

Recent Books on American Jewish History

Bibliography compiled for the Contemporary Jewish Writing Class

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by Gabor Por - April 23, 2015

Available online at JewishBookWorld.org/tag/cjw/

2013 and 2014 National Jewish Book Award Winners and Finalists:

- [After They Closed the Gates: Jewish Illegal Immigration to the United States, 1921-1965](#) by *Libby Garland* (University Of Chicago Press, 2014) 312 pages
Jews, one of the main targets of the quota laws, figured prominently in the new international underworld of illegal immigration. However, they ultimately managed to escape permanent association with the identity of the “illegal alien” in a way that other groups, such as Mexicans, thus far, have not.
- [FDR and the Jews](#) by *Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman* (Belknap, 2014) 464 pages, , **SCL***
Finds that the president was neither savior nor bystander. The authors draw upon many new primary sources to offer an intriguing portrait of a consummate politician-compassionate.
- [Louis Marshall and the Rise of Jewish Ethnicity in America](#) by *M. M. Silver* (Syracuse University Press, 2013) 616 pages
A tireless advocate for and leader of an array of notable American Jewish organizations and institutions, Marshall also spearheaded civil rights campaigns for other ethnic groups, blazing the trail for the NAACP
- [The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire](#) by *Adam Mendelsohn* (NYU Press, 2014) 320 pages
Argues that the Jews who flocked to the United States during the age of mass migration were aided appreciably by their association with a particular corner of the American economy: the rag trade.
- [Theatrical Liberalism: Jews and Popular Entertainment in America](#) by *Andrea Most* (NYU Press, 2013) 304 pages
Illustrates how American Jews used the theatre and other media to navigate their encounters with modern culture, politics, religion, and identity. Offering a comprehensive history of the role of Judaism in the creation of American entertainment.

More Recent Books

- [**The Community Table: Recipes and Stories from the Jewish Community Center in Manhattan and Beyond**](#) by *Katja Goldman, Lisa Rotmil, Judy Bernstein Bunzl* (Grand Central Life & Style, 2015) 352 pages
With anecdotal contributions from JCCs all around the country, this cookbook highlights the JCC's vibrant, eclectic community-and celebrates all of its many flavors.
- [**Constellations of Atlantic Jewish History, 1555-1890**](#) edited by *Arthur Kiron* (University of Pennsylvania Libraries, 2014) 192 pages
This illustrated volume serves as a companion to the 2014 exhibition of highlights from the Kaplan Collection that consists of over 11,000 books, manuscripts, art, and everyday objects.
- [**Jewish Mad Men: Advertising and the Design of the American Jewish Experience**](#) by *Kerri P. Steinberg* (Rutgers University Press, 2015) 224 pages
Looks specifically at how advertising helped shape the evolution of American Jewish life and culture over the past one hundred years.
- [**Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition**](#) by *Marni Davis* (NYU Press, 2012) 272 pages
Reveals that alcohol commerce played a crucial role in Jewish immigrant acculturation and the growth of Jewish communities in the United States.
- [**Just Kids from the Bronx: Telling It the Way It Was: An Oral History**](#) by *Arlene Alda* (Henry Holt, 2015) 336 pages, **SCL***
Alda arranged pieces of the past, from looking for violets along the banks of the Bronx River to the wake-up calls from teachers who recognized potential, into one great collective story.
- [**Knish: In Search of the Jewish Soul Food**](#) by *Laura Silver* (Brandeis, 2014) 300 pages, **SCL***
With good humor and a hunger for history, Silver mines knish lore for stories of entrepreneurship, survival, and major deliciousness.
- [**Lincoln and the Jews: A History**](#) by *Jonathan D. Sarna and Benjamin Shapell* (Thomas Dunne Books, 2015) 288 pages, **SCL***
Reveals how Lincoln's remarkable relationship with American Jews impacted both his path to the presidency and his policy decisions as president.
- [**Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers Who Forged the Way**](#) by *Hasia R. Diner* (Yale University Press, 2015) 280 pages
The story of millions of discontented young Jewish men who sought opportunity abroad, leaving parents, wives, and sweethearts behind. They learned unfamiliar languages and customs.
- [**Unclean Lips: Jews, Obscenity, and American Culture**](#) by *Josh Lambert* (NYU Press, 2013) 276 pages
Offers case studies to reveal the ways in which specific engagements with obscenity mattered to particular American Jews at discrete historical moments.

* Books marked with SCL are available at the Sonoma County Library