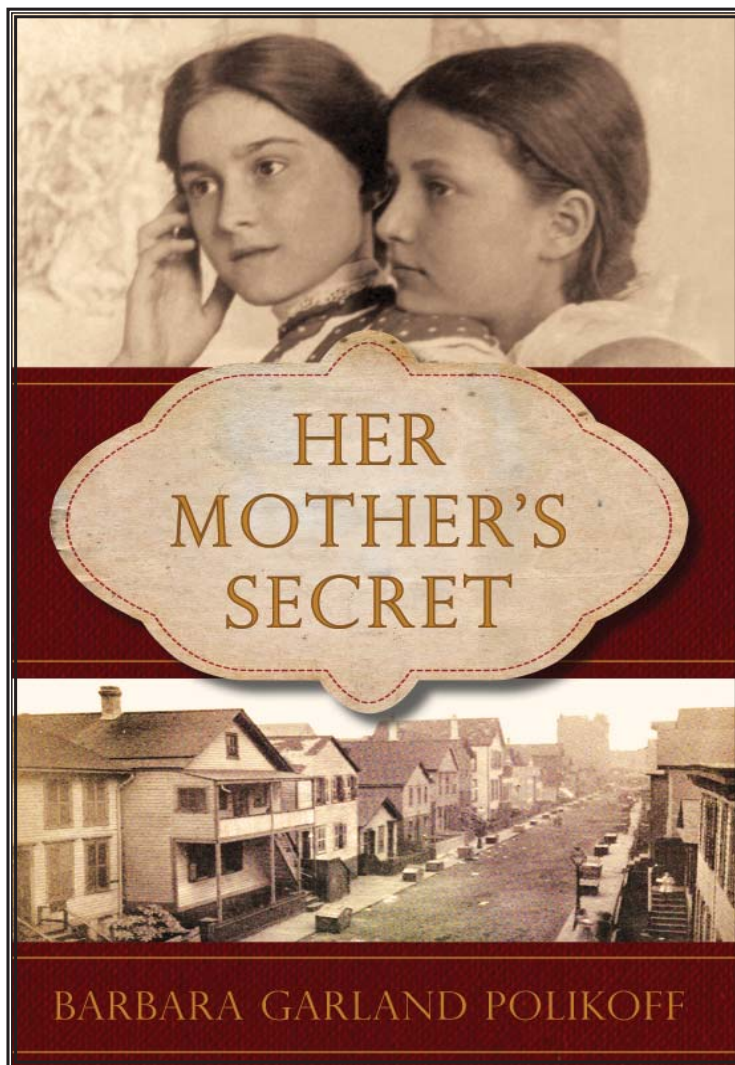


Her Mother's Secret

A Companion to the Novel



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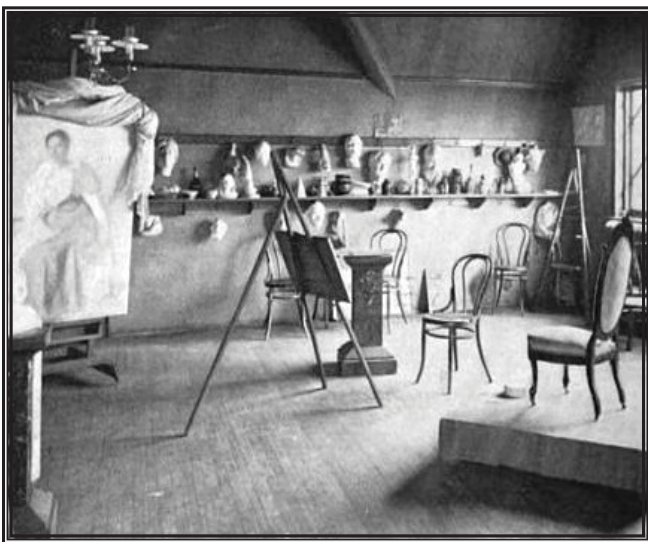
Sarah's World



A street in the Hull-House neighborhood
Notice the garbage box on the sidewalk at the left.



Meyer Levinson in front of his Maxwell Street
butcher shop, Chicago, around 1903-1909



The Hull-House art studio



The Hull-House playground



The whaleback steamer *Christopher Columbus*



Detail of Mary Cassatt's mural at the World's Columbian Exposition



Interior of an El car used to travel to the World's Columbian Exposition



The Japanese Ho-o-den
World's Columbian Exposition



The Japanese Tea House
World's Columbian Exposition

Photo credits

A street in the Hull-House neighborhood
from Robert Hunter, *Tenement Conditions in Chicago*, 1901

Meyer Levinson in front of his Maxwell Street butcher shop, Chicago, around 1903-1909
courtesy of Charles Krugel and Michael Robbins

The Hull-House art studio
from Florence Kelley, "Hull House," *New England Magazine* (July 1898)

The Hull-House playground
from Robert Hunter, *Tenement Conditions in Chicago*, 1901

The whaleback steamer *Christopher Columbus*
from chuckmanchicagonostalgia.wordpress.com

Detail of Mary Cassatt's mural at the World's Columbian Exposition
from William Walton, *World's Columbian Exposition: Art and Architecture*, 1893

Interior of an El car used to travel to the World's Columbian Exposition
from chuckmanchicagonostalgia.wordpress.com

The Japanese Ho-o-den at the World's Columbian Exposition
from C.D. Arnold, *Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 1893

The Japanese Tea House at the World's Columbian Exposition
from C.D. Arnold, *Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition*, 1893

Discussion Questions

1. From the time she was born, Sarah felt that she didn't fit in with her family. Have you ever felt like you were different from the people close to you? If so, how did you handle it?
2. Although this book takes place in 1893, does anything happen in the book that is similar to your life today?
3. What kinds of things did Sarah and her friends do for fun? Are any of their activities like ones that you enjoy?
4. Do you think that you would have been friends with Sarah if you lived in her time and place?
5. If you went back in time to 1893, what would you miss from your own time?
6. How is Sarah's family like your family? How are they different from your family?
7. Early in the book, Sarah is afraid to read her essay about the Chicago Fire out loud to her class. Later, she is too shy to tell her Hull House art class about the Mary Cassatt murals in the Woman's Building at the Fair. Have you ever been afraid to share something because your classmates might make fun of you?
8. Do you think Rifke was right to keep her secret from Sarah and Fanny for so many years? Do you think it is important for parents to tell their children about their early lives? Why or why not?
9. How does Sarah's relationship with her mother affect her decisions and activities throughout the book?
10. Sarah and Fanny think a lot of their parents' rules and opinions are old fashioned because they are from an earlier time. Are there any rules in your house that you think are old fashioned? What do you think has changed since your parents were children?
11. Fanny asks Sarah to keep her boyfriend, Sean, a secret from their parents. When is it okay to keep someone else's secret? Was Sarah right to keep Fanny's secret? Why or why not?
12. Jacob works as a butcher, even though he was trained as a blacksmith. His brother, Mischa, wanted to study medicine, but was not allowed to because he was Jewish. Do you know anyone who cannot work at the kind of job they want to? What are the reasons?
13. There is a Hebrew term, *mitzvah*, which refers to an act of kindness, or charitable act. At several points in the book Sarah undertakes acts of kindness, such as taking care of Goosie, including Subbie in the mural project, and giving clothing to Melina. Can you think of a time when you had to choose between doing something for yourself and doing something to benefit another person? How did you decide what to do? How did you feel about your choice?
14. Bianca tells Sarah how her Italian family went crazy when her sister wanted to marry a Jewish boy, and Rifke and Jacob don't approve of Fanny dating an Irish boy. This book is set during a time when people of different races or religions did not get along very well. Can you think of another time in history when that was the case? Are things better now?
15. Sarah's family came from Russia, and many families from other countries moved to the United States around the same time. Do you know where your family came from? How do you think you could find out? If any of your family members are recent immigrants, ask them to tell you the story of their early days in America.

16. Leo tells the Goldmans that it would take three weeks to see everything at the Fair, and you'd have to walk one hundred and fifty miles. Which of the attractions at the Exposition would you most like to have visited?
17. After the Fair Jacob says, "A miracle they say, this Ferris Wheel. Better it should have come from God. Then, instead of spending millions to build his wheel, Mr. Ferris could have used his money to feed the poor." Do you agree with Jacob that the Ferris Wheel was an irresponsible use of money? Why or why not?
18. Sarah falls in love with Mary Cassatt's paintings when she sees "The Child's Bath" in her Hull House classroom. Do you have a favorite artist or painting?
19. "How important is art to you, Sarah Goldman?" asks the teacher at the Art Academy. What is as important to you as art is to Sarah?
20. Sarah gets in trouble at school for painting a horse red but, in her class at Hull House, she is allowed to use all the colors she likes. Do you prefer art that is realistic or imaginative?



Yiddish

Yiddish is a language used by the Jews of Eastern and Central Europe and their descendants. It includes elements of the German, Hebrew, French, Italian, and Slavic languages, and is written in an alphabet based on Hebrew characters. It is a language known for its humor, wit, sarcasm, sense of irony, and deep appreciation of the human condition. Less than a century ago, Yiddish was spoken by about eleven million people, but today less than a two million people speak it. However, many Yiddish words have found their way into the English language. You may be familiar with such Yiddish words as bagel, klutz, schmuck, and tush.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Yiddish language you might want to check out the book *The New Joys of Yiddish* by Leo Rosten, or visit this website:

<http://yivo.org/about/index.php?tid=57&aid=146>

Some of the Yiddish words used in *Her Mother's Secret* are:

- boychick: an affectionate term for a boy
- mensch: a decent, upright man
- schlimazel: a chronically unlucky person
- shtetl: a small town or village with a large Jewish population found in Eastern Europe before World War II

Read-Alikes

Is It Night or Day? by Fern Schumer Chapman

In 1938, Edith Westerfeld, a young German Jew, is sent by her parents to Chicago, Illinois, where she lives with an aunt and uncle and tries to assimilate into American culture, while worrying about her parents and mourning the loss of everything she has ever known.

Meet Rebecca by Jacqueline Dembar Greene (an American Girl book)

In 1914 New York City, nine-year-old Rebecca is determined to show her family that she is old enough to light the Shabbos candles and to go to the movies. Additional titles continue the series.

All-of-a-Kind series by Sydney Taylor

The adventures of five sisters growing up in a Jewish family in New York in the early twentieth century.

Land of Promise by Joan Lowery Nixon

In 1902 fifteen-year-old Rose travels from Ireland to join family members in Chicago, where she must use all her resources to deal with her father's drinking and her brothers' dangerous involvement in politics.

Land of Hope by Joan Lowery Nixon

Rebekah, a fifteen-year-old Jewish immigrant arriving in New York City in 1902, almost abandons her dream of getting an education when she is forced to work in a sweatshop.

Missing from Haymarket Square by Harriette Gillem Robinet

Three children in Chicago in 1886 experience the Haymarket Riot in response to exploitative working conditions.

For Further Study

World's Columbian Exposition

David F. Burg, *Chicago's White City of 1893* (University of Kentucky, 1976)

Stanley Applebaum, *The Chicago World's Fair of 1893* (Dover, 1980) This book contains many photographs.

Neil Harris et al. *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago Historical Society, 1993)

C.D. Arnold, *Official Views of the World's Columbian Exposition* (Press Chicago Photogravure Company, 1893) (an online version can be viewed at <http://www.erbzine.com/mag33/3361.html>)

Wanda M. Corn, *Women Building History: Public Art at the 1893 Columbian Exposition* (University of California Press, 2011)

Jeanne Weimann, *The Fair Women: The Story of the Woman's Building at the World's Columbian Exposition* (Academy Chicago, 1981)

Hull House and Jane Addams

Barbara Garland Polikoff, *With One Bold Act: the Story of Jane Addams* (Boswell Books, 1999)

Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House* Note: there are many editions of this book available. A free, digital version can be found on <https://play.google.com/store>.

Louise W. Knight, *Jane Addams: Spirit in Action* (Norton, 2010)

Hilda Polacheck, *I Came a Stranger: The Story of a Hull-House Girl* (University of Illinois Press, 1989)

Peggy Glowacki and Julia Hendry, *Hull-House* (Arcadia, 2004). This book contains many photographs.

Chicago in the 1890s

Larry A. Viskochil, *Chicago at the Turn of the Century in Photographs* (Dover, 1984) This book contains many photographs.

Susan Hirsch, and Robert I. Goler, *A City Comes of Age: Chicago in the 1890s* (Chicago Historical Society, 1990)

For maps of Chicago in the 1890s, see

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/collections/maps/chi1890/>

Jewish Chicago

Irving Cutler, *The Jews of Chicago: From Shtetl to Suburb* (University of Illinois Press, 1996)

Irving Cutler, *Jewish Chicago: A Pictorial History* (Arcadia: 2000) This book contains many photographs.

Hyman L. Meites, ed. *History of the Jews of Chicago* (Chicago Jewish Historical Society, 1990; reprint of the 1924 original)

Jewish Chicago, 1833 to 1948 (DVD; a 2003 production of WTTW Chicago)

Mary Cassatt

Nancy Mowll Mathews, *Mary Cassatt: A Life* (Yale University Press, 1998)

Judith Barter, *Mary Cassatt: Modern Woman* (Art Institute of Chicago, 1998)

Thomas Streissguth, *Mary Cassatt: Portrait of an American Impressionist* (Carolrhoda Books, 1998)

Other Resources

Chicago History Museum

<http://chicagohistory.org/>

1601 N. Clark St., Chicago

This institution is home to exhibitions on the history of Chicago, as well as a research center housing books, archives, photographs, etc.

Their permanent exhibit *Chicago: Crossroads of America* includes material on the World's Columbian Exposition, along with an actual early El car that visitors can enter and sit in. In October 2012 they opened an exhibit on Jewish Chicago titled *Shalom Chicago*.

Their website includes an online exhibit on the World's Columbian Exposition.

<http://www.chicagohistory.org/history/expo.html>

Their website also includes a wealth of educational materials.

<http://www.chicagohs.org/education/resources/index>

Their online version of the *Encyclopedia of Chicago* includes an essay on the Jews of Chicago. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/671.html>

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum

http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/hull_house.html

800 S. Halsted, Chicago (on the campus of the University of Illinois at Chicago)

This museum is housed in two of the original buildings of the Hull-House settlement house—the Hull home and the dining hall. Two floors of exhibits detail life at Hull-House and the neighborhood surrounding it.

http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/_museum/exhibition.html

Their website includes the online exhibit *Urban Experience in Chicago: Hull-House and its Neighborhoods, 1889-1963*. <http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/urbanexp/>

Also available on their website are detailed educational materials on immigration, settlement houses, and Hull-House.

http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/_learn/_educationalresources/teachermaterials.html

The Art Institute of Chicago

<http://www.artic.edu/>

111 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

This world-class art museum is home to Mary Cassatt's painting *The Child's Bath*, along with a number of her other works.

Their website includes educational resources about Mary Cassatt and some specifically about *The Child's Bath*. <http://www.artic.edu/aic/collections/artwork/111442>

Spertus Center for Jewish Learning & Culture

<http://www.spertus.edu/>

610 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago

This center for Jewish learning and culture includes a library and exhibits, and hosts public programs.

Portions of their ongoing exhibit *Uncovered & Rediscovered: Stories of Jewish Chicago* are available online.

<http://www.spertus.edu/exhibits/uncovered>

They also have a bibliography available on Jewish Chicago.

<http://www.spertus.edu/subject-guides/chicago-jewish-history>

Tenement Museum, New York

<http://www.tenement.org/>

This museum, housed in a former tenement apartment building on Manhattan's Lower East Side, interprets the history of American immigration. Their website includes a wealth of educational material.

World's Columbian Exposition websites

The World's Columbian Exposition: Idea, Experience, Aftermath

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA96/WCE/title.html>

The Columbian Exposition (Digital Library Project of the Chicago Public Schools/University of Chicago) http://ecuip.lib.uchicago.edu/diglib/social/worldsfair_1893/index.html

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 (Paul V. Galvin Library, Illinois Institute of Technology) <http://columbus.gl.iit.edu/>

The World's Columbian Exposition of 1893

http://www.ust.ucla.edu/ustweb/Projects/columbian_expo.htm

A simulation of the Fair created at UCLA that allows you to take a virtual stroll through the fairgrounds.