



***The Boston Girl*, by Anita Diamant
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, May 2015**

Author Anita Diamant perhaps is best known for her sprawling historical novel *The Red Tent*, whose tale centered on Dinah, a daughter of the biblical patriarch Jacob. Against a sweeping backdrop, the traditions and travails of ancient womanhood were explored.

Ms. Diamant's latest coming-of-age tale, *The Boston Girl*, takes place during the 20th century. The book spans the life of Addie Baum, the title character, who was born in Boston's North End to Russian Jewish immigrants in 1900.

Now 85, Addie is asked by her granddaughter Ava to tell her life's story. Addie begins her tale in 1915, describing life in a teeming, crowded tenement where her family lived in one room. School was a haven for Addie; learning was an escape. After class, she would go to the Salem Street Settlement House. There, at the library, Addie starts to become her own person.

Reading opened up a whole new world for Addie, and she was determined to make a better life for herself. Starting out as a typist, Addie works her way up to newspaper columnist. Along the way, she encounters personal tragedies and challenges. Ultimately, she finds fulfillment in her married life and expands her career into teaching and social work.

All in all, I found *The Boston Girl* compelling and personally satisfying. (My own mother was born in Boston's North End to Italian immigrants.) Addie is an appealing character; her struggles and longing are universal. And her story is told with sincere poignancy.