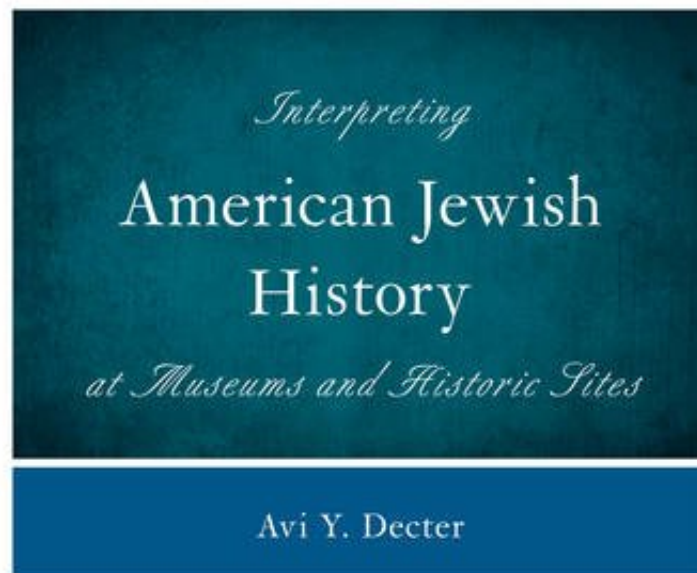


# Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History)

Avi Y. Decter

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**Avi Y. Decter : Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites (Interpreting History):

Jews are part and parcel of American history. From colonial port cities to frontier outposts, from commercial and

manufacturing centers to rural villages, and from metropolitan regions to constructed communities, Jews are found everywhere and throughout four centuries of American history. From the early 17th century to the present, the story of American Jews has been one of immigration, adjustment, and accomplishment, sometimes in the face of prejudice and discrimination. This, then, is a narrative of minority-majority relations, of evolving norms and traditions, of ongoing conversations about community and culture, identity and meaning. *Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites* begins with a broad overview of American Jewish history in the context of a religious culture that extends back more than 3,000 years and which manifests itself in a variety of distinctive American forms. This is followed by five chapters, each looking at a major theme in American Jewish history: movement, home life, community, prejudice, and culture. The book also describes and analyzes projects by history organizations, large and small, to interpret American Jewish life for general public audiences. These case studies cover a wide range of themes, approaches, formats. The book concludes with a history of Jewish collections and Jewish museums in North America and a chapter on next practice that promote adaptive thinking, continuous innovation, and programs that are responsive to ever-changing circumstances.

A superb accomplishment! First, Avi Decter and his collaborators set forth a bold curriculum for interpreting Jewish history incorporating the finest recent scholarship on the Jewish experience of immigration, domestic and community life, and cultural participation in American history. And then they survey an amazingly diverse array of museum projects by which curators and public historians have advanced public understanding of this history. The result is a provocative dialogue between what we know and how we create. Everyone engaged in historical interpretation in the classroom, the gallery, the cityscape, or on screens has to read this book. (Richard Rabinowitz, President, American History Workshop) *Interpreting American Jewish History at Museums and Historic Sites* provides a concise, thorough, and relevant history of the Jews in America that will serve as a useful resource for museum professionals (and volunteers) in any history-related organization. Of particular importance and value is the concluding chapter, *Toward Next Practice*, which offers imaginative yet eminently do-able programmatic approaches that are invaluable for any history-oriented institution seeking to remain relevant in today's dynamic multimedia world. All in all, the volume's synthesis of current scholarship with practical applications in a highly readable text should earn it a spot on any museum professional's history bookshelf. (Marsha L. Semmel, Independent Consultant) Decter and his co-contributors offer a concise, accessible introduction to Jewish history and a far-reaching tour of public history projects that have explored its rich story. *Interpreting American Jewish History* is a can-do handbook for those new to the subject, and the concluding chapter on next practice provides a roadmap for innovation that is a must-read for all museum professionals. (Benjamin Filene, University of North Carolina, Greensboro, Director of Public History, University of North Carolina at Greensboro) **About the Author** Avi Decter, managing partner of History Now, has worked in public history for nearly 40 years. His many projects include the Boott Cotton Mill at Lowell National Historical Park; the US Holocaust Memorial Museum; Louisville Slugger Museum and Visitor Center; and the National Civil War Museum in Harrisburg, PA.