



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
**AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES**

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**A Finding Aid to the  
Rebecca Gratz Collection**

**Manuscript Collection No. 236**



## Collection Summary

<b>Title</b>	Rebecca Gratz Collection
<b>Dates</b>	1794-1869
<b>Collection Number</b>	MS-236
<b>Repository</b>	The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives
<b>Creator</b>	Gratz, Rebecca, 1781-1869 Cohen, Miriam Gratz Moses Cohen, Solomon Gratz, Anna Maria Boswell Shelby, 1808-1882 Gratz, Benjamin, 1792-1884 Gratz, Maria Gist, 1797-1841 Hays, Sarah Ann Hoffman, Maria Fenno
<b>Extent</b>	1.6 linear feet (4 Hollinger boxes)
<b>Language of the Material</b>	English

## Administrative Information

**Biographical Sketch** Rebecca Gratz (March 4, 1781 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania - August 27, 1869 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) was a preeminent Jewish American educator and philanthropist. Gratz was the seventh of twelve children born to Miriam Simon and Michael Gratz. Her mother was the daughter of Joseph Simon (1712-1804), a preeminent Jewish merchant of Lancaster, while her father was descended from a long line of respected rabbis. Miriam and Michael were observant Jews and active members of Philadelphia's first synagogue, Mikveh Israel.

In 1801, at the age of 20, she helped establish the Female Association for the Relief of Women and Children in Reduced Circumstances, which helped women whose families were suffering after the Revolutionary War.[1] In 1815, after seeing the need for an institution for orphans in Philadelphia, she was among those instrumental in founding the Philadelphia Orphan Asylum. Four years later, she was elected secretary to its Board. She continued to hold this office for forty years. Under Gratz' auspices, a "Hebrew Sunday School" was started in 1838. Gratz became both its superintendent and president, and assisted in developing its curriculum,[1] resigning in 1864.

Gratz was also one of the founding members of the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, around November 1819. In 1850, she advocated in *The Occident*, over the signature A Daughter of Israel, for the foundation of a Jewish foster home. Her advocacy was largely instrumental in the establishment of such a home in 1855.[1] Other organizations that came about due to her efforts were the Fuel Society and the Sewing Society.

Gratz is said to have been the model of Rebecca, the daughter of the Jewish merchant Isaac of York, who is the heroine in the novel *Ivanhoe* by Sir Walter Scott. Scott's attention had been drawn to Gratz's character by Washington Irving, who was a close friend of the Gratz family.[2][3] The claim has been disputed, but it has also been well sustained in an article entitled "The Original of Rebecca in *Ivanhoe*", which appeared in *The Century Magazine*, 1882, pp. 679–682.

Gratz never married. Among the marriage offers she received was one from a Gentile whom she loved, but ultimately chose not to marry, on the account of her faith. Her portrait was painted twice by the noted American artist Thomas Sully. One of those portraits, both owned by the Rosenbach Museum, is on display at the National Museum of American Jewish History.

Gratz is buried at Mikveh Israel Cemetery in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

--Wikipedia contributors, "Rebecca Gratz," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rebecca\\_Gratz&oldid=416424813](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Rebecca_Gratz&oldid=416424813) (accessed May 3, 2011).

**Scope and Content** Collection consisting of correspondence with family members and friends.

**Arrangement** This collection is arranged in one (1) series: Series A. Correspondence. 1794-1869.

**Terms of Access** The collection is open for use; no restrictions apply.

**Preferred Citation** Footnotes and bibliographic references should refer to the Rebecca Gratz Collection and the American Jewish Archives. A suggestion for at least the first citation is as follows:

## Subjects

Gratz family / Jewish women / Jews -- Pennsylvania -- Philadelphia

### Series A. Correspondence, 1794-1869

#### Box and Folder Listing

Box 1. Folder 1. Cohen, Miriam, 1836-1840  
Box 1. Folder 2. Cohen, Miriam, 1841-1845  
Box 1. Folder 3. Cohen, Miriam, 1846-1850  
Box 1. Folder 4. Cohen, Miriam, 1851-1855  
Box 1. Folder 5. Cohen, Miriam, 1856-1862  
Box 1. Folder 6. Cohen, Miriam, undated  
Box 2. Folder 1. Cohen, Miriam, undated  
Box 2. Folder 2. Cohen, Solomon, 1839-1860  
Box 2. Folder 3. Gratz, Anna Maria, 1844-1863  
Box 2. Folder 4. Gratz, Anna Maria, undated  
Box 2. Folder 5. Gratz, Benjamin, 1790-1829  
Box 2. Folder 6. Gratz, Benjamin, 1831-1863, 1871  
Box 2. Folder 7. Gratz, Benjamin, undated  
Box 3. Folder 1. Gratz, Maria, 1809-1820  
Box 3. Folder 2. Gratz, Maria, 1821-1828  
Box 3. Folder 3. Gratz, Maria, 1830-1833  
Box 3. Folder 4. Gratz, Maria, 1834-1838  
Box 3. Folder 5. Gratz, Maria, 1839-1841  
Box 3. Folder 6. Gratz, Maria, undated  
Box 3. Folder 7. Gratz, Maria, undated  
Box 3. Folder 8. Gratz, Maria, undated  
Box 3. Folder 9. Hays, Sarah Ann, 1830-1835  
Box 4. Folder 1. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, 1797-1801  
Box 4. Folder 2. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, 1802-1804  
Box 4. Folder 3. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, 1805-1808  
Box 4. Folder 4. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, 1809-1813  
Box 4. Folder 5. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, 1814-1823  
Box 4. Folder 6. Hoffman, Maria Fenno, undated  
Box 4. Folder 7. Miscellaneous correspondence, 1802-1869, undated  
Box 4. Folder 8. Family correspondence, undated