School for Girls. Created for the Vaad Leumi an agency to coordinate child and youth welfare activity in Palestine.

Against the mainstream of Zionist opinion, joined Judah L. Magnes in Ichud, a group devoted to furthering good relations between Arabs and Jews as well as advocating Arab-Jewish binationalism in Palestine.
Family

Parents: Rabbi Benjamin (1829-1902) and Sophia (Schaar) Szold (1839-1916) were married in August 1859, and set out for Baltimore from Hungary one month later. Benjamin had been appointed rabbi of Congregation Oheb Shalom, a moderately liberal congregation in Baltimore. Szold was a scholar with strong liberal and humanitarian convictions. He advocated Zionism and was active in the anti-slavery movement during the Civil War.

Siblings: Henrietta was the first child in a family of eight girls. In addition to Henrietta, four lived to adulthood: Rachel (Mrs. Joseph Jastrow), 1865-1926; Sadie, 1867 or 1868-1893; Bertha (Mrs. Louis H. Levin), 1873-1958; and Adele (Mrs. Thomas Seltzer), 1876-1940. Johanna died at age three or four, and Estella and Rebecca died in infancy.

Historical Sites, Landmarks, Memorials

Israel

A special stamp was issued in Israel on the centenary of her birth, depicting Hadassah and the Hebrew University Medical Center in the background. Many memorials to Szold exist in Israel.

Baltimore, Maryland

Plaque at playground, Baltimore and Aisquith Streets, marks the site of the first night school started by Szold for European Jews fleeing pogroms.

Szold Drive, in the northwest section of Baltimore, is named for her. There is a plaque on the first home built on Szold Drive (corner of Bonnie Pl.), bearing the seal of Hadassah and Szold's name.

New York City

Henrietta Szold Place, at right angles with East 11th Street, is named for her.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Memorial Window, Tree of Life Synagogue, Wilkins and Shady Avenues, Pittsburgh, PA 15217, which memorializes Jews in public life in America, includes Szold in the window dedicated to peace.

Cleveland, Ohio

There is a memorial area to Szold in the Hebrew Cultural Garden, one of the cultural gardens in Rockefeller Park, between the upper and lower boulevards of the city's West Side park system.

Bibliography

Biographical Sketches About Henrietta Szold


Books by Henrietta Szold

Szold edited and translated many volumes for the Jewish Publication Society of America. Outstanding among her translations: The Ethics of Judaism, by Moritz Lazarus; The Renascence of Hebrew Literature, by Nahum Slouschz; and several volumes of The Legends of the Jews, by Louis Ginzberg. She also contributed many letters and articles to
the Jewish press, such as a letter-to-the-editor, "Promised Land," in Nation (vol. 99, August 13, 1914, p. 191-92) and an article which appeared in the Baltimore Sun on July 13, 1892. Szold contributed articles to the Jewish Encyclopedia and edited several volumes of the American Jewish Yearbook. The following is the closest she came to writing a book of her own:


Books About Henrietta Szold


Theses About Henrietta Szold


Primary Source Materials Relating to Henrietta Szold


Scope of collection: Origins of Hadassah's medical work in Palestine. Highlights the papers of the directors of the organization. The microfilm relates to the Medical Center in Ein Karem, Israel.


Scope of collection: Original and microfilm copy of correspondence, diaries, and an index to papers housed at Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem. Includes letters written by Szold to members of family and friends regarding her activities in Palestine, as well as letters to Mrs. Charles T. Cohen regarding Hadassah.


Scope of collection: Selections of correspondence, diaries, articles, and speeches transcribed or copied from the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem for Irving Fineman, and used in his biography, Woman of Valor: The Life of Henrietta Szold (1961).

Henrietta Szold. Papers. Record Group A 125. Extent of collection: 70 linear feet. Finding aids: A list of files covers part of the Szold archives. (American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, listed above, indicates that an index to the papers is housed there.) Location: Central Zionist Archives, 4 Zalman Shazar Ave., P.O.B. 92, Jerusalem 91920, Israel. Scope of collection: Very broad, including early family correspondence as well as her Zionist and educational activities in Palestine.


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