LIZZIE KANDER AND THE SETTLEMENT COOK BOOK

“When I’m president...”

When Lizzie Kander gave this speech at her 1878 high school graduation, women couldn’t even vote (they would not win that right until the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920). But who better than Lizzie, with her dauntless spirit, to bring together the German and Eastern European Jewish groups, founding a community organization that united the Jews of Milwaukee. The famous Settlement Cook Book remains the crowning jewel of her charitable legacy. Lizzie’s is an inspiring tale about the importance of philanthropy, community, and good food.

LIZZIE’S EARLY LIFE

Lizzie Black Kander was born on May 28, 1858, to John and Mary Black. The Blacks owned a dry goods store in Milwaukee. Lizzie enjoyed a household full of siblings, including two brothers and three sisters. A young Lizzie got a chance to meet Ulysses S. Grant, the general for the Northern army and future U.S. president. She fearlessly rushed up to greet him while her sister, frightened by the general’s outstretched arms, backed away.

Lizzie’s ambition and initiative were demonstrated early. Lizzie was one of the first female pupils of the Fifth Ward School in the south side of Milwaukee. After completing 8th grade, she took a difficult test so she could go to East Side High School. Lizzie excelled at her subjects and was voted valedictorian of her class and got to speak at graduation. Her speech satirized the political climate, urging everyone to pay attention to the problems faced by the poor.

THE KEEP CLEAN MISSION

After high school, Lizzie looked for meaningful volunteer work. Her family was wealthy, so she did not have to help support them; it was uncommon for girls to go to college at the time. Being a volunteer was the opportunity open to her until she married and started her own household. Lizzie was energetic in her volunteering pursuits, joining the Ladies Relief Sewing Society. In 1881 Lizzie married Simon Kander, a businessman who was also committed to charitable efforts.

Lizzie was concerned with the problems faced by Milwaukee’s poor, many of whom were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. These immigrants fled persecution and poverty, seeking a better life in America. As a truant officer, she worked with children of immigrant families to discover why they missed school. She was concerned with the immigrants’ cramped and dirty tenements. Given Lizzie’s education, it was important to her that children attend school. In 1885, Lizzie organized the “Keep Clean Mission,” intended to help the immigrants keep clean, attend school, and hone working skills, adopting American habits in the process.

Understandably, many immigrants were upset by the thought that they were dirty and needed outside assistance to keep clean. Lizzie’s organization changed its name to the “Milwaukee Jewish Mission.” The mission’s classes—including sewing and woodcarving—attracted hordes of eager children. Faithful to the idea of the first mission, Lizzie installed a public bathhouse in their location next to the Schlitz beer brewing plant, which provided a hot shower for a penny.
At this time, sewing and cooking were very important skills for girls. For Lizzie, being able to prepare a healthy meal on a budget was essential to a healthy home, a key ingredient for a healthy community. Lizzie’s cooking classes focused on teaching the immigrant girls to prepare American meals.

THE SETTLEMENT HOUSE

The classes at Lizzie’s Mission grew, but the location did not offer enough space. Lizzie raised enough money to establish a new center. In 1900, the Mission joined efforts with the Sisterhood of Personal Service, another Jewish charity, to form “The Settlement House,” known simply as “The Settlement.” This was not unique to Milwaukee; across the nation, settlement houses were established to “Americanize” immigrants. Lizzie never became the president of the United States, but she was the first president of Milwaukee’s Settlement.

The Settlement was an immediate hit. Its baths, with hot water from the adjacent Jung Brewery, attracted many immigrants. The classes covered important life skills for children and adults, including sewing, cooking, dancing, dressmaking, and woodworking, bustling from 9 a.m. in the morning to 11 p.m. at night.

“Lizzie Kander (known generally in the community as Aunt Lizzie) taught English to new arrivals at the Abraham Lincoln House. She would ask what they intended to make for Sabbath dinner that week. The pupils told what they would make. Gefilte Fish for a first course; and what they used to make it and how. While they were telling what kind of fish they would use, Aunt Lizzie was writing that they put into the bowl with the fish; and all the time they were speaking teacher was correcting any mistakes in pronunciations, or grammar.”

~ Jean Gordon, on the role cooking classes played in learning English

SETTLEMENT HOUSES

Reformers associated with the American Settlement Movement wanted to help poor people get better social services, such as housing, food, sanitation, and opportunities to participate in community events and clubs. Settlement workers believed that all economic and social classes were connected to each other. Reformers were interested in identifying the conditions that led to poverty and providing the poor with opportunities and skills to rise above those conditions. The growth of cities led to problems with overcrowding. Settlement houses provided basic services to the nation’s poor and immigrants. By living and working with the people they were trying to help, settlement workers hoped to alleviate the effects of poverty and integrate immigrants into American society. The facilities provided services like meals, nurseries, kindergartens, English classes, and industrial and vocational skills. Some settlements promoted theater and music. Settlement volunteers and workers often lived within the facility itself.

Jane Addams, born in Cedarville, Illinois, founded Hull House in Chicago in 1889; it was one of the earliest settlement houses in America. Addams became well known for her work at Hull House and was an active leader in promoting social reform nationally. For her work with Milwaukee’s immigrants, Lizzie Kander was dubbed the “Jane Addams of Milwaukee.” The excerpts below are from Jane’s writings about her experiences:

The memory of the first years at Hull-House is more or less blurred with fatigue, for we could of course become accustomed only gradually to the unending activity and to the confusion of a house constantly filling and refilling with groups of people. The little children who came to kindergarten in the morning were followed by the afternoon clubs of older children, and those in turn made way for the educational and social organizations of adults, occupying every room in the house every evening. All one’s habits of living had to be readjusted, and any student’s tendency to sit with a book by the fire was of necessity definitely abandoned.¹

It seemed to me that Hull-House ought to be able to devise some educational enterprise, which should build a bridge between European and American experiences in such wise as to give them both more meaning and a sense of relation.

Select Bibliography on Settlement Houses

Lizzie needed to find a reliable source of funding to support the popular activities provided by The Settlement. A practical solution emerged from a solution to a problem in Lizzie’s cooking classes. The girls in her cooking classes devoted too much time to copying down recipes; Lizzie felt it would be more productive to use class time for actual cooking. She approached the Settlement Board with the idea for a cookbook, part textbook and part fundraiser. They laughed at her “little venture,” and refused to put up the money to fund the project. Lizzie sought the help of a local printer and his wife. In 1901, 1,000 copies of the cookbook’s first edition were printed, under the full title, *The Settlement Cook Book: The Way to A Man’s Heart*.

In just one year, all of the 1,000 copies were sold! The 174-page culinary manual included recipes for experienced cooks and beginners alike. The dishes featured in the book were influenced by German, Eastern European, and Jewish cuisines.

Lizzie’s book provided far more than just cooking directions. As was the custom with American cookbooks at the time, *The Settlement Cook Book* lay down the rules for proper household care, like dusting a room and waiting on the table. Lizzie believed that the recipes, ingredients, and equipment used, which were new to immigrant girls and their mothers, would help the girls learn how to manage a healthy American household. Cookbook sales provided The Settlement House had a lasting source of money for its projects.

Lizzie revised her cookbook over the next 40 years. An additional 1,500 copies appeared in 1903 for the book’s second edition, and the third edition doubled in size. Lizzie improved and added new recipes and included the latest scientific thinking on food and cooking. Gathering contributions from friends, Lizzie tested recipes in her kitchen. She felt that the dependability of the recipes and their clear instructions contributed to the cookbook’s success story.

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Many editions included Jewish staples like matzo balls (see recipe page) for soup and gefilte fish alongside American classics like macaroni with cheese. The recipes ranged from familiar to the exotic featuring dishes like baked beans, angel food cake, tongue salad, sunshine cake, potted calf's liver, and opera caramels—do any of these recipes sound good to you? Lizzie and the cookbook editors kept recipes and instructions up-to-date. The 1947 edition’s vanilla, chocolate, pineapple, and coffee ice cream with marshmallows kept pace with the growing marshmallow craze, and the 1936 edition offered useful tips for working with new household equipment, such as electric beaters and waffle irons. The book’s wide appeal led to its position as one of the most popular and best-known charity cookbooks, raising millions of dollars to help the Milwaukee community.

**ABRAHAM LINCOLN HOUSE**

Programs and activities quickly outgrew the new Settlement House building, and the organization moved in 1903. When the landlord ousted the Settlement in 1910, the Board of Directors decided to purchase their own property. Lizzie served an elaborate feast to secure funding for the new project. On Lizzie’s request, the new building was named Abraham Lincoln House, a personal hero of hers. Abraham Lincoln House opened its doors in 1912 and continued to provide diverse classes for children and adults.

The Settlement continued to grow and purchased a new building on North Milwaukee Street in 1929. The Milwaukee Jewish Center opened in 1931, later to be called the Jewish Community Center—an organization that continues to serve Milwaukee’s Jewish and general community today.

**LIZZIE’S LEGACY**

On July 24, 1940, Lizzie died of a heart attack at age 82. She called her niece earlier that day, excited to try a new recipe. Her commitment to her work underlies the popularity of *The Settlement Cook Book*. The 1976 edition was elected to the James Beard “Cookbook Hall of Fame.”

Lizzie’s efforts resulted in more than efficient households and healthy meals. She believed that women and girls should manage a clean, happy, and healthy home, yet Lizzie was an influential leader in the wider community. Lizzie lived when rights and expectations for women were changing. She served on the Milwaukee School Board for 12 years, was instrumental in organizing the Milwaukee Girls Trade School in 1909, and helped found Milwaukee’s first nursery school at the Milwaukee State Teacher’s College (later to become the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee) in 1928.

Irma Greenthal, Lizzie's niece, describes Lizzie’s character: “All her life she was ahead of everybody. She didn’t want to give handouts to the immigrants who came here at the end of the last century but wanted them to help themselves.” Lizzie’s devotion to bettering her community shaped her work and beliefs throughout her life.
Compare these recipes with recipes today—can you find similar recipes and directions online or in cookbooks?

1903 Edition
CRACKER OR MATZOS BALLS
Butter size of walnut, Chopped parsley
1 egg, Salt and cracker meal.
Stir the butter, add egg, then as much cracker meal as it absorbs. Moisten with a little soup, add parsley and salt.
Roll into marbles and boil in the soup just before serving.  

1907 Edition
BEET SOUP. Russian Style (Fleischik.)
1 large beet, 1 lb. fat meat; brisket of beef,
½ lb. onions, ¼ cup sugar
citric acid
Cut the beet and onions in thick pieces and put in kettle with meat; cover with cold water and let cook slowly for two hours; add sugar and citric acid to make it sweet and sour and let cook another hour; season and serve hot.  

1928 Edition
BRAIN CANAPE
Remove red membrane and soak a set of calf’s brains in cold water 20 minutes. Drain and chop fine, add an egg, 1 tablespoon cracker crumbs, salt and paprika. Spread 1 heaping tablespoon of this mixture on each round of bread and fry in deep hot fat. 

1928 Edition
PINEAPPLEADE
½ cup pineapple juice, 2 tablespoons sugar,
1 lime, or 2 teaspoons lemon juice
½ glass cracked ice
Into a tall glass with the ice place pineapple, the juice of the lime or lemon juice and sugar. Mix well and serve. Raspberry, grape or orange juice may be used in place of the pineapple. 

1936 Edition
BAKING POWDER BUNDT KUCHEN
½ cup butter 1 teaspoon vanilla
1 cup sugar 1 cup milk
4 eggs 2 ½ cups flour
Rind of ½ lemon and ½ orange 2 teaspoons baking powder
10 blanched almonds or raisins
CREAM butter and sugar well together, add eggs, one at a time, beating constantly, add flavoring. Mix flour and baking powder and stir in alternately with the milk. Place almonds or raisins in the bottom of a well greased bundt form (a deep, round, fancy cake pan with tube in center). Pour in the cake mixture and bake ¼ hour or until done, in a moderate oven, 350°F.  

1936 Edition
CORN BREAD
1 ¼ cups flour 3 teaspoons baking powder
¾ cup corn meal 1 cup sweet milk
4 tablespoons sugar 2 tablespoons butter, melted
1 egg ½ teaspoon salt
Mix the dry ingredients by sifting them together. Add the milk, the well beaten egg and the butter. Beat well and bake in a shallow pan (8” x 8” x 2”) in a hot oven (400°F.) 30 to 40 minutes.

1947 Edition
SUGAR COOKIES
½ cup butter 2 teaspoons baking powder
1 cup sugar ¼ teaspoon vanilla, nutmeg or cinnamon
1 egg any other flavoring
¼ cup milk 2 cups flour (about)
Cream the butter and sugar. Beat the egg and add to the milk. Sift flour and mix baking powder with 1 cup, combine mixtures, then add the rest of the flour, and only enough more to handle. Chill in refrigerator. Roll on floured board ¼ inch thick. Shape with biscuit cutter. Sprinkle with sugar, cinnamon, chopped nuts. Bake in hot oven, 375°F., 8 to 10 minutes. Or use 2 eggs and only 1 tablespoon of milk. 

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5 Ibid., 526.
6 Ibid., 423.
7 Ibid., 64.
MENU PLANNING

In later editions, detailed menus for events such as home dinner meals, afternoon tea, picnic lunches, and various holidays were included. Read the menus below for Passover and Thanksgiving, taken from the 1934 edition. How does this compare to the traditions in your home?

PASSOVER (SEDAR) SUPPER

Salted Almonds. Matzos. 
Individual Charoset Appetizer, in half lemon shell, surrounded by a quartered hardboiled egg, thin slice of horseradish root, sprig of parsley and radishes on a bed of Water Cress. Serve with Salt Water.
Soup with Matzos Balls.
Spring Lamb or Spring Chicken.
New Potatoes with Chopped Parsley. Fresh Asparagus. 
Fresh Peas. Fresh Fruit Salad. 
Matzos Torte or Matzos Sponge Cake or Kiss Torte with Fresh Strawberry Filling. 
Strawberry Ice. 
Stuffed Prunes. Nuts and Raisins. 
Ceremonial Wine.

THANKSGIVING DINNER

Cream of Oyster Soup, topped with Whipped Cream. 
Celery. Salted or Sugared Almonds. Bread Sticks. 
Roast Turkey. 
Chestnut Dressing with Giblet or Plain Gravy. 
Cranberry Jelly, with Apple Balls. 
Mashed Potatoes. Sweet Potatoes with Marshmallows. 
Cream Onions. Squash. 
Relishes. Jelly. 
Pumpkin Pie, with Cheese. Ice Cream. Cookies. 

Note: There are many foods or combinations of food that are not kosher. The Settlement Cookbook was made by the Jewish community, but did not follow Jewish dietary laws. For example, oysters are not Kosher; at a meal where meat is served, you would not serve cheese or ice cream.

FOOD SCIENCE AND MEASUREMENTS

Lizzie used the latest scientific thinking on food and food preparation. She included information on digestion, classification and nutrition. She stressed precise measurements; where older cookbooks called for a “handful” of this, Lizzie specified level cups, tablespoons, and teaspoons and included tables on weights and measures. Her practice echoed the laments of one nineteenth-century cookbook writer, William Kitchiner who advised accurate measurements in place of the guesswork required for earlier recipes. In the introduction to his work, he detailed the colorful yet imprecise expressions in older cookbooks:

For instance, a bit of this—a handful of that—a pinch of t’other—do ’em over with an egg—and a sprinkle of salt—a dust of flour—a shake of pepper—a squeeze of lemon—or a dash of vinegar, etc., are the constant phrases.

Would you be able to follow a recipe with these phrases? How could a recipe change without precise measures?

Advertisements like the ones above helped pay for the publication of the cookbook. Do cookbooks today have advertisements? Who are they trying to reach?
VOCABULARY AND GLOSSARY

Adjacent (adjective): next to, alongside.

Alleviate (verb): to make (something negative) easier or less severe.

Bile (noun): a greenish or yellowish fluid, released by the liver, that aids in digestion.

Blunt (verb): to become or make less sharp; to weaken the force (of something).

Bustle (verb): to buzz energetically with activity or movement.

Chasm (noun): a large gap (figurative meaning).

Dauntless (adjective): not to be intimidated; fearless.

Enterprise (noun): an undertaking or a project.

Faculty (noun): an ability to do something.

Gastric (adjective): of or relating to the stomach.

Hone (verb): to sharpen or improve, as in “to hone one’s skills.”

Initiative (noun): the ability to take charge or lead action.

Kuchen: the German word for “cake.”

Ladies Relief Sewing Society: a Jewish benevolent society established in 1878.

Lament (noun): an expression of disappointment, sorrow, or regret.

Luncheon (noun): a formal lunch.

Nineteenth Amendment: the nineteenth amendment to the United States Constitution granted women the right to vote by ending voter discrimination on the basis of sex. It was passed in 1920.

Oust (verb): to drive out or remove from an occupied position or place.

Passover: an eight-day Jewish holiday that commemorates the escape from slavery in Egypt. A Seder is a ritual dinner held during the first two nights of this holiday where family and friends get together and retell the story of the escape from slavery.

Philanthropy (noun): concern for enhancing human welfare; the act of improving the welfare of others by donating time or money to a cause.

Piquant (adjective): having a sharp or stimulating flavor.

Reciprocal (adjective): describes a relationship where the parties are interconnected and equally involved.

Resounding (adjective): impressive or emphatic.

Sanitation (noun): measures relating to public health, such as cleanliness, clean water, and sewage disposal.

Satirize (verb): to critically comment on a person, thing, or state of affairs by means of humor, irony, or sarcasm.

Soberly (adverb): seriously or solemnly.

Truant officer (noun): an official who tries to find out why students are absent from school.

Ulysses S. Grant: Ulysses S. Grant was the general of the Union Army during the American Civil War (1861–1865). He later became president of the United States (1869–1877).

Underlie (verb): to be the cause or foundation of something.

Valedictorian (noun): the top student in a graduating high school class. This person often delivers a speech during commencement ceremonies.

Wise (noun): an old-fashioned way of indicating the manner or way, as in the manner in which something is done.
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

- Describe Lizzie’s motivations for helping the poor immigrants in Milwaukee. How did the German Jews feel about the Eastern European newcomers? What steps did Lizzie take to connect the two communities?
- Describe the Settlement’s philosophy for helping the immigrants. How did Lizzie think they could best help the poor? What skills did she think were necessary for boys and girls at the time? How is this similar to or different from today?
- Lizzie Kander felt that nutritious food was the key to a healthy home. How do you connect with your family’s heritage through food? What are your favorite foods? What do you think of Lizzie’s recipes? What would your parents think?
- How do you think Lizzie’s Jewish identity shaped her attitude toward charity and service work?
- Create a class cookbook that represents your students’ backgrounds. Ask everyone to bring a recipe and write a short story about why this recipe is important in their family. You can also ask everyone to bring in food to celebrate the cookbook’s creation.

RESOURCES

Books

A reprint of The Settlement Cook Book’s 1903 edition. Reproduces the look and feel of the original publication.


A biography of Lizzie Kander, detailing her efforts to help immigrants adapt to life in America. Includes recipes, cookbook excerpts, photographs, a timeline, questions for discussion, and activities and projects. Juvenile audience.

Read an interview with Bob Kann about Lizzie and A Recipe for Success: Wisconsin Historical Society. “Q&A with Bob Kann.”

http://video.wpt2.org/video/154019 2159/


The article is available online at: http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/w mh/pdf/spring04_fritz.pdf

Web Sites
Gale Cengage Learning. “Jane Addams.”
http://www.gale.cengage.com/free_r esources/whm/bio/addams_j.htm

A brief biography of Jane Addams, with information on her early life, her work at Hull House, and her national campaigns for peace and reform.

Jane Addams Hull-House Museum.
http://www.uic.edu/jaddams/hull/h ull_house.html#

The web site for the Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago offers educational resources, including poems, essays, and personal narratives describing the immigrant experience and an interactive photobiography of Jane Addams, primary source documents, images, maps, and teachers’ resources.

Wisconsin Historical Society.
“Excerpts from ‘The Settlement Cookbook.’”
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/tu rningpoints/search.asp?id=910

View sample pages from the 1910 edition of The Settlement Cook Book.

Wisconsin Historical Society. “Lizzie Black Kander.”
http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/ topics/kander/index.asp
A concise biography of Lizzie. Includes a link to the wider topic of “Americanizing” immigrants, with primary source documents and lists of further resources on the subject.


This is a digital archive of historic American cookbooks from the 18th to early 20th century. The entry for The Settlement Cook Book includes a downloadable PDF of the book, drawn from various editions.

http://ocp.hul.harvard.edu/immigrat ion/settlement.html

A brief article on the Settlement House Movement, including a link to digitized primary source materials.